

**Classification of Pereltsvaig's suggested list of Russian idiomatic NPI's**

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Suggested list from Asya Pereltsvaig (slightly shortened):

"Here's a list of Russian idiomatic NPIs. They are of different degree of idiomaticity, though. Even though some sources give affirmative variants as well, I cannot use any of these in affirmatives (in the idiomatic sense, that is). Note that most expressions contain objects which are obligatorily in the Genitive of negation. I include negation to make it sound good..."

**Annotations April-May 2004 classifying them into 4 groups according to the judgments of various native speakers of Russian<sup>1</sup>.**

**Class 1:** A completely frozen idiom including the negative particle *ne*; cannot occur in any of the contexts listed for Classes 2,3,4.

**Class 2:** A strong negative polarity item, limited to clausemate negation, but not just a frozen idiom. Test: Can occur in negative sentences with subject *nikto*. *Nikto ne \_\_\_\_\_*.

**Class 3:** An NPI that can occur not only in the Class 2 environment, but also in one or more of the following environments:

*Я удивлюсь, если он (хоть) (и) \_\_\_\_\_*. (With no *ne* in the sentence)

*(Я удивлюсь, если он хоть копейку даст.)*

*Он хоть бы \_\_\_\_\_*. (*Он хоть бы глазом моргнул.*)

**Class 4:** Not an NPI at all in your dialect. Can also occur in simple positive past tense sentences. Example: *Они сложили оружие.*

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(Example numbers are from earlier list.)

**CLASS 1: Completely frozen idiom including negation.**

5. *ne pokladaja ruk* - not putting:GERUND hands:GEN - without resting (e.e., work hard) **Class 1**

6. *dushi ne chajat' v kom-to* - soul:GEN not to-hope(?) - adore somebody **Class 1**

8. *uma ne prilozhu* - mind:GEN not put-to-it:1.sg:FUT - I have no idea **Class 1**

7. *nog / zemli ne chujat' pod soboj* - legs:GEN / earth:GEN not to-feel underneath self –

**Class 1 or Class 2 --??**

14. *ne naxodit' sebe mesta* - not to-find to-self place:GEN - be restless **Class 1 or Class 2**

**CLASS 2: Clausemate negation only.**

2. *ne davat' proxoda komu-nibud'* - not to-give passage:GEN to smb. - to harass somebody

**Class 2**

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Elena Paducheva, Yakov Testelets, and Vladimir Borschev for jointly discovering the four classes in the course of our discussions, and for judgments and discussion about individual expressions. Thanks for further judgments and discussion from two of the students in my RGGU 2004 introduction to formal semantics: Marina Khoruzhenko and Elena Osipenko. I don't know whether anyone has ever suggested grouping NPI idioms into Class 2 and Class 3 types like this before.

4. *ni aza ne smyslit'/ponimat'/znat'* - NI az:GEN (first letter of the Old Russian alphabet) not to-understand/understand/know - not to understand/ know anything **Class 2**

9. *ne spusnjaja / svodja glaz* - not letting-down:GERUND eyes:GEN- without taking eyes off somebody **Class 2**

10. *ne znat' ustali* - not to-know tiredness:GEN - not getting tired **Class 2**

13. *ne znat' pokoja* - not to-know rest:GEN - not to rest **Class 2**

15. *ne znat' uderzhu* - not to-know restraint:GEN - be restraintless **Class 2; this is almost the only existing form of the word uderžu**

20a. *ne delat' paniki* - not to-do panic:GEN - not to create panic (i.e., keep calm) (people didn't like this in this form; see 20b, 20c)

20b. *paniku ne sozdavat'* - not to create panic – VB thinks this is better, and is **Class 2**

20c. *ne vpadat' v paniku* – not to fall into a panic – VB thinks this is also better, also **Class 2**

24. *ne brat' v rot vina / xmel'nogo* - not to-take into mouth wine:GEN / alcoholic:GEN - not to drink a drop of wine **Class 2 (VB)**

28. *ne smykat' glaz* - not to-shut eyes:GEN - not to sleep a wink **Class 2 (VB)**

30b. *ne otstupat' ni na iotu* – variant preferred by VB -- **Class 2 (VB)**

**BORDERLINE CLASS 2 – CLASS 3: some disagreement or uncertainty.**

1. *ne morgnut' glazom* - not to-blink eye:INSTR - not to be affected (usually by something bad) **Class 2 (EVP) or Class 3 (VBB)**

11. *ne podavat' / pokazivat' vida* - not to-give / show look:GEN - not to let know (about how one feels, etc.) **Class 2 or possibly Class 3; some resistance to 3**  
Marina Kh: with *pokazivat'* can be **class 3**, (*ja udivljus' esli on xot' vid pokazhet*), but sounds slightly strange. Elena O: **Class 3** in both variants.

12. *ne podnimaja golovy* - not raising:GERUND head:GEN - without a pause (work hard) **Class 2 – almost Class 3. In positive contexts this suggests raising head in protest, which is not the NPI meaning.**

16c. *ne skazat' ni slova* - not to say NI word:GEN - not say a word (i.e., keep silent) **with skazat', Class 2 (VB), Class 3 (Marina Kh.)**

19. *ne delat' sekreta (iz chego-to)* - not to-do secret:GEN (from something) - not to give something the air of unnecessary secrecy) **Class 2 or 3**

22. *ne davat' spuska (komu-to)* - not to-give freedom(?):GEN - not to let go **Class 2 (VB) Class 3 (M.Kh.)** (but she says it sounds slightly strange.)

23. *ne vyderzhitvat' kritiki* - not to-sustain criticism:GEN - be really bad **Class 2 (VB) Class 3 (M.Kh.)**

29. *ne vesti uxom<sup>2</sup>* - not to-move ear:INSTR - not to react **Class 2 (VB), Class 3 (M.Kh., E.O.)**

31. *ne imet' ponjatija* – not to-have idea:GEN – not to have any idea (about something) **Class 2 (VBB) or Class 3 (EVP)**

Elena Osipenko: This is grammatical as **Class 3** only with the addition of *kakoe-nibud'*: *Ja ne dumaju, chto on imeet kakoe-nibud' ponjatie o tom, chto proisxodit.*

<sup>2</sup> Elena Osipenko notes that this idiom is impossible in the infinitive!

**CLASS 3: Wider NPI.**

3. ne udarit' palec (pal'cem ) o palec - not to-strike finger:ACC (finger:INSTR) on finger:LOC - not to do anything to help **Class 3 (all agree)**
- 16a.. ne proronit' ni slova - not to-let-out NI word:GEN - not say a word (i.e., keep silent) **with proronit', Class 3**
- 16b.. ne govorit' ni slova - not to tell NI word:GEN - not say a word (i.e., keep silent) **with govorit', Class 3**
17. shaga ne sdelat' / stupit' - step:GEN not to-make / step - not to step a step **Class 3**
18. ne dat' ni grosha - not to-give NI grosh:GEN - not to give a red cent **Class 2 (almost Class 3, except that grosh is too archaic)** Marina Kh. – **Class 3**, though slightly odd. Elena O: **Class 3.**
- 18a. ne dat' ni kopejki - not to-give NI kopeck:GEN - not to give a red cent **Class 3**
21. ne vnushat' doverija - not to-inspire trust:GEN - be suspect **Class 2 (VB) Class 3 (M.Kh.) Class 4 (EO)**
- 30a. ne ustupit' ni na jotu - not to-yield NI for iota (letter of the Greek alphabet) - not to yield at all, not to go for a compromise **Class 3 (E.O.)**
32. (To add to the list) Volos s ego golovy ne upadet. **Class 3.**
27. ne podavat' ruki - not to-give/offer hand:GEN - not to be on speaking terms(?) **Class 3 (VB, M.Kh.), Class 4 (E.O.)** (E.O. note: But it's not clear to what extent it keeps its idiomatic meaning in positive contexts.)

**CLASS 4: OK also in positive contexts: not an NPI.**

25. ne davat' volju/voli rukam - not to-give freedom:ACC/GEN to hands - keep restrained from fist-fight **Class 4 (VB, E.O.)**
26. ne slozhit' oruzhija - not to-put-down arms:GEN - not to yield to the enemy **Class 4**

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(There is an earlier version of this document that includes a record of discussion with VBB, EVP, YGT in Wednesday seminar April 7. I am omitting that discussion from this version.)

**Next challenge:** Is there any identifiable semantic difference between Class 2 and Class 3 idioms? Or is this just a matter of degrees of frozenness? I'm wondering if the Class 3 ones are to any greater degree based on scalar implicatures involving minimal units. That's the only semantic property I see so far as being possibly relevant. But it doesn't seem to occur in all or only class 3 idioms.