Core and peripheral disjunction strategies and sentential negation in Russian

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Introduction

- an elegant pattern noticed by Anna Szabolcsi as far as the interpretation of disjunction is concerned
- spotting potential counterexamples and trying to see how they fit

Disjunction and negation crosslinguistically (Szabolcsi, 2002; Szabolcsi, 2004)

English

(1) James doesn't speak Russian or German.
'James speaks neither Russian nor German' (preferred)
'James doesn't speak Russian or James doesn't speak German' (marginal)

Hungarian (Szabolcsi and Haddican, 2004)

(2) *Mari nem járt hokira vagy algebrára*
Mari not went hockey-to or algebra-to

'Mary didn't take hockey and didn't take algebra.'
'Mary didn't take hockey or didn't take algebra.'

Polarity is at the core of the distinction

- disjunction word is a PPI in Hungarian but not in English or Dutch

PPI anti-licensing

- **Anti-licensing:** PPIs cannot be interpreted under the immediate scope of a non-embedded sentential negation.

(3)   Mary does not speak some foreign languages.

$\rightarrow$ there are some foreign languages that Mary does not speak.

NNRs in Hungarian (Szabolcsi, 2002)

Szabolcsi (2002) and Szabolcsi (2004) claim that Hungarian *vagy* does allow NNRs.

(4) Biclausal structures:

Nem	*hiszem,*	*hogy*	*becsuktuk*	*volna*	*az*	*ajtót*	*vagy*	*az*
not	think.1SG	that	in.closed.1PL	AUX	the	door.ACC	or	the

ablakot.
window.ACC

'I don't think we closed the door or the window.'

(5) Secondary predication

Nem	*tart-om*	*János-t*	*bátor-nak*	*vagy*	*okos-nak.*
nog	consider-1SG	John-ACC	brave-DAT	or	smart-DAT

'I don't consider John brave or smart.'

$\rightarrow$ Hungarian *vagy* is a positive polarity item akin to *some* in English

Going back to Russian

Distilled into a generalisation, Russian monoclausal sentences involving and *or* word under negation

- ▶ are acceptable, and
- ▶ have no *neither... nor...* reading (NNR)

Aims for today

- adduce more data to refine the generalisation
- discuss a number of environments where the English-like interpretation is available
- as well as other factors of relevance

Generalisation part I: Is (1) acceptable in Russian?

TVJ task reported by Verbuk (2006):

(6) *On ne   govorit po-russki ili po-nemecki.*
     he   not speaks   Russian   or   German

   = 'He doesn't speak Russian or he doesn't speak German'

- ► My intuition (confirmed by a dozen speakers): () is bad unless there's a pause before *ili*
- ► But then an alternative structure is available
- ► Let's assume for the moment that the sentence is perfect and revisit this judgement later

Is (1) acceptable in Russian?

Alternative structure for *or* $> \neg$

Two clausal disjuncts + ellipsis

(7) [*On   ne   govorit po-russki*] *ili* [~~*on ne govorit*~~   *po-nemecki*]
     he   not speaks Russian   or   he not speaks German

- ▶ the '*or* > ¬' interpretation falls out naturally
- ▶ there are nice processing experiments to help us decide (Hoeks et al., 2006)

Is (1) acceptable in Russian?

Alternative structure for *or* > ¬

- ▶ Two clausal disjuncts + ellipsis

(8) [*On ne   govorit po-russki*] *ili* [~~*on ne govorit*~~   *po-nemecki*]
    he   not speaks Russian   or   he not speaks   German

- ▶ the '*or* > ¬' interpretation falls out naturally
- ▶ there are nice processing experiments to help us decide (Hoeks et al., 2006)

Factor of relevance 1: word order and scope

- ► Russian is an overt scope language, -ish
- ► Fronting the disjunction ameliorates judgement:

(9) [*Po-russki ili po-nemecki*] *on ne govorit*   [NNR]
     Russian   or German   he not speaks

   'Russian or German, he doesn't speak.'

- ► overt scope paradox: fronting the disjunction should change scope relations, yet the disjunction scopes under the negation,
- ► which it couldn't do from its original position.

Exceptional NNRs (Letuchiy, 2015)

Russian copular clauses with overt copula (i.e. in past and future tenses)

(10) *on ne byl / budet vorom ili mošennikom* [NNR]
     he NEG be.PST:M:SG / be.FUT.SG thief or crook

    'He {was/will be} neither a thief nor a crook.'

Russian copular clauses without overt copula (i.e. present tense)

(11) ** on ne vor ili mošennik*
     he NEG thief or crook

    ('He isn't a thief or a crook.')

Exceptional NNRs: other instances of predication

(12) *Ja ne ščitaju* [*pivo vrednym ili protivnym*]   [NNR]
     I   not consider   beer harmful or nasty

'I do not consider beer harmful or nasty.'

(13) *Ja ne videl* [*Vanju v šljape ili parike*]   [NNR]
     I   not saw   Vanya in hat   or wig

'I haven't seen Vanya in a hat or a wig.'

(14) *Ja ne jem* [*mjaso syrym ili peregotovlennym*]   [NNR]
     I   not eat   meat raw   or   overcooked

'I do not eat meat raw or overcooked.'

Neither... nor... readings in present tense

(15) * *on ne vor ili mošennik*
      he NEG thief or crook

    ('He isn't a thief or a crook.')

  ▶ conjunction of negations

(16) *on ne vor i ne mošennik*
     he not thief and not crook

    'He isn't a thief or a crook.'

Factor of relevance 2: Modifying one disjunct with an indefinite

- ▶ if one disjunct is modified with an indefinite, the copulaless sentence becomes acceptable and only has the NNR.

(17) a. *on ne   vor   ili kakoj-nibud' mošennik*
          he not thief or   some   crook

      b. *on ne   kakoj-nibud' vor   ili mošennik*
          he not some   thief or   crook

      'He isn't some thief or crook.'

Factor of relevance 2: Modifying one disjunct with an indefinite

- The indefinite brings in a decidedly depreciative or pejorative flavour to the sentence.
- Not all indefinite series in Russian are suited for this, but the *-to* and *-nibud'* indefinites seem OK

(18)   a.   *on ne vor ili mošennik kakoj-to*
           he not thief or some   crook

        b.   *on ne vor kakoj-to ili mošennik*
            he not some thief   or crook

           'He isn't some thief or crook.'

Factor of relevance 2: Modifying one disjunct with an indefinite

- The word order NP-indefinite seems to be relevant: the *-to*-indefinites do not precede the NP they modify unless they are followed by the adverbial *tam* 'there'.

(19) a. *on ne   vor   ili kakoj-to* *(*tam*) *mošennik*
          he not thief or   some   there   crook

     b. *on ne   kakoj-to* *(*tam*) *vor   ili mošennik*
          he not some   there   thief or   crook

Factor of relevance 2: Modifying one disjunct with an indefinite

► The word order NP-indefinite seems to be relevant: the
  -to-indefinites do not precede the NP they modify unless they are
  followed by the adverbial *tam* 'there'.

(20)   a.   *on ne vor ili kakoj-to* *(*tam*) *mošennik*
           he not thief or some   there   crook

       b.   *on ne kakoj-to* *(*tam*) *vor ili mošennik*
           he not some   there   thief or crook

Summary

- NNRs available in sentences with overt predicator
- disjunction in sentences without overt copula leads to unacceptability
- which can be remedied by supplying one of the disjuncts with an indefinite
- we should probably be looking at theories whereby disjunction and indefinites have a common core (e.g. or some variants of inquisitive semantics, e.g. Ciardelli, Groenendijk, and Roelofsen, 2013).

Complications

Two *or* words: *ili* and *libo*

Russian has several disjunction markers

(21) a.   *vor* **ili** *mošennik*
             thief or crook

         b.   *vor* **libo** *mošennik*
               thief or   crook

(22) a.   **ili** *vor* **ili** *mošennik*
             or thief or crook

         b.   **libo** *vor* **libo** *mošennik*
             or   thief or crook

Multiple *or*-words

- The difference between *ili* and *libo* is frequently described as having to do with **exclusivity**: *libo* is, unlike *ili* obligatorily exclusive.
- Polysyndetic *ili* is, however, typically exclusive as well.

In addition, there are also other disjunction strategies than simply using an *or*-word. *to li X to li Y X li, Y li* Their relevance for the issue at hand remains to be investigated.

Other *or*-words and negation in copular clauses

(23) a. *On ne byl vorom libo mošennikom*
     he NEG was thief.INS or crook.INS

  b. **On ne vor libo mošennik*
     he NEG thief or crook

(24) a. *On ne byl to li vorom to li mošennikom*
     he NEG was or thief.INS or crook.INS

  b. **On ne to li vor to li mošennik*
     he NEG or thief or crook

Concluding remarks

- ▶ Russian *ili* behaves like Hungarian *vagy* in allowing NNRs when sufficiently far away from a c-commanding negation, including copular clauses

- ▶ Outside of such environments, many speakers perceive sentences with *ili* under negation as degraded.

- ▶ Not entirely clear if that degradedness is problematic for analysis of disjunction markers in Hungarian and Russian as double NPIs.

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