**Finnish NPI indefinites: word order, scope and discourse function**

Neutral Finnish negative clauses conform to the general default SVO order, and the negative auxiliary is placed before the verb, yielding SNegVO. Whenever a negative polarity indefinite (NPI indefinite; see Van Alsenoy & van der Auwera 2015 for the term), i. e. *kukaan* 'anyone' or *mikään* 'any(thing),' is used as a nominative subject, this schematic order results in the order *kukaan ei* 'no one, lit. anyone not,' see (1). This pattern contradicts the recurring claim that an NPI must be c-commanded (and thereby preceded) by its licensor, here the auxiliary *ei* 'not' (cf. e. g. Giannakidou 2006: 372; Tovena 2020: 393). In contrast, the Finnish negative auxiliary may scope over the whole clause, and consequently, license NPIs preceding it (see Israel 2011: 71–72; cf. also Holmberg et al. 1993: 201–205).[1] Still, the negation-initial order NegSVO, as in (2), is also quite frequent, both in present-day and older written or dialectal Finnish (Lindén 1963; Savijärvi 1988). This order, however, is not motivated by necessary scope relations, as claimed by Bernini & Ramat (1996: 192–193), but by discourse function and information structure.

Preposed negation has been identified as a tool for marking the negated proposition discourse-old (Kaiser 2006; Vilkuna 1989: 113–125) and for conveying a reaction to an explicit or implicit assumption about the appropriateness of the proposition (Vilkuna 2015: 473).

(1) *Riita-a        synty-y,   kun  **kukaan ei**     halua      ol-la      hevonen.*
    quarrel-PAR    arise-3SG  when anyone NEG.3SG  want.CNG  be-INF     horse
    'Quarrel arises when no one wants to be a horse.' (Yle News Archive, 2011)

(2) *Väitä-n   myös, että  **ei**        **kukaan**      ole        valmis      vanhemma-ksi…*
    claim-1SG also  that  NEG.3SG    anyone       be.CNG     ready       parent-TRA
    'I also claim that no one is ready for parenthood… (Suomi24, 2014)

The context of (2) conforms to the idea that a negation-initial utterance is essentially reactive: at this point of the discussion (in an online forum), people's ability and preparedness for the demands of parenthood have been under debate from different angles. By contrast, (1), from a description of a film about children's friendships, treats the situation where none of the children wants the role of a horse in a planned play as a discourse-new reason for an arising quarrel.

Comparing (1) and (2), the contrast between the S(NPI)Neg order introducing (relatively) new information (1) and the NegS(NPI) order reacting towards old information (2) seems clear. However, we will show that the whole picture is more complex by exploring the conditions on the mutual order of the negative auxiliary *ei* and NPI indefinites in two corpora, Yle Finnish News Archive (years 2011–2014; ca. 286,5 m. tokens) and the Suomi24 Sentences Corpus (year 2014; ca. 265,6 m. tokens). The core analysis is based on a sample of ca. 1000 tokens from both corpora and focused on NPI indefinites in the "default T" role occupying the topic position (see Vilkuna 1989), e. g. subjects or possessors in possessive clauses. Variables to be separately considered are, first, NPI indefinites as part of complex NPs (e. g. *kukaan lapsista* 'anyone of the children), and second, negator-clitic combinations, such as *ettei* (< *että ei*) 'that not' and *eikä* 'and not', which are clause-initial and therefore exclude the *kukaan ei* variant.

Our preliminary data on *kukaan* 'anyone' suggest that the relative frequency of the negation-initial order is higher in the discussion forum data (Suomi24) than in the news texts (Yle), which is to be expected given the often argumentative nature of the internet discussions (see 2). However, preposed negation is so common in the data as a whole that the concept of the default order for negative clauses must be critically discussed: The pattern SNegVO relies

---

[1] Hence, an indefinite's ability to appear clause-initially in a negative clause does not directly mean that it is a negative concord item (NCI) / an n-word (cf. Giannakidou 2006: 372; see also Van Alsenoy & van der Auwera 2015: 537–538).

on the analogy with affirmative clauses, whereas the general pragmatics of negation makes preposed negation much less marked order than the corresponding configuration in an affirmative clause, where the finite element can also be preposed (Lindén 1963; Vilkuna 2015: 474). Moreover, as we will discuss, clauses with NPI indefinites in default T role create a specific group even within negative clauses.

Summing up, our goal is to create a fine-grained picture of the word order patterns with NPI indefinites and the negative auxiliary in Finnish. Our preliminary results suggest two revisions regarding the existing literature: Neither is the negation-initial order obligatory (cf. NPI licensing and negative scope), nor the default status of S(NPI)Neg order unproblematic (cf. the general discourse-bound pragmatics of the negation). The alternation of *kukaan ei* 'lit. anyone not' ~ *ei kukaan* 'lit. not anyone' lies between these extremes, which reveals that the linear syntax of negative clauses must be accounted for not only as less frequent relatives of affirmative clauses, but with subtle understanding of the pragmatics of negation.

## Data

City Digital Group (2021). *The Suomi24 Sentences Corpus 2001–2020, Korp version* [data set]. Kielipankki. Retrieved from http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:lb-2021101525

Yleisradio. *Yle Finnish News Archive 2011–2018, scrambled, Korp* [data set]. Kielipankki. Retrieved from http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:lb-2019121004

## References

Bernini, Giuliano & Paolo Ramat 1996: *Negative Sentences in the Languages of Europe. A Typological Approach.* Empirical Approaches to Language Typology 16. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Giannakidou, Anastasia 2006: N-Words and Negative Concord. In M. Everaert & H. van Riemsdijk (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax* 3, 327–391. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Holmberg, Anders, Urpo Nikanne, Irmeli Oraviita, Hannu Reime, Trond Trosterud 1993: The structure of INFL and the finite clause in Finnish. In Holmberg, A. & U. Nikanne (eds.), *Case and Other Functional Categories in Finnish Syntax*, 177–206. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Israel, Michael 2011: *The Grammar of Polarity. Pragmatics, sensitivity, and the logic of scales.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaiser, Elsi 2006: Negation and the left periphery in Finnish. – *Lingua* 116: 314–350.

Lindén, Eeva 1963: Kieltolauseen sanajärjestyksestä suomen kirjakielessä. [On word order in negative sentences in written Finnish.] – *Virittäjä* 67: 214–226.

Savijarvi, Ilkka 1988: Kieltoverbialkuiset lauseet itämerensuomalaisissa kielissä [Negative-verb-initial sentences in Baltic Finnic languages]. In M. Ojanen & I. Savijarvi (eds.), *Kielikontakteja I*, 32–75. Joensuu: University of Joensuu.

Tovena, Lucia M. 2020: Negative Polarity Items. In Viviane Déprez & M. Teresa Espinal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Negation*, 391–406. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Alsenoy, Lauren & Johan van der Auwera 2015: Indefinite pronouns in Uralic languages. In M. Miestamo, A. Tamm & B. Wagner-Nagy (eds.), *Negation in Uralic Languages*, 519–546. Typological Studies in Language 108. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Vilkuna, Maria 2015: Negation in Finnish. In M. Miestamo, A. Tamm & B. Wagner-Nagy (eds.), *Negation in Uralic Languages*, 457–485. Typological Studies in Language 108. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Vilkuna, Maria 1989: *Free Word Order in Finnish. Its Syntax and Discourse Functions.* Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.