

Irena Zovko Dinković  
Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu  
Ivana Lučića 3, HR-10000 Zagreb  
izovko@ffzg.hr

## THE POSITION OF NEGATIVE ELEMENT IN PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES WITH NEGATIVE INDEFINITES

Croatian negative indefinite expressions, or the so-called *ni*-words, are complex forms made by adding the prefix *ni*- to simple forms of indefinite pronouns. The Croatian standard norm prescribes that in prepositional phrases involving negative indefinite pronouns (the so-called *ni*-pronouns), the negative element *ni* should be separated from the pronoun and put in front of the preposition. However, in everyday communication one may often notice the use of the word order *P + negative indefinite pronoun*, and this word order has also made its way into newspapers and other media. This paper attempts to determine whether there is a significant difference in meaning between the order *ni + P + indefinite pronoun* and the order *P + negative indefinite pronoun* to account for such a change in language. We also analyze the frequency of use of these two different word orders in the *Croatian National Corpus*, examining eleven most frequent prepositions and six simple indefinite pronouns.

### 1. Introduction

The category of indefinite pronouns in Croatian includes a very large number of forms, most of which are formed by adding a prefix or a particle to one of the simple forms – the pronouns *tko* ‘who’, *što/šta* ‘what’, *čiji* ‘whose’, *kakav* ‘what kind (of)’, *koji* ‘which’, the adverb *malo* ‘a little’, the interrogative adverbs *kad(a)* ‘when’, *gdje* ‘where’, *kamo* ‘where to’, *kud(a)* ‘where

by', *otkud(a)* 'where from' and the number *jedan* 'one'.<sup>1</sup> Negative indefinites are formed by adding the prefix *ni-* to simple forms of indefinite pronouns, thus resulting in the pronouns *nitko* 'nobody', *ništa* 'nothing', *ničiji* 'nobody's', *nikakav* 'no (such)', *nikoji* 'none'; negative adverbs *nikad(a)* 'never', *nigdje* 'anywhere, nowhere', *nikamo* 'anywhere', *nikud(a)* 'nowhere', *nimalo* 'none, no', *niotkud(a)* 'from nowhere', and *nijedan* 'none, not one', which has adjectival properties and shows gender, number and case agreement with other adjectives (see Silić and Pranjković 2005). Among the negative indefinite forms Raguz (1997: 370) also places *nikolik* 'none', *nikoliko* 'no', *niodakle* 'from nowhere' and *nidokle* 'to nowhere'. However, these forms were not found in the *Croatian National Corpus* (*Hrvatski nacionalni korpus* or *HNK*) and therefore will not be taken into consideration.

In generative syntactic theories, the issue of morphology of negative indefinites was much debated, mainly in attempts to justify particular syntactic derivations. In his seminal work on negation Klima (1964) thus held that negative indefinite pronouns consist of two separate syntactic elements: a negative element and an indefinite nominal expression. By lowering negation (the so-called *Neg-lowering* operation)<sup>2</sup> to the indefinite expression we get negative indefinite pronouns. However, if we followed Klima's approach, it would still remain unclear whether negative indefinites in Croatian consist of an abstract negative element *n-* and indefinite expressions *itko* 'anyone', *išta* 'anything', etc., or whether they are made of the negative element *ni-* (which exists as a prefix) and indefinite expressions *tko* 'who', *što* 'what', etc. Still in the generative vein, Progovac (1994) decomposes negative indefinites such as *nitko* 'nobody' or *ništa* 'nothing' into three morphemes, eg. *n-i-tko*, while Brown (1999) argues that the prefix *ni-* in negative indefinites in Slavic languages may be, based on etymology, analyzed as the negative prefix *ni-* and the prefix *i-* (the latter being assigned existential meaning), which were then merged through diachronic change into *ni-*. Such an interpretation was appropriate for Brown's theoretical claims because it showed the alleged parallelism between the etymological and semantic decomposition of negative indefinites. However, we consider it wrong because the indefinites containing the prefixes *ni-* and *i-* are in complementary distribution and should be seen as two separate prefixes (cf. Zovko Dinković 2013). Harves (1998), on the other hand, believes that

---

<sup>1</sup> We thus get a total of over 60 different indefinite pronouns (cf. Silić and Pranjković 2005).

<sup>2</sup> In subsequent generative theories the operation of lowering was no longer allowed because all syntactic derivations are considered to proceed from the bottom up. (cf. Chomsky 1995).

*ni-* is a single syntactic unit, although she leaves open the possibility that *ni-* might be the result of raising the indefinite morpheme *i-* to the negative head *ne-* via a phonological rule.

In functional theories, however, the origin of negative indefinites was not relevant (many of the theories being monostratal, i.e. dispensing with the notions of deep structure and syntactic derivation) – what is relevant is the function of negation as a modal operator which influences the information structure of a sentence (cf. Dik 1989, Halliday 1994, Lambrecht 1994, Van Valin and LaPolla 1997 etc.)

The only Croatian grammar that explicitly cites *ni-* as a prefix (but only in relation to negative indefinites!) is by Silić and Pranjković (2005: 127). They claim that the prefixes *ne-*, *ni-* and *i-* are used to form complex forms of indefinite pronouns. The issue of the nature of the negative element in negative indefinites may be crucial for the interpretation of several aspects of negation in Croatian, such as negative polarity items<sup>3</sup> or negative concord<sup>4</sup>, as well as for the topic discussed in this paper – the change in the position of the negative element in prepositional phrases involving negative indefinites.

The Croatian standard norm prescribes that in prepositional phrases containing a negative indefinite pronoun (the s.c. *ni*-pronoun), *ni-* should be separated from the indefinite pronoun and placed in front of the preposition<sup>5</sup>, as in:

- (1) *Osijek igra čvrst rukomet u kojem nema milosti ni za koga.*

‘Osijek plays firm handball with no mercy for anyone.’ (lit. ‘with no mercy not for anyone’).

The same word order is present in the East Slavic languages (2) and Serbian, while in the West Slavic and other South Slavic languages the preposition precedes the negative indefinite pronoun<sup>6</sup> (3):

---

<sup>3</sup> A negative polarity item is an expression that is restricted to negative contexts and some other semantically related contexts such as questions or conditional clauses.

<sup>4</sup> Negative concord is a phenomenon in which more than one negative marker occurs in a clause but the clause is interpreted as having a single logical negation. Croatian exhibits negative concord and requires the indefinites to be negative in the environment of clausal negation, while English, as a language without negative concord, exhibits a somewhat opposite behavior: clausemate negation requires the so-called *any-* polarity items, while negative indefinites require the clause to be affirmative.

<sup>5</sup> In Croatian the same rule applies to all complex indefinite pronouns within prepositional phrases that appear in negative sentences.

<sup>6</sup> I wish to thank prof. D. Sesar for the examples and valuable comments (personal communication, 2012.)

- (2) Russian: **никто** ‘nobody’ (*ни с кем* ‘with anyone’, *ни о ком* ‘about anyone’, **but**: *за никого* ‘for no one’)
- (3) Czech: **nikdo** ‘nobody’; *žádný, -á, -é...* ‘any’ (*o žádném* ‘about anything’, *za žádnou cenu...* ‘for any price’)
- Slovak: **nič** ‘nothing’, **nikto** ‘nobody’; *žiadny, žiadny, -a, -e...* ‘any’ (*o žiadnom, za žiadnu cenu/za nijakú cenu...* ‘for any price/for no price’)
- Polish: **nikt** ‘nobody’; *żaden, -dna, -dne...* ‘any’ (*o żadnym* ‘about anything’, *za żadną cenę...* ‘for any price’).

Such word order in Czech, for instance, is considered to be the result of diachronic change because in Old Czech *ni* was also found in front of the preposition, and there was a transitional period when it could be found both in front and after the preposition (cf. Harves 1998). Today the negative marker is never separated from the indefinite pronoun in prepositional phrases:

- (4) Czech: *Ana s nikym ne mluvila.* (‘Ana didn’t speak to anyone.’)

The order *Preposition (P) + negative indefinite* has become more noticeable in Croatian as well, not only in everyday speech, but also in newspapers and on radio and TV. Thus one may often encounter examples like (5), taken from a Croatian daily:

- (5) *U Vladi su tada bili članovi iz sedam političkih stranaka, a jedanaestorica ministara nisu bila u nijednoj stranci.*

‘The Government then consisted of members from seven political parties, while eleven ministers were not in any party.’ (lit. ‘in none party’)

## 2. Research and results

In order to investigate the frequency and characteristics of the two constructions in Croatian, we examined the use of different orders of prepositions and negative indefinites in the *Croatian National Corpus*. 23 simple prepositions were observed in combination with six most frequent simple forms of indefinite pronouns *tko* ‘who’, *što/šta* ‘what’, *koji* ‘which’, *čiji* ‘whose’, *kakav* ‘what kind (of)’ i *jedan* ‘one’. The results are shown in Tables 1 – 4, and the overall frequency of chosen prepositions is given in (6):

(6) Prepositions with a frequency higher than 100 000:

<i>u</i> ‘in’	2 450 669
<i>na</i> ‘on’	1 236 413
<i>za</i> ‘for’	1 023 828
<i>od</i> ‘from’	572 652
<i>s/sa</i> ‘with’	503 575/128 298
<i>o</i> ‘about’	489 919
<i>iz</i> ‘out of’	346 571
<i>do</i> ‘to’	228 040
<i>po</i> ‘over’	135 847
<i>prema</i> ‘towards’	121 712
<i>zbog</i> ‘because of’	110 452

Prepositions with a frequency of less than 100 000:

<i>uz</i> ‘next to’	87 087
<i>protiv</i> ‘against’	74 034
<i>oko</i> ‘around’	72 204
<i>pod</i> ‘under’	50 723
<i>kod</i> ‘at’	46 343
<i>pred</i> ‘in front of’	35 946

Prepositions with a frequency of less than 30 000:

<i>pri</i> ‘by’	29 965
<i>preko</i> ‘across’	29 707
<i>kroz</i> ‘through’	22 064
<i>nad</i> ‘above’	20 563
<i>iza</i> ‘behind’	13 805
<i>k/ka</i> ‘towards’	11 237/1 135

The indefinite pronouns in all the tables are in the nominative case, since different prepositions require different case marking of indefinite pronouns – the most frequent Croatian preposition *u* ‘in’ appearing with the genitive, the accusative or the locative case, the second most frequent preposition *na* ‘on’ requiring either the locative or the accusative case, and all others requiring just one case. Thus, for instance, the result of 62 examples in Table 1 for the preposition *u* ‘in’ and the indefinite pronoun *kakav* ‘what kind (of)’ means that the corpus contained a total of 62 examples with prepositional phrases *u nikakv-a (-og)/e/-ih* (GEN.M/N.sg, GEN.F.sg, and GEN.M/F/N.pl respectively), *u nikakv-u (-om)/-oj/-im* (LOC.M/N.sg, LOC.F.sg and LOC.M/F/N.pl respectively), and *u nikakv-a (-og)/-u/-o/-e/-a* (ACC.M.sg, ACC.F.sg, ACC.N.sg, ACC.M/F.pl, ACC.N.pl respectively)<sup>7</sup>.

	<i>P + negative indefinite pronoun</i>										
	U	NA	ZA	OD	S/ SA	O	IZ	DO	PO	PREMA	ZBOG
<b>tko</b>	3	7	17	19	26/1	1	0	0	1	13	1
<b>što</b>	23	30	59	21	10/0	31	19	0	14	4	20
<b>koji</b>	0/2*	1	1	0	1/0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>čiji</b>	3	7	1	1	1/0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>ka- kav</b>	62	31	29	14	15/2	42	2	15	3	1	2
<b>je- dan</b>	22	5	3	4	13/0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Table 1. Frequency of appearance in the form *P + negative indefinite pronoun* for prepositions with a frequency higher than 100 000

\*the first number refers to the shortened form *kom(e)*, and the second to the full form *kojem(u), koj(j)*

<sup>7</sup> The abbreviations used are: GEN = genitive case, LOC = locative case, ACC = accusative case, M = masculine, F = feminine, N = neuter, sg = singular, pl = plural.

	<i>ni + P + indefinite pronoun</i>										
	U	NA	ZA	OD	S/SA	O	IZ	DO	PO	PREMA	ZBOG
<b>tko</b>	27	47	135	126	240/73	26	0	2	3	21	4
<b>što</b>	242	179	269	69	20/95	292	69	28	279	1	166
<b>koji</b>	245/412*	570	32	4	16/2	10	6	1	124	10	5
<b>čiji</b>	22	24	7	0	0/0	3	0	3	6	0	0
<b>kakav</b>	341	182	151	20	34/27	357	8	56	27	0	4
<b>jedan</b>	1094	384	203	39	180/11	50	15	9	47	5	3

Table 2. Frequency of appearance in the form *ni + P + indefinite pronoun* for prepositions with a frequency higher than 100 000

\* the first number refers to the shortened form *kom(e)*, and the second to the full form *kojem(u), kojof*

Tables 1 and 2 show that the dominant order in the Croatian written language is still the canonical *ni + P + indefinite pronoun*. However, some prepositions, as well as some indefinite pronouns, show a comparable lack of inclination to appear with negative indefinites, regardless of the order – for instance, the results for the preposition *prema* ‘towards’, which may be considered quite frequent in Croatian, show no marked distinction with regard to the order of the negative element and the preposition, while the indefinite pronoun *čiji* ‘whose’ appears to be least involved in prepositional phrases in general, while *koji* ‘which’ and *jedan* ‘one’ display the greatest difference in appearance with regard to the specific order of the preposition and indefinite pronouns – *koji* is almost never, and *jedan* quite rarely, used in the order *P + negative indefinite*, whereas they are both quite frequent in the canonical order *ni + P + indefinite pronoun*. However, the fact that must be taken into account in the analysis of results is that the *Croatian National Corpus* is a corpus of written texts, taken from various literary works, as well as newspapers and periodicals that have for the most part been proofread. We may therefore rightly expect the prevalence of the canonical order in accordance with the standard norm. A more accurate picture of the language situation would be available if we had at our disposal an appropriate corpus of spoken language of comparable size, since the particular construction under our investigation is still mainly a feature of everyday (spoken) communication. But until such a corpus is available, we shall rely upon the existing data.

Tables 1 i 2 are also a good indicator of the (dis)inclination of some prepositions to appear in combination with particular indefinite pronouns in negative clauses. For instance, a very frequent preposition *do* ‘to’ doesn’t appear with any of the indefinite pronouns in the order *P + negative indefinite pronoun*, except the pronoun *nikakav* ‘no such’, while the indefinite pronoun *koji* ‘which’ in its negative form – *nikoji* ‘none’ – almost never appears with any highly frequent preposition. On the other hand, some prepositions show a marked tendency to appear with particular indefinite pronouns. Thus, Table 2 shows that the most frequently negated prepositional phrase is the one involving the preposition *u* ‘in’ and the indefinite *jedan* ‘one’, with a total of 1094 examples in the canonical order *ni + P + indefinite pronoun*<sup>8</sup>. A more detailed analysis of the examples involving this reveals that the most frequent prepositional phrases are those that are part of some common, almost fixed phrases. It is thus evident from Table 2, for instance, that the most frequent negated prepositional phrases are those that are part of certain common, fixed expressions – eg. prepositional phrases with the preposition *zbog* ‘because of, for’ are quite rare in the form *ni + zbog + indefinite pronoun*, except for the indefinite pronoun *što* ‘what’, that appears in 166 examples. A more thorough analysis of these examples reveals that 121 of them involve this prepositional phrase as part of a larger expression *ako ni zbog čega drugog(a)* (lit. ‘if not for anything else’) ‘if for nothing else’. A similar situation is with a negated prepositional phrase *ni u kom* ‘not in any’ – in as many as 220 out of 245 examples this phrase is part of the expression *ni u kom slučaju* ‘not in any case’. Out of 279 examples involving the prepositional phrase *ni po čemu* (lit. ‘not in anything’) ‘in anything (else)’, 34 have the expression *ni po čemu se ne razlikovati* ‘not be different in anything’. Other numerous examples included *ako ni po čemu drugom* ‘if in nothing else’, *ni po čemu ne zaostajati* ‘not lag behind in anything’, *ni po čemu ne odudarati* ‘not stand out in anything’, etc. The number of examples with the preposition *na* ‘on’ and the indefinite pronoun *koji* ‘which’ in the order *ni + P + indefinite pronoun* is very large – 570 – with 531 among them involving the expression *ni na koji način* ‘not in any way’.

Table 2 also indicates the most frequent meaning of particular prepositional phrases. Thus the negated prepositional phrases with the preposition *s* ‘with’ most often appear with the indefinite pronoun *tko* ‘who’ – *ni s kim* ‘not with anyone’ – which shows that it is most often used to express the negated comitative meaning (i.e. lack of accompaniment). The same meaning is conveyed by the majority of 180 negated prepositional phrases with the indefinite pronoun *jedan* ‘one’ – *ni s jednim/jednom X* ‘not with one (M/F) X’.

---

<sup>8</sup> This includes the forms in all three cases, with all three genders in both singular and plural.



Tables 3 and 4, on the other hand, show a markedly different behavior when it comes to prepositional phrases involving prepositions whose frequency is lower than 100 000:

	<i>P + negative indefinite pronoun</i>					
	UZ	PROTIV	OKO	POD	KOD	PRED
<b>tko</b>	0	11	0	0	2	3
<b>što</b>	0	0	1	0	1	1
<b>koji</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>čiji</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>kakav</b>	2	0	0	8	0	0
<b>jedan</b>	0	5	2	0	4	0

Table 3. Frequency of appearance in the form *P + negative indefinite pronoun* for prepositions with a frequency lower than 100 000

	<i>ni + P + indefinite pronoun</i>					
	UZ	PROTIV	OKO	POD	KOD	PRED
<b>tko</b>	3	36	0	0	5	16
<b>što</b>	0	0	23	0	0	21
<b>koji</b>	0	1	0	114	2	4
<b>čiji</b>	0	0	0	11	0	0
<b>kakav</b>	6	0	0	23	0	4
<b>jedan</b>	19	11	5	1	18	5

Table 4. Frequency of appearance in the form *ni + P + indefinite pronoun* for prepositions with a frequency lower than 100 000

It is evident from the Tables 3 and 4 that prepositional phrases with prepositions whose frequency is lower than 100 000 (but still not insignificant) almost never appear with indefinite pronouns in the environment of clausal negation, regardless of the order between the preposition, the negative element and the indefinite pronoun, with just a few exceptions. The only significant exception is the negated prepositional phrase *ni pod kojim* ‘not under any’ in Table 4, whose high frequency reflects the use of this phrase in the fixed expression *ni pod kojim uvjetom/uvjetima* ‘not under any circumstance(s)’ – 109 out of 114 examples contain this expression.

Table 4 also shows that the frequency of particular combinations of prepositions and indefinite pronouns is influenced by phonological factors. Thus the preposition *k* ‘to’ quite expectedly never appears in the order *ni + P + indefinite pronoun* with pronouns that in the dative case begin with the letter *k* (*komu*, *kojem*, *kakvom*) because that would result in combinations that are extremely hard to pronounce, such as *ni k komu* ‘not to anyone’, *ni k kojem* ‘not to any’, etc. These indefinites would require the preposition to be in the form of *ka*, but curiously enough, this preposition does not appear with any negative indefinite pronoun whatsoever, regardless of the word order.

It should be mentioned that combinations of negative indefinites and prepositions whose frequency is under 30 000 is practically non-existent in the corpus, save for a few rare examples, and shall not be further discussed in this paper.

### 3. Discussion

The issue that arises from the analysis of corpus data is whether there is a significant difference in meaning between the two orders of negative indefinite pronouns in prepositional phrases, or is this deviation from the norm motivated by other factors.

A possible answer may lie in the fact that Croatian is a language with negative concord, which means that the appearance of negative indefinite pronouns in a clause is always conditioned by clausal negation, except in certain affirmative contexts when they are not split even if they are part of a prepositional phrase. The reason is that in such contexts, negative indefinites carry existential meaning:

(7) *Bog je stvorio svijet iz ničega.*

‘God created the world out of nothing.’

Silić i Pranjković (2005) claim that in sentences such as (7) indefinite pronouns are conceived as single entities. This claim is supported by identical exam-

ples from Russian, where the norm also prescribes the order *ni + P + indefinite pronoun*. Our search of Russian sentences equivalent to (7) on the internet yielded just a few examples in the form *Bog sotvoril mir ni iz čego*. (lit. ‘God created the world not out of anything’) meaning ‘God created the world out of nothing’, and a very large number of examples in the form *Bog sotvoril mir iz ničego*. ‘God created the world out of nothing’. It is quite evident that the negative indefinite in these examples refers to ‘nothingness’, the non-existence of anything rather than to an indefinite set of existing things (out of which nothing is chosen).

The difference is also present in examples with comparative constructions, where one would normally expect the so-called *i*-pronouns<sup>9</sup>:

- (8) a. *Loš auto je bolji od nikakva.*  
‘A bad car is better than no car.’  
b. *\*Loš auto je bolji ni od kakva.*  
‘A bad car is better than any car.’  
c. *Loš auto nije bolji od nikakva.*  
‘A bad car is not better than no car.’  
d. *Loš auto nije bolji ni od kakva.*  
‘A bad car is not better than any car.’

If we negate the sentence (8a), we get (8c), which has opposite meaning. Namely, the meaning of the negative indefinite pronoun *nikakav* ‘none, no’ in the examples (8a) and (8c) is different from the meaning of the indefinite pronoun *kakav* ‘what kind (of)’ used in the scope of clausal negation, as in (8d). In sentence (8a) *nikakav* ‘none, no’ means ‘non-existent’, while *kakav* ‘what kind (of)’ in sentence (8d) can refer to any other car that exists. Sentence (8c) is ambiguous because its meaning can be the same as (8d), or it can be interpreted as the negated sentence (8a) – ‘a bad car is not better than a non-existent car’ – being thus contrary to it. It should be noted that this ambiguity can be resolved in spoken language using different intonation on the word *nikakva*.

Other possible reasons for the order *P + negative indefinite pronoun*, not just with negative forms, but with all complex forms of indefinite pronouns may be:

1. the fact that speakers are well aware of the complex form, but are ignorant of the norm – a major exception being fixed phrases that are learned as such
2. phonological reasons, such as avoiding the hiatus in pronunciation (eg. *bilo o čemu* (lit. ‘any about thing’) ‘about anything’ > *o bilo čemu* ‘about anything’), the easiness of pronunciation, etc.

---

<sup>9</sup> *I*-pronouns are a very frequent set of indefinite pronouns which may be used in all polarized contexts, save for the negative ones (cf. Zovko Dinković 2013)

3. attempting to put more emphasis on the negative indefinite – the non-standard order appears to be used when speakers wish to place more emphasis on the negative indefinite, since it is precisely the negative element of the indefinite that carries the stress when pronouncing a prepositional phrase that contains it. Placing the negative element in front of the preposition partly reduces its phonological ‘weight’.<sup>10</sup>

4. to avoid ambiguity, such as in the example:

(9) a. *Pitanje je hoće li i za koga glasati.*

(lit. ‘The question is whether he will and for whom vote.’)

‘The question is whether he will vote and for whom.’

or ‘The question is whether he will vote for anyone.’

b. *Reci mi razlikuju li se i po čemu.*

‘Tell me if they are different and in what.’

or ‘Tell me if they are different in anything.’

The sentences in (9) are ambiguous because *i* may be interpreted either as a coordinate conjunction or as part of the indefinite pronoun which was placed in front of the preposition because the indefinite pronoun was part of a prepositional phrase. The ambiguity may easily be resolved in spoken language through prosody, i.e. by using different intonation for different intended meanings, while in written language it is most easily resolved precisely by using the non-standard order *P + i-pronoun*.

It is debatable whether such ambiguous sentences exist with negative indefinite pronouns because it not very likely that an example such as:

(10) *Ne znam kako će ni za koga glasati.*

(lit. ‘I don’t know how he will not for whom vote.’)

‘I don’t know how he will vote or for whom.’

would be interpreted as ‘I don’t know how he will vote for no one’.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to examples such as (9) or (10), we find quite plausible the claim that the prefixes *i-* and *ni-* in indefinite pronouns started off as intensifying particles which through diachronic change in West Slavic and South Slavic languages merged with the simple form of indefinite pronouns, and resulted in the order *P + ni-pronoun*. This hypothesis is also put forward by Billings

---

<sup>10</sup> This feature was the result of the author’s own observation of the Croatian spoken language, since no such corpus is available as yet.

<sup>11</sup> Although it is always possible, of course, to think of a context in which this meaning would be primary.

(1997), who considers this change a morphological, and not a syntactic one, since it doesn't result in a change of meaning. Two other facts speak in favor of this hypothesis. The first is that in Croatian there is an orthographic inconsistency when it comes to certain negative indefinites such as *nijedan* 'none, not one' or *nimalo* 'no, none', which can be written as *ni jedan* and *ni malo*, with no change in meaning:

- (11) a. *Bez direktnih avionskih linija ni jedan Amerikanac neće krenuti na putovanje u nepoznato.* (= ... *nijedan Amerikanac neće krenuti...*)  
'Without direct air lines not one American will start a journey into the unknown.' (= ... none (of the) Americans will start...)
- b. *Nema ni malo opasnosti i bojazni da bi se ugrozila privatnost ili tajna.* (= *Nema nimalo opasnosti...*)  
'There is not a bit of danger or fear that privacy or secrecy would be in danger.' (= There is no danger...)

The *Croatian National Corpus* contains 4711 examples of *nijedan*, and almost twice as many examples of *ni jedan* – 8357. With *nimalo* the situation is quite the opposite: 3208 examples of *nimalo*, as opposed to 171 examples of *ni malo*. In all the examples for both negative indefinites the forms with separated and joint writing are mutually interchangeable without any change in meaning, except in one:

- (12) *Većinu publike na koncertu činila je mlađa publika, iako nije nedostajalo ni malo starijih fanova.*  
(lit. 'Most of the audience were younger people, though not some older fans were lacking.')
- 'Most of the audience were younger people, though some older fans were not lacking.'

However, this example is an exception because the adverb *malo* 'some' is not part of the predicate and does not scope over the whole sentence – it is part of the indirect object and serves to modify the adjective *stariji* 'older'. The negative intensifying particle *ni* that stands next to the adverb is therefore the result of negative concord (due to the presence of clausal negation). The same situation is in:

- (13) *Ivan iz Australije nije znao ni na kojem je kontinentu Hrvatska.*  
'Ivan from Australia did not even know on which continent Croatia lies.'

where the prepositional phrase preceded by the negative particle *ni* is part of the clause that has the function of direct object and cannot be stated in the form:

(14) \**Ivan iz Australije nije znao na nikojem je kontinentu Hrvatska.*<sup>12</sup>

\*‘Ivan from Australia did not know on none continent Croatia lies.’

The fact that the negative element *ni* which appears in negated indefinite pronouns may be considered to have originated from an intensifying particle is further strengthened by the speakers’ tendency to often substitute this negative element (again contrary to the standard norm) with the intensifying particle *niti*. This is also the case with negated indefinite expressions, even when they are part of a prepositional phrase, which is illustrated by some examples found in the corpus, such as:

(15) a. *Dok jedni drže da je koncentracija neizbježna, drugi pak smatraju da ju ne bi trebalo dopustiti niti po koju cijenu.*

(lit. ‘While some think concentration is inevitable, others think that it should be allowed not at any price.’)

‘While some think concentration is inevitable, others think that it should not be allowed at any price.’

b. *Ratni zločinci ne mogu nekažnjeno šetati niti po jednoj zemlji jugoistočne Europe.*

(lit. ‘War criminals cannot walk around unpunished not in any country in South-Eastern Europe.’)

‘War criminals cannot walk around unpunished in any country in South-Eastern Europe.’

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of data from the *Croatian National Corpus* shows that the Croatian language has two parallel word orders when it comes to prepositional phrases which contain a negative indefinite pronoun, one that is in compliance with the standard norm and the other which goes against the norm but is quite common in many other Slavic languages. The non-standard word order is mainly a feature of everyday spoken language but gradually permeates written language as well as the language heard in the media (the standard still being the prevalent order). Since there appears to be no significant difference in meaning between the use of either one or the other word order, their co-existence may

---

<sup>12</sup> An example found in the *Croatian National Corpus* serves as proof that prepositional phrases may be in this form:

(i) *On tvrdi da sada na nikoji način ne sudjeluje u toj priči.*

‘He claims that he now in no way takes part in this story.’

be attributed to other factors: mostly to the speakers' ignorance of the standard norm, but also to phonology, the attempts at avoiding ambiguity in written communication, or for putting more emphasis on the negative indefinite. It is worth noting that our search of the corpus involving the three most frequent Croatian prepositions and the so-called *i*-pronouns (see footnote 9) yielded somewhat different results than those for negative indefinite pronouns – namely, prepositional phrases involving the prepositions *u*, *na* and *za* are far more rare with *i*-pronouns than with *ni*-pronouns, but when they do appear, the order *P + i-pronoun* is the dominant one. We believe the results would be even more in favor of the non-standard word order with both these types of indefinites if we had at our disposal a corpus of spoken language of comparable size.

#### References:

- BILLINGS, LOREN 1997. Negated prepositional phrases in Slavic. In: *Formal approaches to Slavic linguistics: The Cornell Meeting*. Wayles Browne (ed.). Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 115–134.
- BROWN, SUE 1999. *The Syntax of Negation in Russian*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- CHOMSKY, NOAM 1995. *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Croatian National Corpus (*Hrvatski nacionalni korpus*) 2005. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, version 2.5 (101.3 million tokens).
- DIK, SIMON C. 1989. *The Theory of Functional Grammar; Part I: The Structure of the Clause*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- GIANNAKIDOU, ANASTASIA 2002. N-words and negative concord. In: *The Linguistics Companion*. Henk van Riemsdijk; Rob Goedemans, et al. (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- HALLIDAY, MICHAEL A.K. 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- HARVES, STEPHANIE 1998. The Syntax of Negated Prepositional Phrases in Slavic. In: *Formal approaches to Slavic linguistics 6: The Connecticut Meeting*. Bošković, Željko; Steven Franks and William Snyder (eds.). Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 166–186.
- KLIMA, EDWARD S. 1964. Negation in English. In: *The Structure of Language*. Fodor, Jerry A. and Jerrold J. Katz (eds.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 246–324.
- LAMBRECHT, KNUD 1994. *Information structure and sentence form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- PROGOVAC, LJILJANA 1994. *Negative and positive polarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- RAGUŽ, DRAGUTIN 1997. *Praktična hrvatska gramatika*. Zagreb: Medicinska naklada.
- SILIĆ, JOSIP AND IVO PRANJKOVIĆ 2005. *Gramatika hrvatskoga jezika za gimnazije i visoka učilišta*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
- VAN VALIN, ROBERT D. JR. AND RANDY J. LAPOLLA 1997. *Syntax: Structure, meaning and function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ZOVKO DINKOVIĆ, IRENA 2013. *Negacija u jeziku*. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada.

## Položaj niječnog elementa u prijedložnim izrazima s neodređenim zamjenicama

### Sažetak

Niječni neodređeni izrazi ili *ni*-riječi u hrvatskome složeni su oblici koji se tvore dodavanjem prefiksa *ni*- jednostavnim oblicima neodređenih zamjenica. Norma hrvatskoga standardnog jezika nalaže da se u prijedložnim izrazima koji sadrže niječne neodređene zamjenice (tzv. *ni*-zamjenice) niječni element *ni* odvađa od zamjenice i stavlja ispred prijedloga. Ipak, u svakodnevnoj je komunikaciji sve zamjetnija uporaba poretka *prijedlog + niječna neodređena zamjenica*, a taj poredak prodire i u tiskovine te druge medije. U ovome radu nastojimo utvrditi postoji li bitna razlika u značenju između poretka *ni + prijedlog + neodređena zamjenica* i poretka *prijedlog + niječna neodređena zamjenica*, koja bi utjecala na takvu jezičnu promjenu te ispituje učestalost uporabe različitih poredaka prijedloga i niječnih neodređenih zamjenica u *Hrvatskome nacionalnom korpusu* analizom 11 najfrekventnijih prijedloga te 6 neodređenih zamjenica.

Key words: indefinite pronouns, prepositions, negative prefix, Croatian  
Ključne riječi: neodređene zamjenice, prijedlozi, niječni prefiks, hrvatski