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Bosnic, Ana

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Negative adjectives as licensors of NPIs in English and Serbian
Ana Bosnić
University of Groningen/ University of Novi Sad

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)

(1) Nećemo te više nikad ništa pitati.

(2) We don’t need *no/any help.

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

(a) Nesvesna "nikakvih/ikakvih opasnosti, otišla je na put.
unaware no-kind/any-kind.gen dangers went is on trip

(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, išta, igde, i kad

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

CONCLUSION

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

- Proposition:

RESEARCH QUESTION

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

FEATURE CHECKING APPROACH


- Interpretable and uninterpretable [Neg] feature on negative heads, NPIs and negative adjectives in NC languages:

  - Negative heads: [uNeg], [iKneg]

  - N-words: [iNeg], [uKneg] - inherently negative

  - Negative adjectives: [iNeg] - semi-negatives, carrying negation

  - i-NPIs: [uNeg] - not inherently negative but licensed by negative markers

  - Problem: Negated prepositional phrases with “split” n-words in environments with negative adjectives:

      unprepared for no.kind/for any.kind.acc adventures, turned-down is offer

    - b. Nespremna ni za kakve/*i za kakve poduhvate, odbila je ponudu.
      unprepared no for kind/any for kind.acc adventures, turned-down is offer

    "Unprepared for any adventures, she turned down the offer."

Solid ground for further research!

REFERENCES


CONTACT

E-mail: ana.bosnic88@gmail.com