ФИЛОЛОГ

ЧАСОПИС ЗА ЈЕЗИК, КЊИЖЕВНОСТ И КУЛТУРУ

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NOUN PHRASES IN NEWS REPORTS IN SERBIAN: WORDS TIGHTLY PACKED

Abstract: News reports belong to a register that strives to provide the reader with as much information as possible packed into as little space as possible. In order to achieve these competing goals, the texts tend to rely on structural resources which are particularly suitable to express their content most economically. Studies have shown that newspaper texts in English are especially prone to pack their content into integrated noun phrase constructions, heavily modified with both pre- and post-head elements. What could be expressed in a number of separate sentences is compressed into highly complex noun phrases, predominantly featuring appositive structures and relative clauses as post-modifiers, and nouns and noun phrases as pre-modifiers. This small-scale research seeks to demonstrate that newspaper texts in Serbian resemble those in English in their frequent recourse to tightly packed noun phrases. Although it is reasonable to expect that, owing to their structural differences, the two languages will at times differ in the exact ways in which they set out to accomplish these tasks, the end result is consistent with the assumption that both readily exploit the potential of heavily modified noun phrases in informational registers such as news reporting.

Key words: *noun phrase, pre-modifier, post-modifier, multiple modification, subordinated modification, news reporting, English, Serbian*

1. Introduction

Studies have shown that the noun phrase in English is one of the structures most capable of undergoing heavy modification by a variety of elements stretching both before and after the head word (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990; Halliday and Mathiessen 2004). This structural property of the English noun phrase has been used unsparingly in circumstances in which two competing goals strive to be accomplished: one is to be as informative as possible, and the other to use space as economically as possible. The perfect arena where these opposing demands are attested is, for reasons that are not difficult to understand, newspaper reporting.

In a corpus-based approach Biber (2004: 179) reports that newspaper prose continues to rely on register-specific noun phrase structures such as non-finite and appositive post-modifiers, as well as subordinated noun phrase pre-modifiers. The effects of such tightly-packed noun phrases are best seen after rewording some of the original examples from Biber's corpus. A single sentence featuring a noun phrase built around an abstract noun and post-modified by a to-infinitive clause, e.g. *Meetings on Friday morning also ended without **a decision to accept the deal which provides for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip*** (Biber 2004: 178), could have been replaced with a series of short phrases and sentences as in the following reconstruction: *The negotiators met on Friday morning and, among other things, discussed the terms of a deal. It was about giving the Palestinians self-rule in the Gaza*

Strip. The Israelis did not accept the deal and the meeting came to an end. Another example is that reconstructed from a noun phrase featuring an appositive post-modifier, as in **Oliver Gillie, deputy editor of The Independent Magazine and formerly medical editor of the newspaper** (Biber 2004: 178). A less integrated alternative would spread the content of the noun phrase in two separate sentences, for example, *Olivier Gillie is deputy editor of The Independent Magazine. He was also medical editor of the newspaper*. The last reconstruction at this point takes the head word 'system' pre-modified by an intricate noun phrase involving multi-level subordination, **HP's automatic software distribution system** (Biber 2004: 174), and distributes the phrase content in two separate clauses: *HP has got a system, and that system distributes software automatically*. The three original structures illustrate that the result is a compressed style in which extensive amounts of information are subsumed under phrase level, avoiding repetition and consequently reducing the general number of sentences in text.

According to Downing and Locke (2003: 493), a markedly 'nominal' style makes extensive use of abstractions and nominalisations, and is to be associated mainly with formal and technical contexts of language use. Admittedly, the authors observe that nominal density *per se* is a regular feature of any form of communication, which is virtually impossible without nominal expressions, their abstract varieties included. It is for that reason that the notion of nominal density needs to be reinforced with that of nominal complexity. Indeed, there are studies investigating degrees of nominal complexity in texts belonging to different registers. Using a quantificational approach, Ni (2004: 170) found that texts with an informational focus (i.e. first and foremost designed to inform the reader) displayed a strong tendency towards nominal complexity and differed significantly in that respect from their counterparts whose primary role was an interactive one (i.e. engaging speakers in various forms of social interaction).

2. Research aims, methodology and corpus

The aim of this paper is to point out that the potential of the noun phrase to grow from a mere pronoun into a fully-fledged, tightly-packed meaning complex is not necessarily a property associated with one language only. It would be reasonable to assume that there are languages other than English in which the noun phrase can go from the simplest to the most complex form, in which it can develop to its full structural potential. Similarly, press news reports are expected to be found in an overwhelming majority of literate communities. Regardless of the language they are written in, they ought to have at least one communicative function in common: namely, to inform the reader (Bell 2000). To this end, a language will tend to make use of those strategies and resources that express maximum information in a relatively economical, space-saving format, likely to yield elaborate yet compact and integrated meaning blocks. It would not be unreasonable to assume that, should a language have at its disposal nominal expressions which can undergo heavy modification if required, such useful devices will be readily employed in informative texts such as press news reports. This small-scale research rests on the intuitive belief that the integrated noun phrase in news writing is a widely exploited device in Serbian too, helping journalists to overcome restrictions of space. The results obtained for the noun phrase structure in press news reports in English (Biber 2004; Ni 2004) are indirectly compared to those found in the pilot research at hand exploring the structure of the noun phrase in press news reports in Serbian. The study purports to demonstrate that, although

the two languages may differ in the exact ways in which they achieve the tight packaging of their noun phrases, the end result, summed up under the notion of nominal complexity, remains essentially unchanged.

The corpus underlying the study was composed of front page news downloaded from the official site of *Glas Srpske*[1], a national daily[2], over a period of two weeks in August 2009. The content of front page news was quite diverse, covering a variety of topics and localities: regional, national and international political and financial news dominated the headlines, but were occasionally interspersed with art reports and human interest stories. The noun phrases selected for analysis were required to meet several criteria. First of all, simple[3] noun phrases were not taken into account, 'simple' referring either to those noun phrases comprising no more than the head noun or pronoun alone or any one noun phrase in which the total number of elements was lower than four. Discontinuous noun phrases, those with elements separated from the head of the entire unit by intervening ones[4], were also disregarded. The process of downloading news reports and selecting nominal expressions therein continued until the noun phrase corpus reached a total of 300 complex units. A limited, manually-handled corpus compiled to meet these criteria was obviously not meant to count the overall number of all noun phrases in texts, but was instead designed to explore whether news texts in Serbian were prone to nominal complexity in the first place, and if so, how this complexity was expressed in terms of syntagmatic organisation and structure. With

these reservations in mind, the corpus was analysed combining structural and semantic criteria: the noun phrases were classified into pre- and post-head elements in general as well as according to their various specific realisations (e.g. adjective phrase, relative clause etc.); both pre- and post-head units were in their own right analysed for structural complexity (e.g. simple, multiple etc.); if deemed relevant, the elements were also examined for their semantic properties (e.g. abstract, personal etc.); finally, every result was expressed in percentages and every classification tabulated.

One final caveat is in order before we proceed with a general overview of the noun phrase structure in English and Serbian: the language that served as a model and basis for comparison in this study was English, complete with the descriptive procedures and the metalanguage it entails[5]. This decision was taken in order to avoid technical pitfalls such as going through the trouble of renaming structural terms that do not coincide in the two languages. If the differences in the noun phrase structure were considered too great to be dealt with in this simplistic manner, a neutral term was coined for the purposes of the current research.

3. A general overview of the noun phrase structure in English and Serbian

According to Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 375-405), among the most common pre-modifiers in the English noun phrase are adjective and noun phrases, along with –ing and –ed participles, as in the following examples: *a **lovely young** woman*,

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1 www.glassrpske.com
2 The newspaper literally translates into English as *The Voice of Srpska*.
3 Note that the word 'simple' is in this case more of a convenient shorthand than it is a technical term.
4 See the following section for an illustration of nominal discontinuity in Serbian.

5 The way the noun phrase is described in Serbian does not necessarily coincide with the English system, either functionally or formally. The following section will briefly discuss some conceptual and related differences between the noun phrase structure in the two languages.

ocean waves, *your* **lying** *friends*, **ready-made** *clothes*. The less common pre-head structures include genitives, adverbials and sentences, for example, **yesterday's** *news*, *the* **after** *life*, *his* **nobody-is-as-good-as-me** *attitude*. The post-modifiers come in several forms too, some of which are more frequent than others: post-modifying prepositional phrases, relative clauses and infinitival, –ing and –ed non-finite clauses (e.g. *the puppy* **in the little girl's arms**, *students* **who attend classes and do their homework**, *procedures* **to be followed**, *cats* **purring by the fire**, *walls* **painted white**) generally outnumber appositive post-modifiers, which can appear in syntagmatic or clausal form, adverb and adjective phrases, along with postposed nouns (e.g. *the Millennium Eye*, **one of London's more recent landmarks**, *the idea* **that you can't beat the unbeatable**, *the way* **in**, *anybody* **clever enough**, *veal* **paprika**).

Both pre- and post-modifiers are easily bound in relationships of dependency or subordination, e.g. **EU membership** *negotiations*, in which 'EU' modifies 'membership', which in turn modifies 'negotiations', or *the shocking contents* **of the letter that his unsuspecting wife found under a pile of books in the library**, in which 'the letter' from the immediately post-modifying prepositional phrase *of the letter* is further post-modified by the succeeding relative clause *that his unsuspecting wife found under a pile of books in the library*. Likewise, it is fairly easy to make both pre- and post-modifiers in the English noun phrase recursive, e.g. **delicious savoury** *snacks*, in which the first premodifying adjective describes and the second classifies the head noun independently of each other, or *the TV* **in the guest room that broke down ages ago**, in which the head noun is post-modified independently by two separate structures, first the prepositional phrase *in the guest room* and then the relative clause *that broke down ages ago*.

Although this sketchy overview made use of relatively simple examples, the inherent complexity of the noun phrase in English is one of its conspicuous properties, a claim that was amply quoted in the introduction of this paper. Indeed, coming up with a highly complex noun phrase should hardly present a challenging task, e.g. *Mark and Sheila, the banking agency employees whose services we first sought out when we were thinking of buying a second home in Bristol, which turned out slightly out of our league* (and this could go on for a while more).

Unlike English, Serbian is a language with an elaborate seven-case system, which has driven most of the noun phrase discussion in that direction[6]. Relying heavily on the notions of congruence and supplementation (Simić 1999: 200), the noun phrase is described as a structure consisting of the indispensable head noun and potentially flanked by two dominant functional categories, attributive and appositive. Each can be realised by roughly the same structures, notably adjective and noun phrases. Adjective phrases are congruent with the noun (i.e. agree with it in gender, number and case) whether they precede or follow it, whether they function attributively or appositively[7], e.g.

zgodan sg masc NOMINATIVE *momak*
handsome fellow

(a handsome fellow)

djevojka, lijepa i pametna sg fem NOMINATIVE
girl beautiful and smart

(a beatiful smart girl).

Noun phrases can also both precede and follow the head noun (be juxtaposed

6 For coverage of the noun phrase in Serbian, this paper has drawn largely from Ivić (2005) and Simić (1999).
7 Attributes form closer semantic ties with the noun, whereas appositives are thought of as providing additional information. However, their semantic properties do not necessarily affect their distribution (i.e. both can occur before and after the head noun).

left and right to it), or supplement it in the form of another case-assigned noun following the head. Noun phrases too can act either appositively or attributively, e.g.

Petar, zgodan i vrijedan momak
sg masc NOMINATIVE
Peter handsome and hardworking fellow
    (Peter, a handsome and hardworking fellow)

zgodan i vrijedan momak, Petar
sg masc NOMINATIVE
handsome and hardworking fellow Peter
    (Peter, a handsome and hardworking fellow)

djevojka sg fem NOMINATIVE
crne kose sg fem GENITIVE
girl black hair
        (a girl with black hair)

srce sg neut NOMINATIVE
od kamena sg masc GENITIVE
heart of stone[8]
        (a heart of stone)

Although in Serbian prepositions are treated as case-assigners within noun phrases, we have decided, based on the English model, to regard all the noun phrases in the corpus that are preceded by a preposition as prepositional phrases. This decision was made in the hope that English-friendly labels will facilitate reading of this text and make it easier to compare the results obtained with those already reported for English.

To set them apart from the noun phrases introduced by a preposition as well as those juxtaposed to the head noun with which they share the same case (i.e. appositive noun phrases), the preposition-free post-modifying noun phrases that supplement the head noun in the form of a different case will here be referred to as oblique, e.g.

dani pl masc NOMINATIVE days
mira sg masc GENITIVE peace
        (days of peace)

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8 Note that the post-modifying noun phrase *od kamena* (which is, for that matter, attributive, as is the one in the preceding example, *crne kose*) corroborates case with a preposition.

All of the noun phrases illustrated so far have been presented as uninterrupted sequences of elements; however, it must be observed that discontinuity of the noun phrase in Serbian is one of the features adding to its prospective complexity. Consider the adjective phrase *radosni* in the following sentence:

dječaci pl masc NOMINATIVE
su odskakali radosni pl masc NOMINATIVE
boys were jumping happy
        (The boys were jumping happily.)

The adjective *radosni* agrees with the noun *dječaci* in gender, number and case, and is understood as forming part of the noun phrase. Admittedly, it may seem more appealing to classify *radosni* as an adverbial, but a purely adverbial meaning would require a separate adverbial form, *radosno*, corresponding to the English adverbial 'happily'. Such and similar examples are discussed in Simić (1999: 250) under the notion of 'exlocation'.

This paper has also classified all Serbian quantifiers and referring pronominal expressions[9] (Piper 2005: 91–97) as adjectives since Serbian is in general oblivious to the concept of determination as we find it in English.

Interestingly, whereas in English determination refers to a category of function words that precede the noun, notably the articles, definite and indefinite, along with demonstrative, possessive, quantifying and a few other items, in Serbian the term is used to cover what is basically the domain of pre- and post-modification in English (Ivić 2005; Simić 1999). In order to avoid any misunderstandings, we have decided to remain loyal to the English terminology and classify as pre-modifiers all items that precede the head noun in Serbian, and as post-modifiers all items that follow it. It is for the same reason that we have tried hard not to overuse the notions of attribution and apposition, having al-

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9 Some of those are demonstratives and possessives.

ready acknowledged their high-profile status in the noun phrase in Serbian.

Here comes more evidence that the two languages interpret the same terms in their own specific ways. In Serbian, non-resrictive relative clauses basically represent one more form with appositive function in the noun phrase (Piper 2005: 74). In accordance with the English model, which differentiates between relative and appositive clauses (cf. Greenbaum and Quirk 1990), this paper too makes a distinction between those clauses that admit the relative pronoun proper (e.g. who or which) and those that enter into intensive relationships with the abstract noun they follow and obligatorily replace the relative pronoun proper with a more general Serbian complementiser *da*, e.g.

planovi koje podržavam present 1st person
sg plans which endorse-I

(plans that I endorse)

planovi da se otvaraju present 3rd
person pl *nova radna mjesta*
plans that one opens new work places

(plans to create more jobs)

For the sake of simplicity, appositive forms will in this paper be understood in the English sense of the word with reference to a nominal post-head element.

Finally, as will become apparent in the discussion below, both pre- and post-head elements in the noun phrase in Serbian are liable to subordination and recursion, as we have already acknowledged to be true for the noun phrase in English[10]. In this paper, multiple modification is a term used to cover those noun phrases that consisted of more than one pre- or post-modifier, provided that none of them was subject to subordination. Complex modification, on the other hand, pertained to noun phrases with single pre- or post-head elements which were bound in a relationship of sub-

ordination, i.e. pre- or post-modifiers that were themselves (pre- or post-) modified. If a noun phrase contained multiple pre- or post-head elements, any of which were complex in the sense defined above, they were made members of the complex-and-multiple category. Noun phrases with single pre- or post-head elements not involving subordination at any level qualified for the simple type of modification.

Although quite limited in scope, this brief overview will hopefully serve to map out the main territory of the noun phrase in Serbian and facilitate understanding of the forthcoming section.

4. Results and discussion

The general results show that the noun phrase in news reports in Serbian is especially prone to post-modification, while pre-modifiers themselves point to a reversed trend. Pre-head forms make a more significant contribution to the noun phrase structure in news texts only when they occur in expressions that also incorporate post-head elements, e.g.

(197)[11]
isti ljudi koji su bili kreatori ratnih
zbivanja u BiH i Sarajevu[12]
same people who were creators war
events in BH and Sarajevo

(the same people who were the masterminds
of war in BH and Sarajevo)

(276)
aktivni policijski službenik u Odjeljenju
kriminalističke policije
active police officer in Department Criminal Police

(an active police officer in the Criminal Police

Department)

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10 As similarities here outweigh the differences, exemplification may not be necessary at this point.

11 The numbers reflect the order in which noun phrases appear in the corpus.

12 In order to save space and enhance readability, only a simplified annotation will be provided for the noun phrases in Serbian (i.e. individual words are matched in the order in which they occur with their English equivalents in the next line without providing the otherwise relevant morphological information).

The distribution of percentages for both pre- and post-modification is presented in the table below:

Modification	Percentage
Pre-head	1
Post-head	65
Pre- and post-head	34

Table 1: Position of modification

In news reports in Serbian the pre-modifier literally marks the beginning of a noun phrase that ends with post-modification, but is itself not to be taken as a primary source of nominal complexity. This observation is further corroborated with the finding that a vast majority of pre-modifiers in the corpus have neither multiple nor complex internal structure. For a summary of the results see Table 2:

Pre-modification	Percentage
Simple	74
Multiple	16
Complex	10

Table 2: Simple versus recursive and embedded pre-modifying structures

Unlike English, Serbian does not readily allow pre-modification in the form of noun phrases, e.g. baggage inspection procedures[13] (Biber 2004: 176). Whether multiple or complex, pre-modifiers in the noun phrase in Serbian are predominantly adjectival, e.g.

(84)
bezbrojna službena putovanja u inostranstvo
countless official trips to foreign countries
(countless business trips abroad)

(285)
prilično racionalan pristup problemima država kandidata i budućih kandidata
rather rational approach problems state candidates and future candidates
(a rather rational approach to the problems of present and future candidate states)

The pre-modified noun phrases illustrate that this type of modification in Serbian does not nearly match the potential reported for pre-modifying sequences in media texts in English (Biber 2004: 174), possibly owing to a restriction on nominal pre-head sequences[14]. Rendering further support to this claim is the finding that pre-modifying chains in the Serbian corpus only exceptionally exceed two individual words, as reported in Table 3:

Pre-head items	Percentage
One	73
Two	21
Three	4
Four	2

Table 3: Number of pre-modifying wordsper noun phrase

A vast majority of the pre-modifying items are actually adjectives proper, central members of the adjectival category, with participial and closed-class adjectives making a significantly smaller contribution to the overall pre-modification scheme in news reports in Serbian. A summary of the results is presented in the table below:

Open-class adjective	Percentage	Closed-class adjective	Percentage
Proper	72	Quantifying	16
Deverbal	6	Pronominal	6

Table 4: Types of pre-modifying structures

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13 Such phrases usually translate to Serbian through post-modification, e.g. *procedure provjere prtljaga*, which translates back to English as 'procedures for the inspection of baggage'.

14 When the noun phrase does precede the head noun in Serbian, it actually behaves appositively, but such instances are entirely absent from the corpus. For a quick reminder see section 3.

The initial assumption that adjectives proper and participles, unlike pronominal and quantifying classes, will be more inclined to engage in relationships of sub-modification has not gained support in numbers. Regardless of their formal and meaning properties, adjectival pre-modifiers in general have not expressed willingness to undergo extensive forms of sub-modification, as the following examples suggest:

(113)
poslovni pakt vrijedan nekoliko milijardi evra
business[15] pact worth several billion euros
       (a business deal worth several billion euros)

(187)
dobro čuvana tajna, koja se za sada
može čuti samo nezvanično
well kept secret which one for
now can hear only off-the-record
       (a well-kept secret, which can for now
         only be heard off the record)

(72)
mnogo slučajeva da određeni zakoni ne
budu usvojeni u Narodnoj skupštini RS
many cases that specific laws not be
passed in National Assemly RS
   (many cases of specific laws that have not been
       passed by the RS Parliament)

Having documented that pre-modifying segments in Serbian news reports are not critical in giving the noun phrase as a whole the name of a markedly complex unit, we now turn to those elements that might as well live up to the task and bring the noun phrase in Serbian closer to its English counterpart than the pre-modification sphere proved capable of.

As illustrated in Table 5 below, simple post-modification is virtually non-existent in the corpus, which, on the other hand, abounds in post-head units embedding other units. Percentages also indicate a high frequency of post-modifiers that incorporate both embedding and recursion within a single noun phrase. Interestingly

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15 Note that the English pre-modifier 'business' takes a fully adjectival form in Serbian (cf. 'poslovni').

enough, recursive post-modification is hardly ever reported independently of noun phrases with complex post-modification. Such a trend seems to promote dependency as a primary relationship within the noun phrase post-modification in news texts in Serbian:

Post-modification	Percentage
Simple	1
Multiple	2
Complex	57
Complex and multiple	40

Table 5: *Simple versus recursive and embedded post-modifying structures*

The result is a rather lengthy noun phrase which contains a great deal of information and presumably requires more processing effort from the reader. The following is an example of post-modification which is both complex and multiple:

(140)
navode iz saopštenja Ministarstva
inostranih poslova BiH da je rekao
allegations from communiqué Ministry
Foreign Affairs BH that said-he

da je Ilija Jurišić, optužen za ratni
zločin u slučaju 'Tuzlanska kolona'
that Ilija Jurišić indicted for war crime
in case Tuzla convoy

polovinom septembra trebao da bude na slobodi
mid September should have been at large

 (allegations in a BH Foreign Office communiqué
    that he said that Ilija Jurišić, indicted for war
   crimes in the Tuzla Convoy case, should have
       been released by mid September)

(The head noun 'allegations' is post-modified by a prepositional phrase and a that-clause, and the that-clause itself contains another that-clause.)

The most common post-modifiers in news reports in Serbian include oblique noun phrases along with prepositional phrases:

(119)
poslovni projekti suvlasnika najvećeg
lanca kockarnica u istočnoj Evropi
business projects co-owner biggest
chain casino in eastern Europe

Ritsio Entertainment, koji ima
25 hiljada zaposlenih
Ritsio Entertainment which has
25 thousand employees

    (business projects launched by the co-owner of
the biggest casino chain in Eastern Europe,
Ritsio Entertainment, which has
25,000 employees)

(200)
podaci o krivičnim djelima ratnih zločina
počinjenih nad Srbima
information about criminal acts war crimes
committed over Serbs

u Sarajevu tokom proteklog rata
in Sarajevo during recent war

    (records about war crimes committed against
Serbs in Sarajevo during the recent war)

That these two post-modifying struc-
tures have the highest occurrence rate in
the study is not surprising: they merely
exploit the morphological potential of a
case language like Serbian. For other types
of post-modifying structures and their
frequency in press news in Serbian, see
the table below:

Post-modifier	Percentage
Oblique noun phrase	31
Prepositional phrase	28
Relative clause	18
Appositive noun phrase	11
Appositive clause	8
Adjective phrase	4

Table 6: Types of post-modifying structures

Biber (2004: 177–8) lists several post-
modifying structures that are especially
characteristic of newspaper prose in Eng-

lish: relative clauses, appositive noun
phrases and infinitival appositive clauses.
All these are reported in the Serbian cor-
pus too, with relative clauses scoring some-
what better than appositive noun phrases
and clauses. However, regardless of the
form a post-modifier takes, the following
heavily post-modified noun phrases all
suggest a compressed style of expression:

(80)
ti koji će se morati dogovoriti i odlučiti
kako i na koji način će
those who will have to negotiate and decide
how and in what way will-they

raspodijeliti imovinu, putem sporazuma
između državne i entitetskih vlada
divide property through agreements
between state and entity governments

(those who will have to negotiate and decide how
and in what way to divide the property, through
agreements between the central and national
governments)

(116)
Dragomir Karić, potpredsjednik
"BK grupe" i predstavnik ruske
Dragomir Karić vice-president
BK Group and representative Russian

Trgovinsko-industrijske komore,
rođeni brat Bogoljuba Karića,
Commercial-Industrial Chamber
own brother Bogoljub Karić

koga je Koštuničina vlada protjerala iz Srbije
whom did Koštunica's government exile from Serbia

    (Dragomir Karić, vice-president of the BK
Group and representative of the Russian Cham-
ber of Commerce and Industry, brother of Bo-
goljub Karić, who was exiled from Serbia by
Koštunica's government)

(263)
činjenica da se ekonomski i socijalni
program, pa čak i planovi
fact that are economic and social
programme and even plans

sveobuhvatne reforme penzijskog sistema,
izrađuju na osnovu procjena
overall reform pension system
made on basis evaluations

i zastarjelih podataka
and outdated information

(the fact that economic and social programmes, and even plans for the overall pension scheme reform, are based on evaluation and outdated records)

The examples above are very telling of a degree of complexity the noun phrase in Serbian is susceptible to, which seems to be, at least in the press news register, unaffected by the choice of the head word, as the table below suggests:

Head noun	Percentage
Abstract	31
Deverbal	31
Personal/institutional	26
Other	12

Table 7: *Classes of noun phrase heads*

Whether referring to abstract notions (e.g. initiative, situation, result), individuals or institutions (e.g. officer, councillor, commission), whether derived from verbs (e.g. accusation, establishment, authorisation) or not, the nouns in this study have proved exceptionally inclined to accept post-modification in a variety of complex forms.

5. Closing remarks

News reporting has to be both informative and economical, with journalists working under constant pressure to keep the information presented to the reader within a manageable limit (Bell 1999). Studies have shown that news reports in English have developed devices to assist them in reconciling these competing demands (Biber 2004; Ni 2004). Newspaper prose tends to rely on structural resources which are especially suitable for expressing their content most economically, building noun phrase structures heavily modified with both pre- and post-head elements. The result is a compressed style, in which the same content that could be distributed over a number of separate clauses is compressed into highly complex noun phrases,

predominantly featuring appositive structures and relative clauses as post-modifiers, and noun sequences as pre-modifiers.

On the assumption that economy is a universally acknowledged principle in news writing, this paper has attempted to demonstrate that news reports in Serbian resemble those in English in their frequent recourse to tightly integrated noun phrases. The general outcome is entirely supportive of the initial assumption although, owing to their structural differences, the two languages did not always achieve nominal complexity in completely identical ways. Serbian was particularly prone to make the post-head spot the bulkiest segment of the noun phrase, leaving the pre-head structure relatively unburdened. Also, Serbian prevalently resorted to those types of post-modification that exploited its potential as a case language, English obviously not sharing that feature.

Notwithstanding the differences, the noun phrase in Serbian has proved capable of assuming remarkably complex forms, as exemplified in the section above. It seems safe to conclude, then, that Serbian has joined the ranks of languages that share their reliance on heavily modified noun phrases in informational registers such as news reporting.

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IMENIČKA SINTAGMA U NOVINSKIM ČLANCIMA NA SRPSKOM JEZIKU: OBILJE U MALOM PAKOVANJU

Rezime

Štampani mediji prirodno teže da budu što informativniji za svoje čitaoce, ali se istovremeno moraju povinovati zakonima ekonomičnosti, nastojeći da ponude što više materijala na što manje novinskog prostora. Stoga je razumljivo da se u pisanju novinskih izvještaja prednost daje upravo onim strukturama koje istovremeno posjeduju i izražajni i ekonomični potencijal. Istraživanja novinskog registra na engleskom jeziku dokazala su dominantno prisustvo krajnje razvijenih imeničkih sintagmi, ostvarenih složenom premodifikacijom u vidu subordinisanih imeničkih sklopova i postmodifikacijom u obliku apozitivnih i relativnih struktura. Na taj se način stvaraju koncentrisane sintagmatske jedinice, čiji sadržaj bi, u duhu manje nominalnog stila, mogao da obuhvati i nekoliko klauza. Ovo pilot istraživanje ima za cilj da pokaže da se u novinskim člancima na srpskom jeziku, kao i onim na engleskom, pribjegava složenoj ali kompaktnoj strukturi imeničke sintagme, koja predstavlja istinsko obilje u malom pakovanju. Iako je razumljivo da će se konkretan format ovako integrisane sintagmatske jedinice u dva jezika donekle razlikovati, shodno strukturnim razlikama između dva sistema, krajnji rezultat potvrđuje pretpostavku da se informativni registri i u engleskom i u srpskom jeziku obilato koriste imeničkom sintagmom kako bi donekle pomirili suprotstavljene zahtjeve informativnosti i ekonomičnosti.

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