Strict Negative Concord in Russian and the Directionality of Agree

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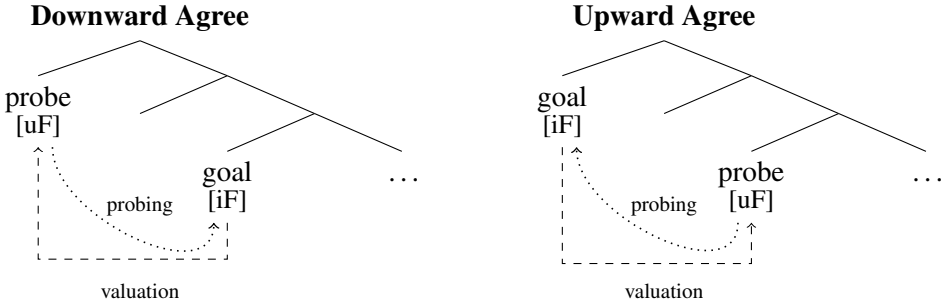
Abstract This contribution discusses strict negative concord, frequently considered a major argument for Upward Agree whereby feature-defective probes are c-commanded by feature-complete goals. By focusing on the interaction between long-distance scrambling and negative concord in Russian, I formulate serious challenges for Upward Agree. The facts are then shown to be trivially compatible with Downward Agree whereby probes c-command goals.

Keywords strict negative concord, Agree, scrambling, syntax, Russian

1. Introduction

Most contemporary theories of agreement postulate elements that are defective in particular features and have to acquire the values for those features in the course of the syntactic computation ('Probes', Chomsky 2000), and elements providing values for those features by virtue of being inherently specified with them ('Goals', Chomsky 2000). It is also uncontroversial that Probes and Goals must be in a c-command relationship for the features of the Goal to value the matching features of the Probe. There is no consensus, however, regarding the directionality of featural operations: while Probes c-command Goals in the classical conception of Agree (Chomsky 2000 *i.a.*), Goals must c-command probes for Agree to obtain in the conception of Upward Agree (Zeijlstra 2004 *i.a.*). The two approaches are illustrated in (1), where dotted arrows show the direction of probing and dashed arrows the direction of valuation.

(1)



The main argument for Upward Agree is the existence of phenomena in which Goals do appear to c-command Probes: anaphor binding, where featurally deficient anaphors require c-commanding antecedents, or negative concord, where neg-pronouns must be licensed by a c-commanding sentential negation operator. Standard Downward Agree, whereby probes c-command goals, has been shown to be better at handling φ-agreement (Preminger 2013, Preminger and Polinsky 2015, Polinsky and Preminger 2019, Rudnev 2020a, 2021, Bárány and van der Wal 2022). Upward

Agree, on the contrary, has been motivated by the necessity to formalise, in contemporary syntactic terms, anaphor binding (Heinat 2006, Rooryck and Vanden Wyngaerd 2011) and semantic concord phenomena, such as negative concord (Zeijlstra 2004) or sequence of tense (Zeijlstra 2012).[1]

Proponents of Downward Agree thus face a dilemma when confronted with phenomena like anaphor binding or negative concord: (i) they must either view such phenomena as non-syntactic or (ii) rethink them in such a way as to make them compatible with Downward Agree. The first path has been pursued for binding, and Preminger (2019), Rudnev (2020b), Bruening (2021) have provided evidence that binding does not reduce to Agree. Non-syntactic theories of negative concord also exist, and analyse the obligatory cooccurrence of negative morphology on negative concord items, henceforth NCIs, with the marking of sentential negation as signalling empty discourse referents (Kuhn 2021). In this paper, I pursue the second option by providing an argument from colloquial Russian that favours Downward Agree over Upward Agree. The argument is based on the interaction of negative-concord licensing and (long-distance) scrambling: I show that scrambling helps circumvent the locality restrictions imposed on negative concord but only if the final landing site c-commands the marker of sentential negation. Therefore, if Russian strict negative concord is to be modelled syntactically, it is Downward Agree that has the upper hand.

Section 2 introduces strict negative concord and the analysis proposed for it in the framework of Upward Agree (Zeijlstra 2004, 2012). Section 3 introduces the locality condition on the licensing of negative concord, whereupon Section 4 presents a way of circumventing this locality condition in Russian and discusses the challenge it poses for the theories of negative concord licensing that rely on Upward Agree. Section 5 then sketches an alternative way of capturing the facts by exploiting Downward Agree. Section 6 summarises the discussion.

2. Strict Negative Concord and Upward Agree

Russian is a strict negative concord language whose neg-words must appear in the vicinity of sentential negation, as shown in (2). Neg-words like *nikto* 'no one' in (2) cannot be used on their own and do not contribute a negative force of their own.

(2) Nikto *(ne) prishël.
no.one NEG came
'No one came.'

According to Zeijlstra (2004), the sentence in (2) has the semi-formal underlying structure in (3), where $Op\neg$ is the abstract operator effecting sentential negation:

(3) $Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$ $nikto_{[uNeg]}$ $ne_{[uNeg]}$ *prishël*

On the analysis in (3), neither the neg-word *nikto* 'no one' nor the sentential negation marker *ne*

[1] I am setting aside the Upward Agree approach of Bjorkman and Zeijlstra (2019) whereby the effects of Downward Agree in feature F1 can be derived from a prior Upward-Agree dependency in feature F2. See Rudnev 2021, Bárány and van der Wal 2022 and Keine and Dash 2022 for a critical assessment of that approach.

'not' is inherently negative, and their negative features are therefore uninterpretable. Both [uNeg] features appear below the [iNeg] feature that c-commands them, and can be checked and deleted.

Two distinct syntactic positions have been proposed for *Op*¬, either as the specifier of NegP (Zeijlstra 2004) or as immediately c-commanding the highest constituent carrying a [uNeg] feature, for instance adjoining immediately above TP (Zeijlstra 2012). Zeijlstra argues against positioning *Op*¬ in the left periphery on semantic grounds so as to avoid a scope conflict between negation and illocutionary force. In structure (4) below, the uninterpretable negative feature [uNeg] is initially generated on the verb, and subsequently moves to v, eventually projecting a constituent of its own, NegP. Because the negative feature on Neg is still uninterpretable, the abstract negative operator *Op*¬ carrying an interpretable [iNeg] feature is inserted in Spec,NegP to satisfy the requirements of the Principle of Full Interpretation (Chomsky 1995), whereupon the [uNeg] feature on Neg is checked and deleted.

(4) $[_{\text{NegP}}\ Op\neg_{[\text{iNeg}]}\quad \text{Neg}^0{}_{[\text{uNeg}]}\ [_{\text{vP}}\ \text{v}^0{}_{[\text{uNeg}]}\ [_{\text{VP}}\ \text{V}_{[\text{uNeg}]}\ ]]]$

Agree *head movement*

A variant of the analysis in (4) would treat the sentential negation marker *ne* 'not' as a separate lexical item spelling out the Neg head endowed with a [uNeg] feature, with the verb moving through v/Voice to Neg. According to Zeijlstra, the structure in (4) derives the pattern of strict negative concord in the Slavonic languages since the interpretable [iNeg] feature on *Op*¬ c-commands all the uninterpretable [uNeg] features. Sentence (5) from Russian illustrates.

(5) *Op*¬$_{[\text{iNeg}]}$ nikto$_{[\text{uNeg}]}$ nikuda$_{[\text{uNeg}]}$ ne$_{[\text{uNeg}]}$ poedet.
no.one nowhere NEG go.FUT
'No one is going anywhere.'

The uninterpretable [uNeg] features on the subject NP, the negative head Neg and the directional adverbial in (5) are all checked by the [iNeg] feature on the negative operator, exactly as in (4).

3. Strict Negative Concord and Locality

Viewing negative concord as a featural operation corresponding to an instance of Agree imposes a locality restriction on its application, providing an explanation for the well known observation that negative concord cannot obtain across a finite-clause boundary. One such example is given in (6).

(6) **Op*¬$_{[\text{iNeg}]}$ ya ne$_{[\text{uNeg}]}$ govoril [chto on poedet nikuda$_{[\text{uNeg}]}$]
I NEG said that he go.FUT nowhere
('I did not say that he would go anywhere.')

Sentence (6) is bad, given Zeijlstra's (2004) assumptions, because, while everything is in order in the matrix clause, the uninterpretable [uNeg] feature on the embedded directional adverbial *nikuda* 'nowhere' is trapped inside the embedded clause and cannot be checked by a c-commanding [iNeg] feature.

The next section shows that the observation regarding the inability of neg-words in an embedded finite CP to be licensed by matrix negation is too strong by focusing on the interaction of negative concord and long-distance scrambling, which rescues embedded neg-words but only if their landing site is above the sentential negation marker *ne* 'not'. This behaviour is expected if probes (i.e. the neg-words' [uNeg] features) c-command their goals (i.e. the negation markers' [iNeg] features) but is unexpected on approaches appealing to Upward Agree.

4. Negative Concord and Long-distance Scrambling in Russian

Long-distance scrambling can bring a constituent from an embedded clause into a variety of syntactic positions (see Bailyn 2020 for a recent in-depth discussion of Russian scrambling and its $\overline{\text{A}}$-properties). The PP *v Afriku* 'to Africa' in (7), for instance, occupies its base position in the embedded clause in (7a). It appears above the embedded complementiser *chto* 'that', presumably in Spec,CP, in (7b), or in the matrix clause, either below the matrix subject, as in (7c), or above it, as in (7d). This pattern is available in both affirmative and negated clauses.[2]

(7) a. Ya (ne) [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet **v** **Afriku**.]]
I (NEG) said that he will.go in Africa

b. Ya (ne) [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ **v** **Afriku** chto on poedet _.]]
I (NEG) said in Africa that he will.go

c. Ya **v** **Afriku** (ne) [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet _.]]
I in Africa (NEG) said that he will.go

d. **V** **Afriku** ya (ne) [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet _.]]
in Africa I (NEG) said that he will.go
'I said/didn't say that he would go to Africa.'

Now, if the directional PP *v Afriku* 'to Africa' is replaced by the negative directional adverbial *nikuda* 'nowhere' familiar from example (6) above, a different set of judgements results.

(8) a. *Ya ne [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet **nikuda**.]]
I NEG said that he nowhere go.FUT
('I did not say that he would go anywhere.')

[2]There is some variation in the degree to which native speakers are willing to accept the order in (7b) under negation. This is presumably entirely context dependent, since fronting the entire embedded clause makes the sentence fully acceptable:

(i) V Afriku chto on poedet ya ne govoril.
in Africa that he will.go I NEG said
'As regards him going to Africa, I did not say that.'

Because fronting the entire embedded clause is logically independent of fronting a constituent to Spec,CP of that clause and because there are speakers who readily accept the order in (7b) under negation, I conclude that the presence of matrix negation does not bleed scrambling to embedded Spec,CP.

b. *Ya ne [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ **nikuda** chto on poedet _.]]
I NEG said nowhere that he go.FUT

c. Ya **nikuda** ne [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet _.]]
I nowhere NEG said that he go.FUT

d. **Nikuda** ya ne [$_{vP}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet _.]]
Nowhere I NEG said that he go.FUT
'I did not say that he would go anywhere.'

All sentences in (8) contain an embedded declarative clause and a negative directional adverbial originating in it. When the negative directional adverbial appears *in situ* or in embedded Spec,CP, negative concord fails to be licensed, as in (8a–b). When the negative adverbial is linearised to the left of the sentential negation marker, however, the sentence becomes acceptable, as in (8c–d).[3] I argue that these facts create two problems for the theory of strict negative concord from Zeijlstra (2004) outlined in Section 2. I also argue that attempts to fix Problem 1 exacerbate Problem 2 and attempts to fix Problem 2 exacerbate Problem 1. I then show that later variants of the Upward Agree approach to strict negative concord such as Zeijlstra (2012) fare no better at handling the observed facts.

Problem 1: Acceptability of (8c–d) What examples (8c–d) have in common is the negative adverbial linearly preceding the negated matrix verb. Consequently, given the common assumption correlating linear precedence with c-command, an element with an uninterpretable [uNeg] feature c-commands an interpretable [iNeg] feature carried by the invisible negative operator $Op\neg$ in Spec,NegP.

(9) … *nowhere*$_{[uNeg]}$ … [$_{NegP}$ $Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$ *ne*$_{[\sout{uNeg}]}$ [$_{vP}$ said …]]
Agree

For Zeijlstra (2004), feature checking can only take place if the [uNeg] feature is locally c-commanded by an interpretable [iNeg] feature. The structure in (9), however, is not the configuration required by Zeijlstra (2004) for feature checking to obtain and should therefore lead to unacceptability, since the [uNeg] feature is not c-commanded by an [iNeg] feature and remains unchecked. Zeijlstra's (2004) system relying on Multiple (Upward) Agree undergenerates, as I discuss in some more detail in Subsection 4.3.

Problem 2: Unacceptability of (8b) The unacceptability of (8b) is unexpected on an Upward Agree analysis. We have seen in (7b) that the pre-complementiser position is an available target position for a scrambled constituent. This position is string ambiguous between the matrix vP, as in (10), and the embedded Spec,CP, a phase edge, as in (11).

[3] See Saito (2008) for a discussion of a similar interaction of negative-concord/NPI licensing and long-distance scrambling in Japanese. Space limitations preclude me from exploring the Russian and Japanese facts in tandem.

(10) *Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$ *ne*$_{[\sout{uNeg}]}$ [$_{vP}$ said *nowhere*$_{[\sout{uNeg}]}$ [$_{CP}$ that . . .]]]

Agree

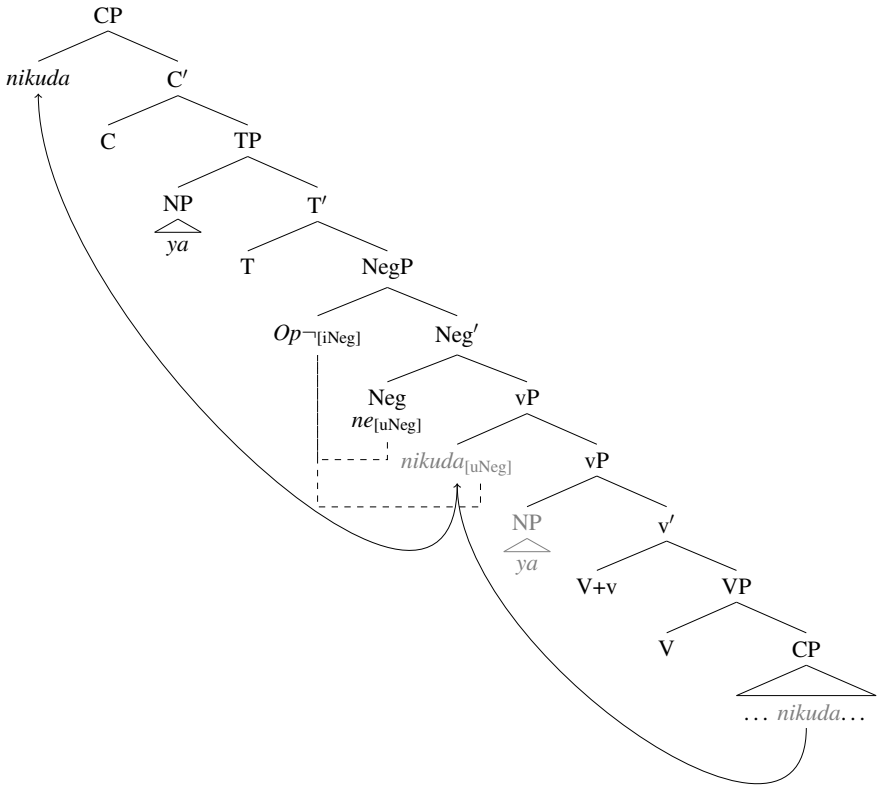
(11) *Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$ *ne*$_{[\sout{uNeg}]}$ [$_{\mathbf{vP}}$ said [$_{\mathbf{CP}}$ *nowhere*$_{[uNeg]}$ [$_{C'}$ that . . .]]]

Agree

It is likely, then, that the unacceptability of (8b) must be attributed to the failure of the negative directional adverbial *nikuda* 'nowhere' in either of these positions to be licensed by the matrix negation. Negative concord cannot be licensed by Upward Agree in (11) because of the Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2001): in that structure, the probe in embedded Spec,CP is separated from the goal by the matrix vP, a phase boundary.

This leaves us with the structure in (10), which, if available, could also help solve Problem 1 by ensuring that [uNeg] is checked by a c-commanding [iNeg] while in matrix Spec,vP, just under Neg and *Op*¬.[4] A more detailed version of (10) is given in (12):

(12)



Because the Russian verb in negated clauses moves to Neg (Gribanova 2017), the additional stopover in Spec,vP represented in (12) above can either precede or follow this movement, resulting

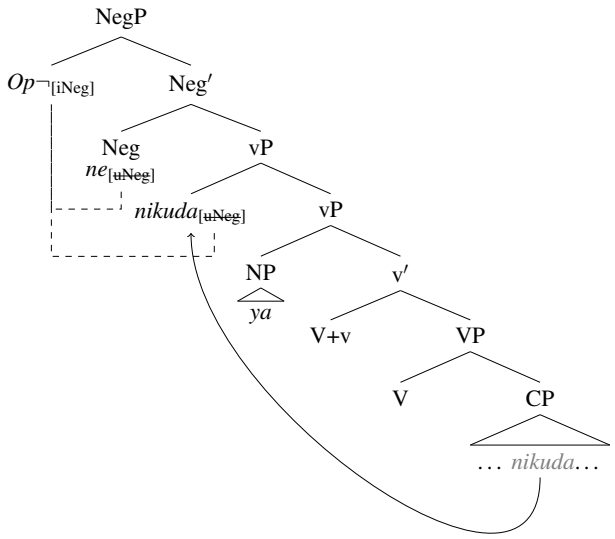
[4]It could be that (10) is an impossible structure and there simply is no vP-internal position distinct from Spec,vP for the scrambled constituent to move to (perhaps as an effect of a mixed A/$\overline{\text{A}}$-chain created by such a movement, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer). There would then be no structural source for the unacceptable order in (8b). This would solve Problem 2 but leave Problem 1 unresolved.

in different predictions, which I discuss below. Neither order of operations solves Problem 1 and Problem 2 simultaneously.

4.1 Scrambling Precedes Verb Movement to Neg

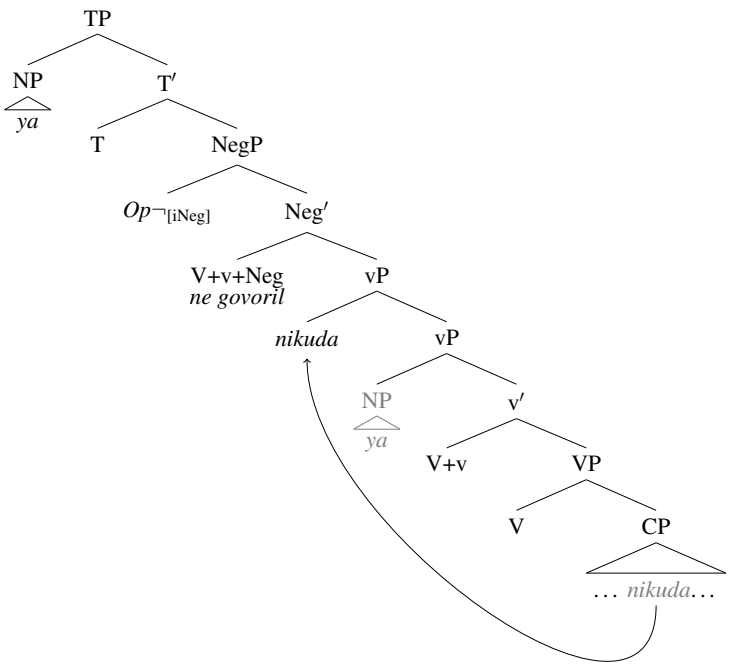
If scrambling proceeds cyclically via phase edges and targets the outer Spec,vP in the matrix clause prior to the verb moving to Neg, the word order in (8b) is predicted to be available, contrary to fact. First, as shown in (13), *nikuda* 'nowhere' moves to matrix Spec,vP, checking its [uNeg] feature via Upward Agree.

(13)



Once the [uNeg] on the negative adverbial has been checked, the verb can undergo head movement to Neg. Following verb movement and the movement of the matrix subject to Spec,TP (see Slioussar 2011 for evidence of EPP-driven subject movement to Spec,TP in Russian), the structure in (14) results. This is linearised as the unacceptable order in (8b).

(14)



What is noteworthy, there is in fact no reason other than negative-concord licensing for the negative adverbial to keep moving, since long-distance scrambled constituents are known to be pronounced in Spec,vP, as shown by (15).

(15) Ya chasto [$_{vP}$ **v** **Afriku** govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poekhal _]].
I often in Africa said that he went
'I often used to say that he had gone to Africa.'

In the absence of negation, the finite verb in Russian moves to v/Voice (Slioussar 2011, Gribanova 2017). The fact that the scrambled PP *v Afriku* 'to Africa' is linearised to the right of the adverb *chasto* 'often' and to the left of the finite verb *govoril* is consistent with it occupying the outer Spec,vP, exactly as schematised in (13), modulo the absent Neg head. Therefore, since there is no constraint independently forcing the scrambled constituent to vacate Spec,vP and move to a higher position, the word order in (8b) should be available, but it is not. Instead, the negative adverbial only moves to a higher position when negation is present. I conclude that allowing scrambling to precede verb movement to Neg does not interact well with Upward Agree, since Upward Agree overgenerates.

4.2 Scrambling Follows Verb Movement to Neg

If scrambling applies after the verb has moved to Neg, the result is the correct word order, either the one in (8c) or the one in (8d), but scrambling would then have to exceptionally target an outer Spec,NegP instead of Spec,vP so as to maintain the cyclicity of derivations and obey the Extension Condition. While this solves Problem 2, it brings back Problem 1, since the negative adverbial carrying a [uNeg] feature now lands higher in the structure than *Op*¬ carrying an [iNeg] feature. The

uninterpretable [uNeg] feature can then not be checked, and the predicted outcome, on Zeijlstra's (2004) uniformly Upward Agree analysis, is for the derivation to crash, contrary to what actually happens. I conclude that, irrespective of the derivational timing, the extraction of the negative adverbial to matrix Spec,vP does not rescue the Upward Agree approach to the licensing of strict negative concord in Russian.

We have seen so far that the interaction of long-distance scrambling with negative concord licensing in Russian cannot be accounted for by the approach in Zeijlstra (2004) whereby the abstract negative operator *Op*¬ occupies a fixed position, Spec,NegP. I now turn my attention to a later variant of that analysis whereby *Op*¬ is adjoined above the highest neg-word (Zeijlstra 2012) and show that it, too, faces insurmountable difficulties.

4.3 Dynamic Insertion of Abstract Negation

If the abstract negative operator *Op*¬ were merged into the structure after the negative directional adverbial had vacated the embedded clause and surfaced above matrix negation, the uninterpretable [uNeg] feature on it would unproblematically be checked against the operator's [iNeg] feature under Upward Agree, as in (16).

(16) *Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$ *nowhere*$_{[\text{~~uNeg~~}]}$ *ne*$_{[\text{~~uNeg~~}]}$ [$_{vP}$ said [$_{CP}$ that . . .]]

Agree

Allowing the operator to be merged above the scrambled constituent captures the acceptability of (8c–d) solving Problem 1 but it also creates additional problems.

Firstly, because the scrambled constituent in (8c–d) occurs in the C-domain, placing the operator above it makes wrong predictions with respect to the scope of negation and epistemic adverbials such as *navernoe* 'probably', as already observed by other authors (Rossyaykin 2020).

The next problem is related to the first one and concerns the scope of negation and NPI licensing. Russian NPIs such as the *libo*-indefinites are licensed (semantically, not syntactically, see Subsection 5.2 for details) in the scope of sentential negation and can in principle coöccur with neg-words, as the naturally-occurring example (17) illustrates.

(17) *Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$ Nikto$_{[uNeg]}$ chego-libo neobȳchnogo ne nameril.
nobody anything unusual NEG measured
'No one has measured anything unusual.' https://popgun.ru

Because the negative operator in (17) c-commands the subject neg-word and the object NPI, both are licensed. When a neg-word c-commands a subject NPI, as in (18), the result is unacceptable, which is unexpected if the negative operator is inserted above the highest neg-word and has the subject NPI in its scope.

(18) *Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$ Nikogda$_{[uNeg]}$ nikto /*kto-libo ne prikhodil.
never nobody anyone NEG came
'No one has ever come.'

Finally, inserting abstract operators at will creates a lookahead problem when it comes to explaining the unacceptability of (6), repeated here in modified form as (19).

(19) **Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$ ya ne$_{[uNeg]}$ govoril [chto on *Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$ poedet nikuda$_{[uNeg]}$]
I NEG said that he go.FUT nowhere
('I did not say that he would go anywhere.')

Once the embedded clause has been constructed, the abstract operator is predicted to be inserted above the highest neg-word in it to avoid a violation of Full Interpretation. Because the negation marker *ne* 'not' and the neg-word in this system are logically separated and are both probes carrying uninterpretable [uNeg] features, the computational system cannot know that there is another [uNeg] feature in a higher clause and must insert *Op*¬ to rescue the derivation. The unacceptable (19) is predicted to be acceptable.

I conclude that the abstract negative operator, if it exists at all, cannot be inserted dynamically above the highest neg-word but must instead be confined to a lower position such as Spec,NegP, exactly as originally proposed by Zeijlstra (2004). In that case all the criticisms levelled against that theory reëmerge.

I have shown in this section that deriving the strict negative concord facts in Russian using the machinery of Upward Agree is far less straightforward than claimed by Zeijlstra (2004, 2012), which is why strict negative concord cannot be taken as an argument in favour of reversing the directionality of Agree.

5. An Alternative via Downward Agree

This section presents an alternative view of strict negative concord in Russian, one based on Downward Agree whereby it is the probe that c-commands the goal, and not vice versa. The facts to be accounted for are the ability of matrix negation to license neg-words originating in a finite embedded clause and undergoing (long-distance) scrambling but only when their landing site is above the marker of sentential negation, and its inability to license those neg-words occupying lower, intermediate positions such as the matrix Spec,vP and embedded Spec,CP.

Firstly, since NCIs are phrasal, I assume that maximal projections can act as probes (Rezac 2003, Rudnev 2020a, Clem 2021, Keine and Dash 2022) so that the [uNeg] feature on an NCI's head could probe into the sister of the maximal projection rather than just in the head's c-command domain.

Secondly, I propose, following Rossyaykin (2020), that it is the sentential negation marker *ne* 'not' that is the real semantic negation carrying an [iNeg] feature against which all [uNeg] features can be checked, which is why no silent abstract negation operators need be postulated. I still assume

that the sentential negation marker spells out the negative functional head Neg to which the verb moves in negated sentences.

Let us see how a simple transitive clause with a direct-object NCI, such as (20), could be derived via Downward Agree. For the [uNeg] feature on the internal argument to be able to establish an Agree relation with the matching [iNeg] feature on the negation marker *ne* 'not', the NCI-object *nikogo* 'anyone/no one' must move to a position right above the negated verb (see Abels 2005, Bošković 2009, Rossyaykin 2020 for similar proposals).

(20) Ya nikogo$_{[uNeg]}$ ne$_{[iNeg]}$ videl __
I no one not saw
'I didn't see anyone.'

I shall have more to say about the postverbal placement of NCIs momentarily in Subsection 5.1 below.

Turning to the long-distance facts at the heart of this paper, if an NCI carrying a [uNeg] feature is generated in the embedded clause and stays there, Agree cannot obtain, since the basic structural condition on its application, *viz.* that the [uNeg]-probe should c-command the [iNeg]-goal, is not satisfied, and the unacceptability of (8a), repeated here as (21), follows.

(21) *Ya ne$_{[iNeg]}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet nikuda$_{[uNeg]}$.]
I NEG said that he go.FUT nowhere
('I did not say that he would go anywhere.')

If an NCI carrying a [uNeg] feature is generated in the embedded clause and subsequently moves to the embedded Spec,CP, the same result obtains, in spite of the fact that the movement to Spec,CP itself is licit. Because [uNeg] does not c-command [iNeg], sentence (8b), repeated here as (22), is unacceptable.

(22) *Ya ne$_{[iNeg]}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ nikuda$_{[uNeg]}$ chto on poedet _.]
I NEG said nowhere that he go.FUT
('I did not say that he would go anywhere.')

If the negative adverbial moves successive cyclically via the matrix Spec,vP, the same result obtains, as [uNeg] still does not c-command [iNeg]. The resulting word order is identical to (22) because the movement of the negative adverbial is further masked by the verb moving to Neg, as discussed in Section 4.1 above.

(23) *Ya [$_{NegP}$ ne$_{[iNeg]}$ govoril [$_{vP}$ nikuda$_{[uNeg]}$ t_V [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet _.]]]
I NEG said nowhere that he go.FUT
('I did not say that he would go anywhere.')

Once the negative adverbial carrying a [uNeg] feature moves past the negative head Neg, however, the [uNeg] feature can probe in its c-command domain and find the [iNeg] feature on the negative

head Neg. Because the basic structural condition on Agree has now been satisfied, both word orders in (8c–d), repeated here as (24), are acceptable.

(24) a. Ya nikuda$_{[uNeg]}$ ne$_{[iNeg]}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet _.]
I nowhere NEG said that he go.FUT

b. Nikuda$_{[uNeg]}$ ya ne$_{[iNeg]}$ govoril [$_{CP}$ chto on poedet _.]
Nowhere I NEG said that he go.FUT
'I did not say that he would go anywhere.'

The proposed alternative in terms of Downward Agree is compatible with a variety of approaches to Russian scrambling as well as Bošković's (2007) approach to successive-cyclic movement, whereby the intermediate steps of successive-cyclic wh-movement are motivated by the wh-items themselves. It also extends the existing movement-based analyses of local negative concord licensing in Slavonic by Abels (2005), Bošković (2009), Rossyaykin (2020) to the interaction of negative concord licensing and long-distance dependencies.

In the remainder of this section, I address two phenomena that might at first glance be taken to challenge the approach sketched above and be better amenable to the Upward-Agree analysis — postverbal neg-words and fragment answers — and show that they are not problematic.

5.1 Preverbal and Postverbal Neg-words

The movement approach to NCI-licensing sketched above easily derives the preverbally placed neg-words: having moved to a position c-commanding the sentential-negation marker and the [iNeg] feature it possesses, the neg-words can be spelled out in that position. Russian displaying a flexible word order, this linearisation pattern is indeed an attested one, as illustrated by (20) above.

Now, neg-words in strict negative concord languages may also occasionally appear postverbally, as in (25) below. While Upward Agree can derive such cases via *in-situ* licensing, exactly as shown in Section 2, the Downward Agree approach as sketched above requires an additional mechanism to capture the postverbal placement of NCI-objects. In that case, the postverbal position is a derived position string-identical with the base position.

(25) Ya ne videl nikogo
I not saw no one
'I didn't see anyone.'

There are several distinct ways of deriving the postverbal placement for the Rusian NCIs: rightwards movement/extraposition, remnant movement, verb movement, and covert movement. The first two mechanisms — rightwards movement and remnant movement — have been discussed in detail by Brown (2005) and Bošković (2009) respectively, which is why I do not discuss them here. I do not aim to determine what the division of labour between these mechanisms should be, as my sole concern in this subsection is to show that an analysis in terms of NCI licensing by movement is feasible. It also suffices to say that none of these mechanisms are *ad hoc* mechanisms specifically

intended to apply in the context of NCI licensing, since their domain of application is significantly broader.

Let us consider verb movement as a way of allowing the finite verb to be linearised to the left of the fronted NCIs. As required by the present analysis and as shown in (26), the NCI first moves above Neg to check its [uNeg], whereupon the verb undergoes head movement to a left-peripheral position in an instance of polarity focus (Gribanova 2017), this movement being accompanied by a pitch accent on the verb. Incidentally, Zeijlstra (2004:251–252) also uses verb movement to obtain the postverbal position of some NCIs in Czech, which is why an appeal to such a mechanism cannot be used as an argument against the Downward Agree approach contemplated here.

(26) [$_{CP}$ Ne VIdel [$_{TP}$ ya [$_{NegP}$ nikogo$_i$ [$_{VP}$ t$_V$ t$_i$]]]]
not saw I nobody
'I DIDn't see anyone.'

Finally, it is conceivable that the NCI should be able to move to a higher position for the purposes of NCI licensing covertly (Brown 1999), perhaps in an instance of lower copy pronunciation under the Copy Theory of Movement (Bobaljik 1995, 2002). This is sketched in (27), where the higher, unpronounced, copy appears in grey. As was the case with verb movement, the mechanism of covert movement also forms an integral part of the proposal in Zeijlstra (2004).

(27) [$_{TP}$ NP$_i$ [T [$_{NegP}$ NCI [Neg [$_{VP}$ t$_i$ [V NCI]]]]]]

While the mechanisms above responsible for yielding the postverbal position are different in some respects, what they all have in common is their predicted sensitivity to syntactic islands. Indeed, various authors have observed that NCI-licensing (though, crucially, not NPI-licensing) in Slavonic is impossible if an NCI appears inside a coordinate structure, a strong island (Rozhnova 2009, Rossyaykin 2021). The contrast between the acceptable (28a), where the NCI either modifies the entire coordinated NPs or has undergone ATB-movement leaving a gap in each conjunct, and the unacceptable (28b), where the NCI can only be construed as modifying the second conjunct, is a case in point.[5]

[5] Klaus Abels (p.c.) wonders why the entire coordination structure cannot inherit the [uNeg] feature and move as a whole to have that feature checked. While I am unable to answer this question at present, I would nevertheless like to note that pied-piping does not always ameliorate island violations. In particular, the pied-piped coordination in (i) below is hardly significantly better than the non-pied-piped wh-extraction in (ii):

(i) *What beverage and tiramisu did they order _?

(ii) *What beverage did they order _ and tiramisu?

(28) a. Ya ne nashël tam nikakikh deneg i/ili dragotsennosteĭ.
I not found there no money and/or treasures

b. *Ya ne nashël tam deneg i/ili nikakikh dragotsennosteĭ.
I not found there money and/or no treasures
'I did not find money there or any treasures.' (Rossyaykin 2021:96)

This is expected on the present approach, which requires movement for NCI-licensing, but unexpected on the Upward Agree approach, since coordinate structures are not barriers for agreement (see Nevins and Weisser 2019 for a comprehensive summary of attested agreement patterns with coordinated NPs). Clausal φ-probes can agree with individual conjuncts, as shown below for Slovenian first/highest conjunct agreement in (29a) and closest conjunct agreement in (29b).

(29) a. **Radirke** in peresa so se prodajal-**e** najbolje. [Slovenian]
erasers(F.PL) and pens(N.PL) AUX.PL REFL sold- F.PL the best

b. Radirke in **peresa** so se prodajal-**a** najbolje.
erasers(F.PL) and pens(N.PL) AUX.PL REFL sold- N.PL the best
'Erasers and pens sold the best.' (Marušič *et al.* 2015:40)

A detailed pointwise comparison of negative concord with other nonlocal dependencies (pronominal/variable binding, NPI-licensing and $\overline{\text{A}}$-movement) undertaken by Baykov (2022) further reveals that negative concord in Russian is sensitive to exactly the same additional locality constraints as wh-movement. A relevant syntactic environment is the interior of adjectival phrases (APs) in predicative and attributive positions. In Russian, APs in predicate positions are transparent for both wh-movement and negative concord, as illustrated in (30a) for wh-movement and in (30b) for negative concord.

(30) a. Na kogo novaya sosedka bȳla [$_{\text{AP}}$ udivitel'no pokhozha _]?
on whom new neighbour was strikingly similar
'Who did the new female neighbour strikingly resemble?'

b. Novaya sosedka ne bȳla [$_{\text{AP}}$ pokhozha ni na kogo iz aktris].
new neighbour not was similar on no one from actresses
'The new female neighbour did not resemble any of the actresses.'

When the same AP is used attributively to modify an NP, however, neither wh-movement nor NCI licensing is possible, as shown in (31a) for attempted wh-movement and (31b) for attempted negative concord.

(31) a. *Na kogo tȳ vchera vstretil [$_{NP}$ [$_{AP}$ pokhozhuyu _] sosedku]?
on whom you yesterday met similar neighbour
('Who did you meet yesterday a female neighbour resembling *t*?')

b. *Ya ne vstretil [$_{NP}$ [$_{AP}$ pokhozhuyu ni na kogo is aktris sosedku]].
I not met similar on no one from actresses neighbour
('I did not meet a female neighbour resembling any of the actresses.')

Based on the data and discussion above, I conclude that a movement analysis of the licensing of postverbal NCIs is feasible and requires no additional machinery. Before closing this subsection, however, I would like to address a prediction of the competing, Upward Agree, analysis with respect to the status of postverbal NCIs. Since the prediction in question is grounded in the status of NCI licensing via Upward Agree as an *in-situ* licensed dependency, we should establish some of the relevant properties of such dependencies.

For Zeijlstra (2004), postverbal NCIs are licensed *in situ* by a c-commanding operator, in a way reminiscent of the *in-situ* licensing of wh-items in languages like Japanese, exemplified in (32) below, where two wh-elements, *nanio* 'what' and *naze* 'why' are licensed by the question particle *no*.

(32) Kimi-wa nani-o naze katta no? [Japanese]
you-TOP what-ACC why bought Q
'(Lit.) What did you buy why?' (Takita *et al.* 2007:108)

Just like Russian fronted NCIs, Japanese wh-expressions can also be fronted under certain information-structural and discourse-structural conditions:

(33) Nani-o John-ga _ katta no? [Japanese]
what-ACC John-NOM bought Q
'What did John buy?' (Sabel 2001:ex. 3a)

All else being equal, the *in-situ* licensed NCIs in Russian are expected to be fully acceptable, preferred and frequent, just like Japanese *in-situ* licensed wh-expressions are preferred to and more frequent than their fronted/scrambled counterparts in the majority of environments. I now show that this is a wrong prediction, since it is the preverbal placement of NCIs which is actually more acceptable, preferred, frequent, and unmarked, as argued by Brown (1999, 2005) and as confirmed by every single native speaker of Russian I have queried.[6]

The observed preference for preverbal placement cannot be due to information-structural factors

[6]As elsewhere in this paper, I only discuss Russian strict negative concord here but the same preference for the fronted neg-words has been reported as holding in Polish (Dornisch 2001), Serbo-Croatian (Bošković 2009), Ukrainian (Filonik 2014). It is beyond the immediate concerns of this paper to examine the observed linear preferences of neg-words in other, non-Slavonic, languages with strict negative concord (Greek, Japanese, Hebrew, Hungarian) or their interactions with other aspects of the grammars of these languages. See some potentially relevant discussion by Maeda (2003), Nakajima (2020) for Japanese, Tsimpli and Roussou (1996) for Greek and Puskás (2012) for Hungarian.

such that the NCIs are licensed, *in situ*, postverbally, whereupon they move to a preverbal position for an independent reason. In the absence of NCIs, the 'default' subject-indirect object-direct object word order is an appropriate order to answer the question in (34), as evidenced by the acceptability of (34a). When the two objects are realised as NCIs, their most natural place is in the preverbal position, as shown in (34b). The affirmative (34a) and the negative (34b) also share a prosodic contour, and the indirect and direct objects in them are information-structurally identical. The postverbal NCI-objects in the same context, on the other hand, are barely acceptable and are incompatible with the same prosodic contour as in (34a) and (34b). Example (34c), where two NCIs, *nikomu* 'to nobody' and *nichego* 'nothing', occur postverbally, is a case in point.

(34) What do you give your coworkers for Christmas?

a. Ya daryu im sharfȳ.
I give them scarves
'I give them scarves.'

b. Ya nikomu nichego ne daryu.
I nobody nothing not give
'I do not give anything to anybody.'

c. ??Ya ne daryu nikomu nichego.
I not give nobody nothing

The postverbal position is acceptable if the verb receives prosodic emphasis, as in (35a), or the NCI is contained in a prosodically heavy NP, as in (35b).

(35) a. Ya ne daRYU nikomu nichego.
I not give nobody nothing
'I do not give anything to anybody.'

b. Ya nichego ne daryu nikomu iz prisutstvuyushchikh.
I nothing not give nobody from present
'I do not give anything to anybody present.'

The observed distribution of the judgements regarding the preverbal and postverbal NCIs is actually the opposite of what one would expect if they were simply licensed *in situ*.

Finally, to complete our analogy with the wh-movement *vs.* wh-in-situ languages with the view to evaluating the predictions of the *in-situ* Upward-Agree approach and the movement-based Downward-Agree approach, we can consider frequency data. The intuition is clear: assuming English wh-movement and Japanese wh-*in situ* are prototypical examples of movement-based and base-generated dependencies, the proportion of English wh-questions involving wh-movement is greater than the proportion of English wh-questions involving wh-*in situ* (and those *in-situ* wh-questions are restricted to marked environments such as 'quizmaster questions' or echo-questions). Similarly for Japanese, wh-*in situ* significantly outnumbers wh-movement (wh-movement being

information-structurally marked, as mentioned above). These differences manifest themselves in curated corpora. If Russian NCIs are licensed by movement, as suggested in this section, they are predicted to pattern with English wh-items in being more frequent in corpora than their *in-situ* counterparts. The Upward-Agree *in-situ* approach, on the other hand, predicts that Russian NCIs should pattern with Japanese wh-items in being more frequent *in situ*. In particular, in relation to multiple NCIs per clause, the *in-situ* Upward Agree approach whereby the postverbal placement reflects the default order predicts a higher proportion of postverbal NCIs than preverbal ones. The exact opposite is observed, however: a quick precise-correspondence search in the Russian National Corpus reveals a total of 805 sentences containing two consecutive NCIs, *nikomu nichego* 'to no one nothing', not separated from their licensing negation by a clause boundary. Of these 805 sentences, only 22, or 2.7%, display the postverbal placement, the remaining ones displaying the preverbal placement. The high proportion of preverbal NCIs shows that Russian NCIs parallel the behaviour of wh-items licensed by movement in languages like English, in accordance with the predictions of the movement-based Downward-Agree analysis sketched at the beginning of this section.

Having examined multiple sources of evidence, I take it as established that the facts discussed above receive a natural explanation on the movement approach to NCI-licensing. Upward-Agree *in-situ* approaches such as Zeijlstra's (2004) one, in contrast, are at a disadvantage since they require additional stipulations to accommodate the heavy preference for the preverbal placement of NCIs, the marked nature of postverbal NCIs and the island-sensitive character of NCI-licensing.

5.2 Fragment Answers

Another phenomenon with respect to which the Upward Agree analysis with the abstract operator and the Downward Agree analysis without such an operator make diverging predictions are fragment answers on the assumption that they are derived by clausal ellipsis (Merchant 2004). Fragment answers are important with respect to two logically separate issues: the recoverability of elided negation and the ability, or inability, of neg-words and NPIs to serve as fragment answers. I intend to show in this subsection that the first issue presents no challenge for the present approach and that the second issue actually threatens, rather than supports, the Upward Agree analysis in Zeijlstra (2004, 2012, 2022).

Recoverability of elided negation The first challenge posed by fragment answers for the two lines of analysis arises from the inherent nonnegativity of neg-words and the concomitant absence of semantic negation in the ellipsis remnant. This means that a negative proposition that has undergone ellipsis must be recovered on the basis of a nonnegative antecedent proposition, which is essentially an instance of a polarity mismatch/polarity reversal:

(36) A: Kogo tȳ videl? — B: Nikogo [~~ya~~ ~~ne~~ ~~videl~~ _].
who.ACC you saw No one I not saw
'Who did you see? — Nobody.'

Zeijlstra (2004, 2022) claims to solve this problem by allowing the semantically negative operator to remain in the ellipsis remnant while eliding the semantically nonnegative negation marker, as in (37) below. Because the negation marker is semantically nonnegative, there is no polarity mismatch between the antecedent clause in A and the ellipsis site in B.

(37) A: Kogo tȳ videl? — B: Nikogo $Op_{\neg[\text{iNeg}]}$ [~~ya~~ ~~ne~~ ~~videl~~ _].
who.ACC you saw No one I not saw
'Who did you see? — Nobody.'

Downward Agree analyses such as the one contemplated here, on the other hand, as well as operator-less Upward Agree approaches such as Szabolcsi 2018, appear to be at a disadvantage, since they analyse the negation marker *ne* in the ellipsis site as carrying the [iNeg] feature. The elided negation is thus not recoverable on the basis of the antecedent.

I should note that the recoverability problem outlined above only arises on a very specific approach to ellipsis licensing that requires *semantic* identity between antecedent and elided material in terms of e-GIVENness (Watanabe 2004, Merchant 2001), and there are multiple ways around it. Firstly, there is a growing body of evidence in the literature to the effect that semantic identity is neither necessary nor sufficient, and that certain mismatches between antecedent material and elided material are allowed as long as the mismatching material is in principle recoverable (Merchant 2013, Rudin 2019, Kroll 2020, Kroll and Rudin 2017, Ranero 2021, Landau 2023, Stockwell 2022, to appear). In the case at hand, recoverability is ensured by the Agree relation between the NCI in the ellipsis remnant and the Neg head properly contained in the ellipsis site in a manner fully parallel to φ-agreement, as shown in (38) below. In that example, a valued probe outside of the ellipsis site, *weren't*, makes the plural goal in the ellipsis site, *minibars*, recoverable by virtue of an overtly realised featural dependency. Exactly the same is happening in (36) above.

(38) In my room, there was a minibar available, but in my friends' rooms there weren't [~~minibars~~ ~~available~~].

Secondly, one might argue that negation in negative fragment answers is not part of the ellipsis site at all but is instead deleted by an additional mechanism akin to the mechanism bleeding T-to-C movement under matrix sluicing (Landau 2020). Because the negation marker in languages such as Russian or Japanese is effectively affixal, the relevant mechanism could be viewed as an instantiation of Lasnik's (1981) Stray Affix Filter (in brief, the negation marker is deleted because its verbal host is elided, see Rossyaykin 2022 for an analysis of Russian negative fragment answers along these lines). This is represented in (39), where the unpronounced negation is not contained in the ellipsis site, and semantic identity between the antecedent and the ellipsis site is respected.

(39) A: Kogo tȳ videl? — B: Nikogo ~~ne~~ [~~videl~~ _].
(~~ne~~: PF deletion; [~~videl~~ _]: ellipsis)
who.ACC you saw No one not saw
'Who did you see? — Nobody.'

If one of the above workarounds, or a combination of them, is pursued, then there is no difference between the Upwards and Downward Agree approaches to negative concord with respect to the recoverability of unpronounced negation.

Upward Agree and NPI fragments Unlike neg-words, which can be used as fragment answers, conventional NPIs are frequently taken to be incapable of being used as fragment answers. Upward-Agree approaches such as Zeijlstra (2004) claim to provide a natural explanation for this contrast. If this explanation is successful, then Upward-Agree approaches are superior to the approach sketched above. I show below, however, that the explanation, while accounting for non-strict negative concord languages, is nevertheless not successful when it comes to strict negative concord languages.

Zeijlstra (2004) *et seq.* argues that, unlike NCIs, which carry uninterpretable [uNeg] features, real NPIs are not licensed syntactically via a featural Agree relation with a local interpretable [iNeg] feature. Instead, they are licensed semantically by occurring in the scope of an [iNeg] element. The relevant contrast to be explained is provided in (40) below.

(40) A: What did you see there?
B: Nichego / #Chego-libo interesnogo.
nothing.GEN anything.GEN interesting.GEN
'What did you see there? — Nothing/#Anything interesting.'

As shown in (40), the NCI *nichego interesnogo* 'nothing interesting' is a felicitous fragment answer whereas the NPI *chego-libo interesnogo* 'anything interesting' is not a felicitous fragment answer.[7] Zeijlstra (2004:271) models the contrast between the NCIs and NPIs as fragment answers by appealing to the insertion of $Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$ in the process of structure building prior to ellipsis taking place, which is necessary to satisfy the featural requirements of NCIs. This ensures that all uninterpretable [uNeg] features are checked and the principle of Full Interpretation (Chomsky 1995) is satisfied. In the case of NPIs, however, no abstract operator is inserted, since NPIs carry no [uNeg] features in need of checking against [iNeg]. Depending on whether fragment answers are licensed *in situ* (Ginzburg and Sag 2000, Stainton 2006, Griffiths *et al.* 2023) or involve $\overline{\text{A}}$-movement (Merchant 2004), the fragment answers in (40) will have the syntax in (41) and (42) respectively; the *in-situ* structure in (41) will involve non-constituent ellipsis. It is crucial that full syntactic structure is projected prior to ellipsis taking place, in accordance with the ellipsis approach to fragment answers. The NCI fragment answer is correctly predicted to be acceptable because the NCI in both (41) and (42) carries an uninterpretable [uNeg] feature, which triggers the insertion of $Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$. The case of NPIs in languages like Russian is different, however: even in the absence of an NCI, the clause still contains, by hypothesis, another [uNeg] feature situated on the marker of sentential negation, which, too, should trigger the insertion of $Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$ to satisfy the principle of Full Interpretation. This

[7] The *libo*-NPIs can in principle instantiate felicitous fragment answers, at least in the judgements of some of the speakers I have consulted, when they are used to answer a negative question, see den Dikken *et al.* 2000 for the same observation regarding English NPIs.

operator, in turn, should suffice to license the *libo*-NPI, which is nevertheless unacceptable. The Upward-Agree analysis in (41) does not explain the unacceptability of NPIs as fragment answers, contrary to the claims in the literature.

(41)

	Agree					
Op¬$_{[iNeg]}$	~~Ya~~	~~ne$_{[uNeg]}$~~	~~uvidel~~	nichego$_{[uNeg]}$	/ chego-libo	interesnogo
	I	not	saw	nothing.GEN	anything.GEN	interesting.GEN

'~~I didn't see~~ anything interesting.'

In (42), illustrating the move-and-delete approach to fragment answers, the *libo*-NPI *chego-libo interesnogo* 'anything interesting' has undergone $\overline{\text{A}}$-movement to a left-peripheral position before the rest of the clause is elided.

(42)

		Agree			
Chego-libo	interesnogo	*Op*¬$_{[iNeg]}$	[~~ya~~	~~ne$_{[uNeg]}$~~	~~uvidel~~ __]
anything.GEN	interesting.GEN		I	not	saw

'Anything interesting [~~I didn't see~~].'

Now, because the negation marker *ne* 'not' in (42), just like its counterpart in (41), carries an uninterpretable [uNeg] feature, the abstract negative operator carrying an interpretable [iNeg] feature is inserted, checking the [uNeg] on the negation marker *and* semantically licensing the *libo*-NPI in its base position. Consequently, the move-and-delete Upward-Agree approach to fragment answers incorrectly predicts such NPI-fragment answers to be acceptable, just as the *in-situ* Upward-Agree approach to fragment answers incorrectly predicted NPI-fragment answers to be acceptable. The Downward-Agree analysis developed in this paper, on the other hand, does not make this prediction.

I conclude that fragment answers do not provide a litmus test for choosing the correct analysis of NCI-licensing and not only do not threaten the Downward-Agree approach sketched in this section but also undermine the existing approaches based on Upward Agree.

6. Conclusion

This contribution has explored strict negative concord, a central argument for reversing the direction of Agree so that feature-defective probes must be c-commanded by feature-complete goals (Zeijlstra 2004, 2012), in Russian, a prototypical strict negative concord language. We have seen that the usual locality restriction on the licensing of negative concord can be circumvented by moving an NCI from a nonnegative embedded clause into a negative matrix clause but only if the eventual landing site c-commands the marker of sentential negation. I have shown that the attested distribution of acceptable and unacceptable word orders is problematic for Upward Agree since Upward Agree predicts the available orders to be unavailable and the unavailable ones to be available, but is straightforwardly compatible with Downward Agree. If strict negative concord in Russian and

languages like it is to be modelled via Agree, it is Downward Agree which has the upper hand. This invalidates one of the main arguments for Upward Agree.

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