Wh-indefinites in Russian
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Wh-indefinites have the morphological shape of a wh-word and the interpretation of an indefinite. A postverbal *kto* in (1a) is understood as an indefinite pronoun in the context of a YN question. In (1b), the sentence-initial *kto* is interpreted as a wh-word. In addition to (1a), a YN question, four other contexts reportedly enable licensing of wh-indefinites (data from Hengeveld *et al.* 2018, Yanovich 2005): (i) antecedents of conditionals in (2a); (ii) epistemic adverbs in (2b); (iii) subjunctives in (2c); (iv) complements of negated predicates (e.g., under *ne požože*) in (2d).

(1)   a. Prišel **kto**?   b. Kto prišel?
           came who$_{indef}$ who came
           'Did anybody come?'   'Who came?'

(2)   a. Esli **kto**   pridet, pozovi menja.
           if   who$_{indef}$ comes call   me
           'If anybody comes, call me.'

       b. Možet, **kto**   prixodil.
           maybe who$_{indef}$ came
           'Maybe somebody came.'

       c. Petja zaper dver', čtoby **kto**   ne vošel.
           Petja locked door   that$_{subj}$ who$_{indef}$ neg entered
           'Peter locked the door, lest somebody enter.'

       d. Ne poxože, čto Vasja **kogo**   uvidel.
           neg similar that Vasja whom$_{indef}$ saw
           'It does not look like Vasja saw anybody.'

First, I demonstrate that existing empirical generalizations do not quite capture the range of environments where wh-indefinites are licit. Second, I argue that wh-indefinites are licensed by a sufficiently local operator introduced in the clausal domain. Wh-indefinites are (weak) NPIs eligible to appear in a subset of nonveridical contexts (in the sense of Giannakidou 1998). A nonveridical operator is defined in (3) (ibid: 106). It entails a lower degree of epistemic commitment to *p*, but not necessarily the falsity of *p*. This paper concentrates on the syntactic properties of these operators.

(3)   *Op* is nonveridical iff *Op* does not entail *p*, i.e. iff whenever *Op p* is true, *p* may or may not be true.

New data. Contrary to standard assertions, wh-indefinites are possible in wh-interrogatives. This construal is only available in **rhetorical wh-questions**, as in (4a), which corresponds to a negative assertion in (4b). This reading can be forced by prosody (a sharp rising tone on the first wh-word, a glottal closure after the stress-bearing *kto*, and a pitch fall thereafter) and a pragmatically marked particle da. Following Han (1998), I assume that *who* maps onto a negative quantifier that scopes over the entire proposition. I suggest that it is this environment that enables the second wh-word (*kogda*) to function as the indefinite (shown in (4c)).

(4)   a. Da **kto** emu   kogda   takoe delo doverit?
           da who to.him when$_{indef}$ this   job entrusts
           'And who will ever entrust this job to him?'

       b. = Nobody will ever entrust this job to him.

       c. ¬∃[x will when$_{indef}$ entrust this job to him]

It is also not the case that all subjunctive contexts admit wh-indefinites. The latter are attested in examples like (5a): here, the Russian *čtoby*-clause is closest in meaning to the English **lest-clause**, conveyed in the gloss translation (this also holds of Yanovich's (2c)). On the other hand, (5b) shows that a wh-indefinite is not allowed in a conventional subjunctive environment embedded under *want*: this sentence is degraded in any incarnation – with or without verbal negation, whether in the matrix or the embedded clause. English *lest* is presumed to instantiate a negative complementizer (*that-not*), whose behavior falls within the range of Expletive/Evaluative Negation phenomena (van der Wouden 1997, Yoon 2011). My contention is that *čtoby₁* in contexts like (2c) and (5a) is distinct from *čtoby₂* in (5b): it is a negative complementizer with semantics identical to English *lest*.

(5) a. Ja naročno pribrala, čtoby **kto** ne podnjal.
I wilfully picked.up that$_{subj}$ who neg took$_{indef}$
'I deliberated picked [it] up, **lest** somebody take it.'
[M. Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*]

b. * Ja (ne) xoču, čtoby **kto** (ne) priezžal.
I neg want that$_{subj}$ who neg came
Intended:'I (don't) want for anybody (not) to come.'

In fact, we find a convergence between the *čtoby$_1$*-clause from (5a) (as well as its English counterpart with *lest*) and a typical Russian **Expletive Negation** context, as in (6), where the preverbal negative marker *ne*, obligatorily present in the *until*-clause, is ostensibly devoid of negative force (Brown and Franks 1995, a.o.). In both contexts, the wh-indefinites are entirely natural.

(6) Uvjazneš po samye stupitsy i zagoraeš, poka **kto** ne vytaščit.
stuck to very hubs and tans until who$_{indef}$ neg pull.out
'Your hubs get stuck, so you hang out until somebody extricates you.' [RNC: «Рыбак Приморья», 2003.01.16]

I identify several additional contexts: wh-indefinites are eligible to appear in **as soon as** clauses, with **barely** (*edva li*, *navrjad li*) and other **negative frequency adverbs**, in **comparatives**, and embedded under predicates like **doubt**.

Analysis. Wh-indefinites are licensed by the relevant non-veridical operator merged in the sentential domain, as in (7a). In the contexts outlined above, the following are eligible licensers – Question *Op*, "negative" complementizers (i.e., *čtoby$_1$ = lest*), epistemic adverbs, and "high negation" (arising derivationally via movement of *ne* to the C-domain in EN contexts per Abels (2005) and in rhetorical wh-questions). In addition to the merge site of the licenser, there are two further syntactic conditions: locality (*Op* must be in the same clause as the indefinite) and c-command (*Op* must c-command the indefinite). Furthermore, the licensing configuration must not be disrupted by a c-commanding quantificational intervener (a wh-word or a universal), as schematized in (7b). (8) provides evidence for the latter claim. Both (8a) and (8d) supply a potential licenser—"higher negation" and Q-operator, respectively. The problem is the intervening universal (*vse*) that c-commands the indefinite. So, (8a)/(8d) are ruled out because they result in illicit (7b). (8b)/(8e) demonstrate that indefinites are possible in such contexts in principle. Both wh- and -nibud'-indefinites require a licenser, as neither is acceptable in indicative contexts (8c)/(8f). But although the -nibud'-series indefinites show a substantial overlap with wh-indefinites in the kinds of contexts they are licensed in, unlike wh-indefinites, they can be licensed in the scope of universals (Yanovich 2005).

(9) demonstrates the locality requirement along with one further distinction between wh- and -nibud'-indefinites. It has already been established in (2a) that wh-indefinites are fine in conditionals. This licensing is established via c-command by an *Op* merged in the C-domain, provided no relevant interveners are present (see Kratzer (1986) on covert quantificational/modal operators in conditionals). The contrast between (2a) and (9b) indicates that the licenser must be in the same clause as its licensee—in ungrammatical (9b), *Op* is separated from *who$_{indef}$* by a clause boundary. This boundary is evidently not an impediment for licensing of -nibud' series, as the minimal pair (9a) vs. (9b) shows.

(7) a. [$_{CP}$...$OP_{Q/Neg/Epistemic}$ [$_{TP}$ ... wh-indefinite]]

b. *[$Op_{Q/Neg}$ [Quan $^{(=vse)}$ [... **wh-indefinite**]]]

(8) a. * Ždem, poka vse **čto** ne pročitajut.
wait until all what$_{indef}$ neg read

b. Ždem, poka vse čto-**nibud'** ne pročitajut.
wait until all what-nibud' neg read
'We're waiting until everybody reads something.'

c. * On čto-**nibud'** čital.
he what-nibud' read

d. * Vse **čto** pročitali?
all what$_{indef}$ read

e. Vse čto-**nibud'** pročitali?
all what-nibud' read

f. * On **čto** čital.
he what$_{indef}$ reads

(9) a. Esli ty dumaeš, čto kto-**nibud'** čital Ulissa, ty ošibaeš'sja.
if you think that who-nibud' read Ulysses, you are.mistaken
'If you think that anybody read *Ulysses*, you are mistaken.'

b. * Esli ty dumaeš, čto **kto** čital Ulissa, ty ošibaeš'sja.
    if you think that who$_{indef}$ read Ulysses, you are.mistaken

While the licenser of wh-indefinites merges in the C-spine, the extended domain of the verb constitutes the locus of core propositional negation and of negative concord items (*nikto* 'ni-who'). Following Bošković (2009), I am assuming that ni-items must move to Spec, NegP overtly, as in (10a). In situations when there are two potential licensers (NegP and higher Op, as in (10b), both ni-items and wh-indefinites are possible —e.g., in conditionals (11). If so, *lest*-subjunctives in (12a) are distinct from *until*-clauses in (12b): the former enable two licensing configurations (within the NegP and by a higher Op), while the latter only have a higher operator.

(10)   a. [$_{CP}$... [$_{NegP}$ NI-ITEMS [$_{vP}$...]]]   b. [$_{CP}$...**Op** [$_{NegP}$ NI-ITEMS [$_{vP}$...]]]

(11)   a. Esli **kto** ne znaet,...   b. Esli **ni**kto ne znaet,...
            if who$_{indef}$ neg knows   if **ni-who** neg knows

(12)   a. ..., čtoby **ni**kto ne podnjal. = (5a)   b. * ..., poka **ni**kto ne vytaščit. = (6)
            ... that$_{subj}$ **ni-who** neg picked.up   ... until **ni-who** neg extricate

Finally, I discuss a peculiar word-order effect involving wh-indefinites. Yanovich (2005) observes that the wh-indefinite cannot appear with certain epistemic adverbs (e.g., *dolžno byt'*), as in (13a). What has been overlooked is the robust contrast between (13a) and (13b): the sentence is perfect if the wh-indefinite is placed into the post-verbal position. This additional restriction will be shown to follow from interactions with focus.

(13)   a. * Dolžno byt', **kto** prixodil.   b. Dolžno byt', prixodil **kto**.
            must be who$_{indef}$ came   must be came who$_{indef}$

References: Abels, K. 2005. "Expletive Negation" in Russian: A conspiracy theory. *JSL* 13. **Bošković, Ž.** 2009. Licensing negative constituents and negative concord. *NELS 38*. **Brown, S. and S. Franks.** 1995. Asymmetries in the scope of Russian negation. *JSL* 3. **Giannakidou, A.** 1998. *Polarity xensitivity as (non)veridical dependency*. John Benjamins. **Han, C.**1998. The structure and interpretation of imperatives: Mood and Force in UG. UPenn diss. **Hengeveld, K.***et al*. 2018. Quexistentials I. **Kratzer, A.** 1986. Conditionals. *CLS* 22. **van der Wouden, T.**.1997.*Negative contexts: Collocation, polarity and multiple negation*. Routledge. **Yanovich, I.** 2005. Choice-functional series of indefinites and Hamblin semantics. *SLT* 15. **Yoon, S.**. 2011. 'Not' in the Mood: the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of Evaluative Negation. U Chicago diss.