

Three kinds of event nominal negation in Russian¹

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Topic: event nominals, their negation and their meaning under negation, exemplified by negative event nominals in Russian.

1. Event nominals and their negation

Event nominals: the term ascends to Grimshaw 1990, but here is used in an extended manner: all the nouns that can denote situations (eventualities) of different kinds, whether deverbal or non-derived, telic or atelic, dynamic or static, are event nominals (1)².

(1) *vypolnenie* ‘fulfillment’
priezd ‘coming’
znanie ‘knowing’

uspex ‘success’
napadenie ‘aggression’
sootvetstvie ‘conformity, accordance’

The distinction of simple event nominals (SENs) and complex event nominals (CENs) will be ignored:

- as has been shown (see A. Alexiadou 2001, 2004), the former, as well as the latter, also have aspectual structure;
- Russian deverbal nominals derived from transitive verbs, from intransitive ones and underived situation-denoting nominals share a lot of properties, and behaviour under negation is one of them.

Negation: Almost every event nominal can be negated by attaching negative prefix *ne*-³:

(2) *nevypolnenie* ‘non-fulfillment’
nepriezd ‘non-coming, failure to come’
neznanie ‘not knowing, ignorance’

neuspex ‘failure, lack of success’
nenapadenie ‘non-aggression’
nesootvetstvie ‘discrepancy’

¹ I am grateful to Elena Paducheva, Sergey Tatevosov and Igor Yanovich, whose discussions and observations on the matters discussed here have been very useful. I would like as well to thank the symposium reviewers for their profitable comments.

² I realize that using the term “event nominal” for stative atelic situation-denoting nouns can evoke some misunderstanding, but I’ll still do it for a lack of better word(s). Its use can be justified as referring not to “event”, but to “eventuality” (in the sense of Bach 1981, 1986). When speaking about dynamicity and telicity in the sense of e.g. Krifka 1998, 2001, I’ll use these explicit terms, or the term “eventive” to refer to telic eventualities (“events proper”). The use of word “event” here has nothing to do with the fact-proposition-event distinction (cf. Zucchi 1993, Vendler 1968, Peterson 1997).

³ Cf. its English counterparts discussed, a.m.o., in Zucchi 1993: 23-25, 184-187, Baeuerle 1987, Higginbotham 1996, Stockwell, Schachter & Partee 1973, Horn 1989: 53-55, Polish ones in Przepiórkowski 1999.

Negative prefix in Russian is a distinctive feature of “nominal” parts of speech: nouns (3a), adjectives (3b), and adverbs (3c). Some quite idiomatic cases excluded, neither finite verbs, nor infinitives or adverbial participles can attach the negational prefix (4):

- (3) a. **ne**-drug ‘enemy’ b. **ne**-vysokij ‘not high’ c. **ne**-xorosho ‘badly’
 NEG-friend NEG-high NEG-well
- (4) a. *Petja **ne**-priexal. b. *Petja xochet **ne**-priexat’.
 Peter NEG-come Peter wants NEG-come.INF
 (intended) *Peter has not come.* (intended) *Peter wants not to come.*
- c. *Petja, **ne**-priexav, rasstroil nas.
 Peter NEG-come.ADV upset we.ACC
 (intended) *Peter, having not come, upset us.*

Deverbal nouns pattern together with nouns and adjectives, and not with verbs, in allowing negative particles, which cannot be separated with anything (6) — cf. with negative pronouns allowing insertion of propositions inside (5):

- (5) a. Mne **ne**-komu podarit’ knigu.
 I.DAT non-who.DAT give book
 I have no one to give him a book.
- b. Mne **ne** k komu pojti.
 I.DAT non to who.DAT go
 I have no one to go to.
- (6) a. My gotovy k **ne**-priezdu Peti.
 We ready to non-arrival Peter.GEN
 We are ready to Peter’s non-arrival.
- b. #My gotovy **ne** k priezdu Peti.
 We ready not to arrival Peter.GEN
 *It is not Peter’s arrival we are ready to. / *We are ready to Peter’s non-arrival.*

Thus, the opposition between particle *ne* and prefix *ne*- is not just an orthographical convention.

2. Attested types

As can be seen from English translations of the negative event nominals in (2), they are different in how the negation combines with the meaning of the positive nominal. Three groups can be distinguished:

- (i) stative negative nominals (‘negative state’): *neznanie* ‘not knowing, ignorance’, *nesootvetstvie* ‘discrepancy’;
- (ii) eventive negative nominals (‘failure to’): *nevypolnenie* ‘non-fulfillment’, *nepriezd* ‘non-coming, failure to come’, *neuspex* ‘failure, lack of success’;
- (iii) existential negative nominals (‘no occurrence of the event on some long interval’): *nenapadenie* ‘non-aggression’.

Let’s look at these types in more detail.

2.1. Stative negative nominals (i)

Source: stative event nominals.

Meaning: a state that is characterized by that the state denoted by the positive nominal does not hold. Semantically, the negation in these case is contrary (Geach 1969), or idiomatic (Boguslavsky 1985) in that it inverts the properties of the state denoted by the initial positive nominal, therefore creating a new state referred to by the negative nominal.

More examples:

- (7) *naxozhdenie* ‘being (at some place)’ — ***nenaxozhdenie*** ‘not being (at some place)’
zavisimost’ ‘dependence’ — ***nezavisimost’*** ‘independence’
prinadlezhnost’ ‘membership, affiliation’ — ***neprinadlezhnost’*** ‘non-membership’

Typical contexts: same as for all the (stative) event nominals, e.g. verbal actants (8).

- (8) *Prinadlezhnost’* ili ***ne-prinadlezhnost’*** *grazhdan* k
membership or NEG-membership citizen.GEN.PL to
obshchestvennym *objedinenijam* ne *mozhetsluzhit’osnovaniem*
social institution.DAT.PL not can serve reason.INSTR
dlja *ogranichenija* ix *prav* i *svobod.*
for limitation their right.PL freedom.PL

Membership or non-membership of citizens in social institutions cannot be a reason for limiting their rights and freedoms.

Pluralization&collocations: no plural form (9ab), adjectives referring to time period are possible (9cd), adjectives of repetition are completely out (9e).

- (9) a. *neznanie* ‘not knowing, ignorance’ — **neznaniya* ‘ignorance.PL’
b. *nezavisimost’* ‘independence’ — **nezavisimosti* ‘independence.PL’
c. *mnogo-let-nee* *ne-sootvetstvie* ‘discrepancy which holds for many years’
many-year-ADJ NEG-accordance
d. *dlitel’naya* *ne-milost’* ‘long lasting disfavour’
long.term NEG-favour
e. **mnogokratnaya* *ne-milost’* Int. ‘repeated disfavour’
repeated NEG-favour

2.2. Eventive negative nominals (ii)

Source: telic event nominals.

Meaning: an event consisting in that the expected event denoted by the positive nominal fails to occur. For agentive predicates this either means refusal of the agent to perform the action, or a failed attempt. Here the negation is contradictory and close to the verbal one in that the negative nominal tells us that the event denoted by the initial positive nominal failed to take place.

More examples:

- (10) *javka* ‘appearance’ — *nejavka* ‘failure to appear’
vyplata ‘payment’ — *nevyplata* ‘non-payment’
popadanie (v cel’) ‘hitting (the target)’ — *nepopadanie* ‘missing (the target)’

Typical context: conditional adjunct *v sluchae...* ‘in case of’, *pri* ‘by’ (11), other non-assetive contexts.

- (11) Pri **ne-dostizhenii** soglashenija zainteresovannoe lico
 by NEG-achievement.PREP agreement.GEN concerned person
 vprave obratit'sja v sud
 has.a.right address to court

In case of failure to reach an agreement the person concerned has a right to apply to court.

Pluralization&collocations: easily pluralize with meaning ‘many instances when the event was expected but failed to take place’ (12ab), cooccur with adjectives of repetition (12cd), but not with adjectives of time period (12e).

- (12) a. *nejavka* ‘failure to appear’ — *nejavki* ‘failures to appear’
 b. *nevyplata* ‘non-payment’ — *nevyplaty* ‘non-payments’
 c. *reguljarnoe nesobljudenie instrukcii* ‘regular non-observance of the instruction’
 d. *mnogokratnoe nevypolnenie sluzhebnyx objazannostej* ‘repeated non-fulfillment of office duties’
 e. *#mnogoletnee nesobljudenie instrukcii* ‘regular non-observance of the instruction (as a matter of policy or habit)’

(12e) is in fact possible, but the nominal shifts its meaning into existential negative (type iii).

2.3. Existential negative nominals (iii)

Source: telic event nominals (same as for ii).

Meaning: a long time interval during which there exist no moment *t* when the event denoted by the positive nominal occurs. Semantically the most complicated type, as it denotes a sort of “generic state” (Vendler 1967), a generic abstraction on different instances of non-occurring of the event denoted by the initial nominal (see Smith 1975, Carlson 1977).

More examples:

- (13) *vmeshatel'stvo* ‘interference’ — *nevmeshatel'stvo* ‘non-interference’
rasprostranenie ‘proliferation’ — *nerasprostranenie* ‘non-proliferation’
razglashenie ‘disclosure’ — *nerazglashenie* ‘non-disclosure’

Typical context: long-term agreements, description of policy or general attitude.

- (14) Poxozhe, chto politika **ne-vmeshatel'stva** v dela
 look.like that policy NEG-interference.GEN into affair.PL
 sosednej strany, kotoruju Rossija nachala provodit',
 neighbour country which Russia begin.PST follow.INF
 prinosit plody.
 bring.PRS benefit.PL

It looks as if the policy of non-interference which Russia began to follow brings benefits.

Pluralization&Collocations: don't pluralize (15ab), cooccur with adjectives of time period (15cd), but not those of repetitivity (15e).

- (15) a. *nevmeshatel'stvo* 'non-interference' — **nevmeshatel'stva* int. 'non-proliferations'
 b. *nerasprostranenie* 'non-proliferation' — **nerasprostraneniya* 'non-proliferations'
 c. *mnogoletnee nerasprostranenie* 'non-proliferation lasting for many years'
 d. *dlitel'noe nevmeshatel'stvo* 'long-lasting non-proliferation'
 e. **mnogokratnoe nerasprostranenie* Int. 'repeated non-proliferation'

3. Contextual modifications

The distinction between eventive negative nominals and existential negative nominals is not so strict: they are formed from the same class of telic nominals; therefore one and the same positive nominal can potentially derive negative nominals of any of the two types. Our classifications above reflect only statistically more common usages, in fact nouns of the both types can be attested in both “eventive” (16) and “existential” (17) contexts.

- (16) a. *v sluchae ne-vypolneni-ja plan-a*
 in case non-fulfillment-GEN plan-GEN
 'in case if the plan fails to be fulfilled'
 b. *v sluchae ne-razglasheni-ja shpion-om tain-y*
 in case non-disclosure-GEN spy-INSTR secret-GEN
 'in case if the spy fails to disclose the secret'
- (17) a. *Ja podgovor-il ego na sistematicheskoe ne-vypolneni-e plan-a*
 I incite-PST he.ACC to systematic non-fulfillment-ACC plan-GEN
 'I incited him to systematic non-fulfillment of the plan'
 b. *My dogovori-li-s' o ne-razglasheni-i tain-y*
 we come.to.agreement-PST-REFL about non-disclosure-PREP secret-GEN
 'we came to an agreement about non-disclosure of the secret'

4. Aspectual properties

Main differences among the three attested types of negative nominals lie in the lexical aspectual domain, i.e. in the domain of actionality: they differ with respect to the actional properties of the negative and the initial positive nominals.

- Stative negative nominals (i) are stative themselves (it is proved by their inability to pluralize⁴ and barring of repetitive adjectives) and derived from stative nominals.
- Eventive negative nominals (ii) are telic and ascend to telic events as well: they can pluralize and cooccur with adjectives of repetitiveness (18).

- (18) *vypolnenie* 'fulfillment' — *vypolneniya* 'fulfillments, instances of fulfillment'
javka 'appearance' — *javki* 'appearances, different instances of appearance'

⁴ This criterion, however rough, can be used as a first approximation; see e.g. Esau 1973 for the same phenomenon in German, Brinton 1995 for English.

- Existential negative nominals (iii) are similar to stative negative nominals in that they are also stative (as their incompatibility with adjectives of repetitivity shows), but they share with the eventive negative nominals the property of being derived from a telic source (19).
- (19) *razglashenie* ‘disclosure’ — *razglashenija* ‘disclosures, different instances of disclosure’.
- The difference between eventive negative nominals (ii) and existential negative nominals (iii) consists in the interval of evaluation: the former are evaluated immediately when the expected event fails to take place, whereas the latter require a long-term interval to be evaluated.
 - The last is also true for those of stative negative nominals compatible with adjectives referring to long terms.
 - This distinction in interval of evaluation resembles that of individual-level vs. stage-level predicates (see Carlson 1977, Krifka et al. 1995): eventive negative nominals that denote individual events are counterparts of stage-level predicates in the verbal domain, while existential negative nominals that are evaluated on long time intervals correspond to individual-level predicates.
 - Eventive negative nominal describe an instance, a moment of time when the event was expected, had a possibility to occur but failed to.
 - Existential negative nominals, like individual-level predicates, refer to a characteristic of the person or object involved in the situation and don’t need to be exemplified by an occurrence when the person/object in fact doesn’t perform the negated action.

5. No negative: processes

Interestingly, nominals that don’t attach negative *ne-* form a natural class describable in terms of actionality: these are atelic dynamic nominals (names of processes):

- (20) *kormlenie* ‘feeding’ — **nekormlenie* int. ‘failure to feed’/ ‘habit to not to feed’
podmetanie ‘sweeping’ — **nepodmetanie* int. ‘failure to sweep’/ ‘habit to not to sweep’
xrapenie ‘snoring’ — **nexrapenie* int. ‘failure to snore’/ ‘habit to not to snore’

An explanation for this is that process nominals cannot (for semantic reasons) attach neither contrary, nor contradictory negation. They are incompatible with contrary negation since inversion of a process to make negative another process is impossible, as far as processes don’t form scales with plus and minus characteristics.

Contradictory negation (of any type, eventive or existential) can be just out for atelic eventualities for the reason that they don’t denote an eventuality that has enough material in it. What is needed for a contradictory negation is some common domain on which the contradiction is defined. For a word like *nejavka* ‘non-appearance’ this domain is constituted by at least the time and place someone was expected to appear (be it described in terms of possible worlds or whatever). The

meaning of this negative nominal, contradiction to *javka* ‘appearance’, will be the same domain without the appearance itself. For processes, however, such a domain fails to be built, since a process doesn’t have a strict temporal localization.

6. Conclusions

We have discussed event nominals, their negation and their meaning under negation. As our Russian data suggest, there are three ways to (semantically) combine negative marker with an event nominal, depending on the meaning of the nominal itself and requirements of the context:

- (1) stative negative nominals, denoting a state that is characterized by that some other state denoted by the positive nominal does not hold: *neznanie* ‘not knowing, ignorance’;
- (2) eventive negative nominals, denoting an event consisting in that some other event denoted by the positive nominal and probably expected fails to occur: *nevypolnenie* ‘non-fulfillment’;
- (3) existential negative nominals, denoting a long time interval during which there exist no moment *t* when the event denoted by the positive nominal occurs: *nenapadenie* ‘non-aggression’.

These differences are driven by aspectual factors, i.e. by aspectual properties of the initial positive noun and the requirements of the context the negative is built into. Even the non-compatibility of negation with processual situations can be explained in aspectual terms.

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