

# Negative Prefixes In English And Their Equivalents In Serbian Within Computer Register

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## Abstract

This paper deals with the analysis of English prefixes expressing negation and the equivalents in the Serbian language within computer register. Since a wide range of new words appears in the process of new technologies development, it is essential to study and analyze the way they were formed.

Examining negative prefixes in computer register in English, we have found five of them: *de-*, *dis-*, *in-*, *non-*, *un-*. In terms of the Serbian equivalents the research has shown that they are the following: *de-*, *dis-*, *iz-*, *ne-*, *po-*, *pre-*, *raz-*. It has been discovered that the prefixes *de-* and *dis-* (in one of the examples) are translated into Serbian by their international analogues. In the case of the *in-* and *non-* prefixes, the research shows that it has a direct equivalent and it is the prefix *ne-*. Findings also show that the English prefix *un-* has more than one equivalent in Serbian, surprisingly, there are four of them: *ne-*, *po-*, *iz-* and *raz-*.

The analysis implies etymology (focus on origin), semantics (including meaning) and morphology (including derivational patterns of one-word terms).

**Key words:** negative prefixes, computer register, etymology, semantics, morphology

## Introduction

New technologies, as the computer technology is, require new terminology. Since a wide range of new words appears in the process of new technologies development, it is essential to study and analyze the way they were formed. It should be noted that negative prefixes have an important role in word formation in the English language, as well as in Serbian.

It is important to note that we expected more differences of prefixes in two analysed languages. Examining negative prefixes in computer register in English, we have found five of them: *de-*, *dis-*, *in-*, *non-*, *un-*. On the other hand, the research has shown that the equivalents in Serbian are the following: *de-*, *dis-*, *iz-*, *ne-*, *po-*, *pre-*, *raz-*.

In addition, they can be classified according to the origin, where in English the prefix *un-* is the only native prefix, whereas, in Serbian *iz-*, *ne-*, *po-*, *pre-*, *raz-* are of native origin, and *de-* and *dis-* are prefixes of foreign origin.

Morphologically speaking, these prefixes in the English language form verbs (*de-*, *dis-*, *un-*), nouns (*in-*, *non-*, *un-*) and adjectives (*in-*, *non-*, *un-*). In Serbian the situation is the following: prefixes *iz-*, *ne-*, *po-*, *pre-*, *raz-* form verbs, *ne-* prefix forms nouns, and the same is with forming adjectives.

Thus, in the following we look in more detail at negative prefixes, their meaning, origin and derivational patterns. The prefixes are listed in alphabetical order.

### The analysis of negative prefixes

#### 1. Prefix *de-*

Let us begin by examining the prefix *de-*. From the point of view of etymology, this prefix is of Latin origin. As noted by Quirk (1985), the prefix is called reversative, because it means 'reversating the process described by the original words' as in the example of the verb *demodulate* which means 'to reverse modulate'.

Regarding the prefix *de-*, Stekauer and Lieber (2005) conclude that it is typically characterized as privative, expressing 'lacking, not having, or preventing from having'. Take, for example, the verb *demagnetize* which means 'not having magnetic properties'.

Dealing with the same prefix, Jespersen (1970) concludes that it is a verbal one, as it is confirmed in the case of computer register. Apparently, from the examples we have found out, this prefix attaches verbs in *ize-* and *ate-* (except *decode*). Here are a few examples:

*deactivate - deaktivirati*

*decentralize - decentralizovati*

*decode - dekodirati*

*demodulate - demodulisati*

*demagnetize - demagnetisati*

*denormalize - denormalizovati*

As it can be seen from the examples above, the prefix *de-* is appeared in the Serbian language in all these examples. In other words, it means that there is no a direct equivalent in Serbian.

Klajn (2002) states out that it is primarily a verbal prefix, so, a great number of nouns can be considered derivatives from verbs. He also points out that the characteristic of this prefix is, that it attaches to the foreign origin bases, as it is evident from the above mentioned examples.

#### 2. Prefix *dis-*

Next, let us discuss the prefix *dis-*. Etymologically, the prefix is of Latin origin, just like the previous one. According to Zandvoort (1969), this prefix may express negative meaning, or the reversal of an action. Take, for example, the verb *disassemble*, and it means 'to reverse the process of assembly'; whereas, the verb *disconnect* is 'the opposite of connect'.

As is evident from all the examples here, it is a verbal prefix. Now, here are some verbs with the prefix *dis-*:

*disassemble - disasemblirati*

*disconnect - prekidati*

*dispatch - rasporediti*

*displace - premeštati*

It is interesting to notice that this prefix has three equivalents in Serbian. They are: *dis-*, *pre-*, *raz-*. With the exception of the prefix *dis-*, as an international analogue, the others are of native origin.

According to Klajn (2002) *dis-* is the verbal prefix with privative meaning, as in *disasemblirati* ('preventing from assemble').

The other one is the prefix *raz-*, and it is one of the most productive prefixes in the Serbian language. It is interesting to notice that this prefix is added to a prefixed verb (*ras + po + rediti*). It is worth mentioning that double prefixation is a characteristic of the Serbian language. The meaning of the verb *rasporediti* is 'motion in different directions'.

The prefix *pre-* is also appeared here, and it is a productive verbal prefix in Serbian, with diversity in meaning. In *prekidati* it has the meaning of interrupting, and in *premeštati* it means 'motion from one place to another'.

### 3. Prefix *in-*

Let us explore the next prefix, it is the prefix *in-*. From the etymological point of view, it is of Latin origin. Paying attention to this prefix, Katamba (1993) notes that it is prefixed to adjectives. When considering the same prefix, Stekauer and Lieber (2005) notice that it is productive not only on adjectives, but on nouns as well. As noted by the same authors, the meaning of the prefix is negative both on nouns and adjectives. For example, the noun *inaccuracy* describes 'lack of accuracy, not accuracy'; the adjective *inefficient* means 'not producing desired results'.

Let us look at the examples of nouns formed by the prefix *in-*:

*inaccuracy* - *netačnost*

*incoherence* - *nekoherentnost*

*inefficiency* - *neefikasnost*

*instability* - *nestabilnost*

And now, here are a few examples of adjectives formed by the same prefix:

*incompatible* - *nekompatibilan*

*inefficient* - *neefikasan*

*infrequent* - *nefrekventan*

*incoherent* - *nekoherentan*

*irregular* - *neregularan*

As we can see from the above mentioned examples, the direct equivalent in Serbian is the native prefix *ne-*. According to Klajn (2002), this prefix is highly productive with nouns, as well as with adjectives, and it has the opposite meaning to the original noun or adjective.

### 4. Prefix *non-*

In dealing with the properties of the prefix *non-*, first, we can say that it is of Latin origin. As noted by Jespersen (1970), the prefix attaches to nouns and adjectives, but it rarely attaches to verbs, and it is the same in computer register.

Its basic meaning is 'not'. Stekauer and Lieber (2005) point out that *non-* is quite productive on nouns. They say that the meaning of this prefix is 'not have the qualities or characteristics referred to'. For example, *nonlinearity* is 'the state of being nonlinear, or not have the characteristic of being linear'.

The following are the examples of nouns with the prefix *non-*:

*nondeformation* - *neizobličnost*

*nonlinearity* - *nelinearnost*

*nonredundancy* - *neredundantnost*

*nonuniformity* - *neravnomernost*

Stekauer and Lieber (2005: 391) mention that *non-* attaches quite freely to adjectives. Nowadays, *non-* can be prefixed to almost any adjective (Marchand 1960). For example, *nonmagnetic* is 'not capable of being magnetic'.

Here are some more examples:

*nonadaptive* - *neadaptivan*

*nonelectric* - *neelektričan*

*nonerasable* - *neizbrisiv*

*nonflexible* - *nefleksibilan*

*nonprogrammable* - *neprogramabilan*

*nonsynchronous* - *nesinhron*

Within our contrastive analyses, we have found out that the equivalent in Serbian is the prefix *ne-* in all the analysed examples with the general meaning 'not'. For example, the adjective *nonelectric* means 'not electric, not capable of conducting electricity'.

#### 5. Prefix *un-*

Let us now turn to the last prefix, it is the prefix *un-*. Unlike all other mentioned English prefixes here, it is the only one of native origin.

As noted by Katamba (1993), it is prefixed to adjectives when it means 'negative', and to verbs when it means 'reversative'. Similarly, Stekauer and Lieber (2005) state out that the meaning of this prefix is negative on nouns and adjectives, and reversative when attaches to verbs. For example, the noun *unavailability* means 'the quality or state of not being available'; the adjective *unbuffered* is 'without a hardware or software buffer'; the verb *undo* means 'reverse an action or its effect'.

Plag (2003) notes that this prefix attaches to verbs, but rarely to nouns. The same author discusses the meaning, and concludes that it has reversative or privative meaning. Within the literature on prefixation, the extensive research of the prefix *un-* can be found in Jespersen (1970), and he considers that it is the adjectival, not the verbal prefix. On the other hand, in computer register the prefix attaches to all 3 categories of base: nouns, adjectives, verbs.

Take a look at nouns with the prefix *un-*:

*unavailability* - *neraspoloživost*

*incompatibility* - *nekompatibilnost*

Here are some examples of adjectives formed by the prefix *un-*:

*unavailable* - *neraspoloživ*

*unbuffered* - *nebaferovan*

*undisturbed* - *neometan*

*unlocked* - *nesinhronizovan*

*incompatible* - *nekompatibilan*

*unmodulated* - *nemodulisan*

Let us see some examples of verbs with the prefix *un-*:

*undelete* - *poništit*

*unload* - *isprazniti*

*unpack* - *raspakovati*

Things are quite different with Serbian prefixed translation equivalents. From the examples presented above, it is evident that there are four direct equivalents in Serbian: *ne-*, *po-*, *iz-*, *raz-*.

The prefix *ne-* has been already discussed, and it has the general meaning 'not'. Take a look at some examples here. The noun *unavailability* means 'the quality of not being available'; the adjective *unbuffered* means 'without a buffer, i.e. that operates without a hardware or software buffer'; and the meaning of the verb *undelete* is 'not delete'.

The prefix *po-* is interesting to describe because of its diversity in meaning. As Klajn points out (2002), this prefix is one of the most productive verbal prefixes in the Serbian language. In *poništiti* this prefix has reversative meaning, it means 'reverse an action or its effect'.

From the above mentioned examples, it can be seen that there is another prefix, it is the prefix *iz-*, very productive verbal prefix, with diversity in meaning. The verb *isprazniti* has the meaning 'to remove the load'.

The prefix *raz-* has been previously discussed, so, here, the focus is on the meaning of the verb *raspakovati*, which means 'remove from its packing'.

And now, let us take a look at the data from the Tables.

Table 1. provides information about the number of English negative prefixes in computer register on one side, and their prefixed translation equivalents in Serbian on the other side. As the Table 1. shows there are five prefixes in English which reflect negation, whereas, in Serbian there appears *dis-*, *pre-*, *raz-* for English *dis-*, and *ne-*, *po-*, *iz-*, *raz-* for English *un-*.

Table 1. English prefixes and Serbian equivalents

English prefixes	Equivalents in Serbian
de-	de-
dis-	dis-, pre-, raz-
in-	ne-
non-	ne-
un-	ne-, po-, iz-, raz-

With regard to morphology, each of these prefixes attaches to different categories of base as the Table 2. below illustrates.

Table 2a. English prefixes / Categories of base: nouns, adjectives, verbs

de-			verbs
dis-			verbs
in-	nouns	adjectives	
non-	nouns	adjectives	
un-	nouns	adjectives	verbs

Table 2b. Serbian prefixes / Categories of base: nouns, adjectives, verbs

iz-			verbs
ne-	nouns	adjectives	verbs
po-			verbs
pre-			verbs
raz-			verbs

If we take a look at Table 3. it can be seen that it reviews the information about the origin of the examined negative prefixes in two languages, namely, English and Serbian.

It should be noted from Table 3. that the prefix *un-* is the only native negative prefix in the English language, whereas, the situation in Serbian is different.

Table 3. Prefixes and their origin

English prefixes	origin	Serbian equivalents	origin
de-	Latin	iz-	Serbian
dis-	Latin	ne-	Serbian
in-	Latin	po-	Serbian
non-	Latin	pre-	Serbian
un-	English	raz-	Serbian

## Conclusion

This paper discusses negative prefixes in computer register in English, as well as their equivalents in the Serbian language in terms of morphology, semantics and etymology.

As it is evident from the research findings, the total number of English negative prefixes in computer register is five. They are the following: *de-*, *dis-*, *in-*, *non-* and *un-*. Examining the same prefixes in mentioned register in the Serbian language, it has been found out that there are seven of them: *de-*, *dis-*, *iz-*, *ne-*, *po-*, *pre-* and *raz-*. The prefixes *de-* and *dis-* (in one example) are translated into Serbian by their international analogues. The prefixes *in-* and *non-* have a direct equivalent, namely, it is the prefix *ne-*. The English prefix *un-* has more than one equivalent in Serbian, namely, there are four of them: *ne-*, *po-*, *iz-* and *raz-*.

It can be noted that, among the above mentioned examples, verbs predominate in English, as well as in Serbian. According to Stevanović (1986), the most numerous words with prefixes are verbs, while, nouns are so rare that they present no interest in word formation in the Serbian language. Similarly, Šipka (1998) notes that prefixation is more frequent with verbs. However, there is a new tendency in the word formation which has become evident in computer register, that is, there are more and more nouns and adjectives with negative prefixes in English, and in Serbian as well.

Considering the origin of these prefixes, we can conclude that the most number of prefixes in English come from Latin. The fact is that Latin has influenced every modern language, including English. In addition, computer terminology uses words created by using prefixes, primarily, of Latin origin.

To sum up, this paper may serve as a basis for further investigations on contrastive analysis of English and Serbian negative prefixes in the field of computer register.

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