Negative adjectives as licensors of NPIs 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)

(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.

(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. From Serbian there are two types of NPIs:

- i-NPIs - long-distance licensing items:
  - iko, išta, 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 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.

**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.

**ANALYSIS**


- interpretable and uninterpretable [Neg] feature on negative heads, NPIs and negative adjectives in NC languages:
  - Negative heads: [uNeg], [ιK]<sub>e</sub>
  - N-words: [ιNeg], [ιK]<sub>n</sub> - inherently negative
  - Negative adjectives: [ιNeg] - 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:

  canonical: “Unprepared for any adventures, she turned down the offer.”

- b. Nespremna ni za kakve/ī za kakve poduhvate, odbila je ponudu.
  unprepared for any kind for any kind.acc adventures, turned-down is offer

Solid ground for further research!

**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**


**CONTACT**

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