Negative Adjectives as licensors of Negative Polarity Items in English and Serbian
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INTRODUCTION

Negative Concord: more than one negative element is allowed in order to convey a single negative concept - Serbian (1)

Double Negation: two negative elements cancel each other out and result in an affirmative sentence - English (2)

α can be used in structures containing sentential negation or α can provide a negative fragment answer.

Similarity: with respect to negative adjectives and their licensing of NPIs they both yield Double Negation in constituent negation (3):

(3) a. Nečemo te više nikad ništa pitati.
   neg.will.3rd.p.pl you.acc more never nothing ask
(2) We don’t need *no/any help.

b. Unaware of *no/any dangers, she went on vacation.

TERMINOLOGY

NPIs are lexical units that can appear mainly in negative contexts and have to be licensed (allowed) by negative elements in a sentence.

Fro Serbian there are two types of NPIs:

i-NPIs - long-distance licensing items:
- iko, šiša, igde, ikad

ni-NPIs (n-words) - clause-mate licensing items:
- niko, ništa, nigde, nikad

N-words are negative elements which can or cannot express negation which depends on their syntactic position.

An expression α is an n-word iff (Giannakidou, 2002:2):
- α can be used in structures containing sentential negation or another α-expression yielding a reading equivalent to one logical negation; and
- α can provide a negative fragment answer.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How come negative adjectives cannot license ni-NPIs locally and allow a Negative Concord reading?

METHOD

Research method: questionnaire (two tasks); 40 informants (students of English language and literature in Novi Sad, native speakers of Serbian)

Results: more than 90% of participants disallow constructions with negative adjectives and ni-NPIs in Serbian.

CONCLUSION

- Contexts with negative adjectives are negative, but not Negative Concord environments. They are Double Negation environments.

- Proposition: Sentences with negative adjectives represent a DN licensing context of true NPIs (i-NPIs and any-NPIs) that allow clause-mate i-NPIs.

(And in these terms they share a similarity with English).

REFERENCES


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