Scope Reversal in Adyghe indefinites

My paper is dedicated to indefinite pronouns in Adyghe[*].

There are two morphological series of indefinite pronouns in Adyghe. I shall deal only with one of them, formed by a scalar particle *-jə*. Scalar particles are typologically quite a widespread means for making up indefinite pronouns (see Haspelmath 1997).

This series consists of different types of pronouns depending on the stem used for building particular pronouns. Pronouns built from different stems show different distribution. They can appear in different contexts which evokes interesting interpretational effects and scopal relations.

There are exactly three types of these *jə*-pronouns:

One type is built from the numeral *zə* 'one': *zjə*;

another type from the interrogatives *xet* 'who', *səd* 'what' and *tədə* 'where': *xetjə*, *sədjə* and *tədjə* resp.;

and yet another type from the universal quantifier stems *zeč'e* / *pstew-* 'all': *zeč'erjə* and *pstewrjə* resp., this latter type will not draw my attention in this paper.

For the sake of convenience, I shall call the type formed on interrogative basis Free Choice (FC-) pronouns, and the type formed from the numeral negative ones.

FC-pronouns typically appear in free choice contexts (cf., among others, Tatevosov 2002: 146-152), like hypothetic and counterfactual modality, (permissive) imperative, (grammaticized) habitualis, generic contexts or deontic modality in (1), thus associated with the free choice function and universal quantifier:

(1) xet-jə qə-g_wərə$ʔ_w$e-š't
who-ADD DIR-understand-IRR
'Whoever would understand it.'
∃y∀x(understand (x,y))

Adding negation to a sentence containing such a FC-pronoun results not in negating the main predicate, but in the universal quantifier, which is associated with the pronoun, falling under the scope of this negation, like in sentence (2) that has a depreciative meaning:

(2) xet-jə qə-g_wərə$ʔ_w$e-š't-ep
who-ADD DIR-understand-IRR-NEG
'Not just anyone will understand it.'
∃y(¬∀x(understand (x,y)))

But when the tense/aspect of the predicate changes from non-factive future/irrealis to factive present or perfect, we witness a reverse scope of the universal quantifier and the sentential negation. Namely, the UQ gets a scope wider than negation:

(3) asλan deṣəha-ʁe-m səd-jə ə-šxə-n-ew faj-ep
lion capture-PST-ERG what-ADD 3SG.A-eat-POT-ADV want-NEG
'A caught lion doesn't want to eat anything.'
∃x∀y(lion(x) & ¬want to eat (x,y))

The question arises why it should happen. I suggest that 1) in factive contexts depreciative reading is less plausible and 2) there be need to fill in caveat arising because of syntactic restrictions on using another pronoun in "indirect" negative contexts. Normally it is the negative pronoun derived from the numeral 'one' which falls under the scope of negation, like in (4):

[*] Adyghe is a polysyntehtic language of the North West Caucasian family. All the data come from my own field materials.

(4) fatjəme zə-m-jə j-e-ǯe-r-ep
Fatima one-ERG-ADD OBL-DYN-read-DYN-NEG
‘Fatima does not read anything.’
λx(f(x) & ¬∃y(read (x,y))

Syntactically, this negative pronoun is licensed only when it falls under immediate scope of negation. In sentences where the pronoun is in the embedded clause and negation is in the matrix clause, negative pronoun is ruled out and another item must be employed to construct the desired meaning. That is when the FC-pronoun is used with its scope reversed with respect to that of negation. The depreciative reading is still at hand where it is semantically plausible, like in (3), for which this second, depreciative, reading is given in (5):

(5) ∃x(lion(x) & ¬∀y(want to eat (x,y)))

I have shown that there is a type of indefinite pronouns in Adyghe which is associated with the universal quantifier and normally takes narrow scope with respect to negation but can change its scope when filling a functional gap caused by syntactic restrictions.

In my talk, I shall explain how the morphosyntactic properties of the indefinite pronouns derived via a scalar particle allow for the described behaviour, why the widest scope is primary for Adyghe sentence make-up and how syntax demands for such a shift of semantics.

List of glosses:

A - Agent; ADD – Additive particle; ADV – Adverbial; DIR – Directive; DYN – Dynamic; ERG – Ergative; IRR – Irrealis; NEG – Negation; OBL – Oblique; POT – Potential; PST – Perfect; SG – Singular.

Literature:

Haspelmath, Martin. *Indefinite pronouns*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1997.

Tatevosov, Sergei. *Semantika sostavljajuschix imennoj gruppy*. [Semantics of the Noun Phrase constituents: Quantifiers.] Moscow: IMLI RAN. 2002.