

Dual source for indefinite pronoun-adjective combinations*

Franc Marušič^a and Rok Žaucer^{a,b}

^aUniversity of Nova Gorica and ^bUniversity of Ottawa

1. Introduction

This paper discusses structures in which indefinite pronouns combine with adjectives, as in (1). We will refer to such combinations as IP-As and to indefinite pronouns as IPs.

(1) *something new; someplace nice; everyone tall*

In this section, we will sketch two competing descriptions/interpretations of the core data (Larson & Marušič 2004 vs. Roehrs 2006); we will then outline the basics of our proposal, which combines the insights of both of those data interpretations, and claims that the apparently diverging English and German IP-A data reflect an important difference in the basic structures and should thus be given separate accounts (in line with Roehrs 2008) instead of attempting to capture them with a uniform analysis (as in Roehrs 2006).¹

One approach to deriving the structures in (1) is that of Abney (1987) and Kishimoto (2000), among others, whereby the structures in (1) are derived with movement of the (light) noun *thing/place/one* over the adjective, from a base configuration such as *some new thing*. However, Larson & Marušič (2004) point out that if this was correct, the adjectives in (1) should behave as prenominal, which is not the case. Indeed, Larson & Marušič (2004) present a number of arguments to show that the adjectives in (1) behave as postnominal. One of these rests on the observation that in English, adjective recursion is freely available in prenominal position but not, without heavy comma intonation, in postnominal position, (2), nor when the adjective is used as

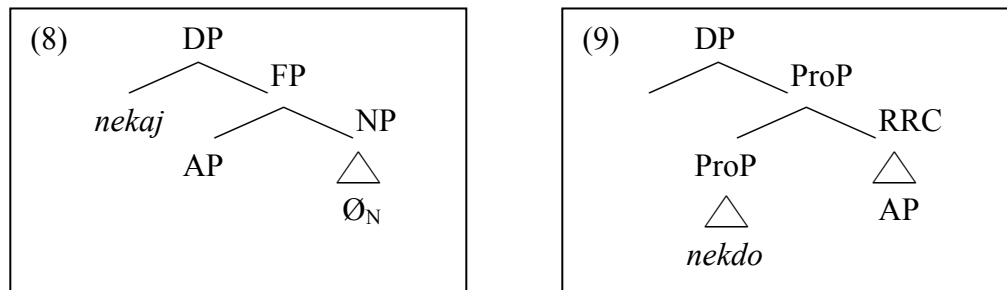
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¹ Roehrs (2008) is in principle an updated and published version of Roehrs (2006), which was circulated as a manuscript. Since we only became aware of Roehrs (2008)—which differs from Roehrs (2006) in several important respects—right before the submission deadline for this paper, we treat the two as separate papers.

Two Strategies for Combining Adjectives with Indefinite Pronouns

- c. *etwas* Wichtig*(es)
 something important-strong
 ‘something important’

To summarize, then, we have evidence that adjectives in English IP-As are postnominal and that adjectives in German IP-As are prenominal. Now, one approach to this situation is to try and propose one basic structure for both types of languages; this is the approach taken in Roehrs (2006), who proposes to ‘resolve’ the discrepancy by saying that adjectives in IP-As are prenominal to a null noun in a postnominal position (cf. also Leu 2003). The approach we will take, however, is to claim that the differences between the two types of IP-A constructions also reflect different basic structures (in the spirit of Roehrs 2008). We will corroborate this by going through a number of tests to show that the difference observed between Larson & Marušič’s (2004) English data and Roehrs’ (2006) German data can in fact also be found within a language; in Slovenian, *nekdo* ‘someone’ combines with postnominal adjectives and *nekaj* ‘something’ with prenominal adjectives. The structures we propose for the two types of IP-As are in (8) and (9). *Nekaj*-type IP-As are basically a case of regular DPs, with a null noun, with adjectives in the specifiers of functional projections, and with *nekaj* heading the DP. On the other hand, *nekdo*-type IP-As have *nekdo* heading a pronominal phrase (=ProP), and the adjective adjoined to this phrase as a reduced relative clause.



In section 2, we present a number of tests which show that not only does one find the diverging patterns when comparing different languages (e.g. English and German), but sometimes also language-internally; Slovenian will be shown to have both the English- and the German-type IP-As, with *nekdo* ‘someone’ combining with postnominal adjectives and *nekaj* ‘something’ combining with prenominal adjectives. In section 3, we develop our proposal and discuss some of its consequences.

2. The two Slovenian constructions

2.1 Case of the adjective

The first difference between the two Slovenian constructions we point out has to do with the case of the adjective that follows the IP. When the entire DP is in an oblique case, the adjectival complement agrees with the IP in both types of IP-As. But when the entire DP is marked nominative or accusative, there is a split between the two IP-A constructions. Whereas *nekdo* requires no special case on the adjective, i.e. the adjective still agrees with the IP, *nekaj* requires the adjective to be in the genitive, (10a).

- (10) a. *nekaj* *velikega* / **veliko*
something-nom big-gen big-nom
‘something big’
- b. *nekdo* **velikega* / *velik*
someone-nom big-gen big-nom
‘someone tall’

Now, the IP *nekaj* is homophonous with the quantifier *nekaj* ‘some’, which requires its complement to be in the genitive, (11a). Since we claim that the *nekaj*-type IPs head regular DPs, the genitive on the adjective in (10a) is not surprising, and can thus be of the same source as the adjective on the noun in (11a). (See e.g. Bailyn 2004 for a possible analysis of the Slavic genitive case.) *Nekdo*, on the other hand, only has an IP use and no quantifier use, (11b).

- (11) a. *nekaj snega* / *snežink* b. **nekdo ljudi*
some snow-gen snowflakes-gen someone men-gen
‘some snow’

Something similar is true also of the German *etwas*, which is both an IP (e.g. *etwas neues* “something new”) and a quantifier for mass nouns (e.g. *etwas Wein* “some wine”, cf. Roehrs 2006). Just like with Slovenian *nekaj*, both the complement of the quantifier *etwas* and the adjective with the IP *etwas* are in the same case (*etwas neues* and *etwas Wein*); the only difference is that in German, the case in question is the nominative rather than the genitive.

As mentioned above, the requirement for genitive case on the complement of *nekaj* does not hold in oblique cases, as shown in (12a). However, the same is true when *nekaj* is used as a regular determiner, as shown in (12b). In other words, the IP *nekaj* behaves just like the quantifier *nekaj*.

- (12) a. *z nečim* *velikim*
with something-instr big-instr
‘with something big’
- b. *z nekaj velikimi* *snežinkami*
with some big-instr snowflakes-instr
‘with some big snowflakes’

So, if the two *nekaj*’s are really one and the same element, as we propose, then—given that quantifiers need an NP to act as their restriction—it is natural to posit a null N in its complement for the IP use in (10a). On the other hand, no such conclusion can be made for *nekdo*, which is just a simple pronoun.

There are, nevertheless, two interesting differences between the IP *nekaj* and the quantifier *nekaj*. As shown in (12b), when the quantifier *nekaj* heads an oblique-cased DP, *nekaj* does not decline; conversely, when the indefinite pronoun *nekaj* is in such a

Two Strategies for Combining Adjectives with Indefinite Pronouns

DP, it does decline. Secondly, when the complement of the quantifier *nekaj* is a mass noun (rather than a count noun, as in (12b)), this noun does not decline in oblique cases (z *nekaj snega*/**snegom* ‘with some snow-gen/snow-instr’). We will return to these potential problems in section 3.

2.2 Adjective recursion

A difference between the two IPs is also observed in the number of adjectives they can cooccur with. While *nekaj* freely allows stacked adjectives, as shown in (13a), *nekdo* only tolerates one adjective (unless heavy comma intonation is used), (13b).

- (13) a. *nekaj* *velikega* *temnega*
 something big dark
 ‘something big and dark’
- b. *nekdo* *velik* (?* *temen*)
 someone tall dark
 ‘someone tall’

Now, Slovenian freely allows adjective recursion in prenominal position, that is, a noun can cooccur with stacked attributive adjectives. In postnominal position, on the other hand, adjective recursion is not allowed (unless heavy comma intonation is used), and the same restriction holds for adjectives in predicative position. Therefore, the difference that (13) reveals between the two IPs further shows that while adjectives following *nekaj* exhibit prenominal/attributive properties, adjectives following *nekdo* exhibit postnominal/predicative properties.

The validity of this claim can also be checked with respect to the relative order of stacked adjectives in the *nekaj* IP-A. The ordering of adjectives is typically restricted, and if the adjectives following *nekaj* are indeed prenominal, we expect them to show the same ordering restrictions that we find with adjectives that are prenominal to ordinary nouns. As shown in (14), this prediction is borne out.

- (14) a. *nekaj* *velikega ruskega* vs. **nekaj* *ruskega velikega*
 something big Russian something Russian big
 ‘something big Russian’
- b. *velika ruska* *reka* vs. **ruska velika* *reka*
 big Russian river Russian big river
 ‘a big Russian river’

In sum, the adjective-recursion data lead us to the same conclusion again. Adjectives following *nekaj* are prenominal, adjectives following *nekdo* are postnominal.

2.3 AP-internal order

As discussed by Orešnik (1996) and Marušič (2001), when Slovenian complex APs appear prenominally, the complement must precede the adjective, (15). But when the same AP is used postnominally, the complement must follow the adjective, (16).

- (15) a. okolju nevaren avto
 environment-dat dangerous car
 ‘a car dangerous to the environment’
 b. *nevaren okolju avto
 dangerous environment-dat car
- (16) a. *avto okolju nevaren
 car environment-dat dangerous
 b. avto nevaren okolju
 car dangerous environment-dat
 ‘a car dangerous to the environment.’

This rather clear distinction between pre- and postnominal APs offers another test for the nature of APs inside IP-As, and once again, we get conflicting results for the two IPs. As shown in (17), *nekaj* allows both orders in the AP, whereas *nekdo* only allows the postnominal order in the AP, (18) (cf. Larson & Marušič 2004).

- (17) a. *nekaj* okolju nevarnega
 something environment-dat dangerous
 ‘something dangerous to the environment.’
 b. *nekaj* nevarnega okolju
 something dangerous environment-dat
- (18) a. ??*nekdo* okolici nevaren
 someone surrounding-dat dangerous
 b. *nekdo* nevaren okolici
 someone dangerous surrounding-dat
 ‘someone dangerous to the surroundings.’

We conclude that the whole AP that combines with *nekdo* can only be postnominal in its origin, while the AP combining with *nekaj* appears to be either pre- or postnominal.

2.4 Prenominal and postnominal adjectives

Bolinger (1967) observes that English prenominal adjectives show an ambiguity that postnominal adjectives lack. Prenominally, adjectives can be understood either as attributing their property inherently (e.g. *List all the visible stars, whether we can see them right now or not.*) or as attributing their property episodically. Postnominal adjectives, on the other hand, are unambiguous in this respect; they only have the episodic reading (cf. *#List all the stars visible, whether we can see them or not.*).

Two Strategies for Combining Adjectives with Indefinite Pronouns

This difference is also manifested with the Slovenian adjective *viden* ‘visible’. As shown in (19), the inherent interpretation is perfectly available for *viden* when it is found in prenominal position, while this interpretation is unavailable when the same adjective is used predicatively.

- (19) a. *Betelgeza je vidna zvezda, ki je ta hip ne vidimo.*
Betelgeuse is visible star that aux this moment not see-1ps-pl
‘Betelgeuse is a visible star, that we cannot see at the moment.’
b. # *Ene zvezde, ki je vidna, ta hip ne vidimo.*
one star that is visible this moment not see-1ps-pl
‘At this moment we don’t see a star that is visible.’

This interpretative difference can now be used as a test to determine the nature of the adjectives occurring with indefinite pronouns. As we would predict, adjectives following *nekaj* indeed allow the inherent interpretation, (20a), in which they differ from the adjectives cooccurring with the English counterpart *something* (cf. Larson & Marušič 2004), (20b). And on the other hand, adjectives following *nekdo* can only have an episodic reading, (20c), in which they pattern with the adjectives cooccurring with the English *someone*, (20d).

- (20) a. *Nekaj vidnega, kar je ta hip sicer nevidno.*
something visible that is this moment actually invisible
‘A visible thing that is invisible at the moment.’
b. # *Something visible, which is presently not visible.*
c. # *Nekdo viden, ki je ta hip sicer neviden.*
someone visible that is this moment actually invisible
d. # *Someone visible, who is presently not visible.*

Once again, then, we are led to conclude that while adjectives cooccurring with either English *something* or *someone* are postnominal, Slovenian shows a split between its counterparts of these two IPs: adjectives cooccurring with the IP *nekaj* are prenominal, whereas adjectives cooccurring with the IP *nekdo* are postnominal.⁴

2.5 Superlatives

The last difference between *nekaj* and *nekdo* that we will provide here has to do with superlatives. As shown in (21), *nekaj* allows superlatives in its complement, but *nekdo*

⁴ Our claims predict that things like (i) should be possible, especially in view of the possibility of strings such as *an invisible visible star*. At first sight, it is not very straightforward how to interpret things like (i), presumably due to the presence of the pronoun with the meaning ‘something’ (rather than of a common noun such as, say, *star*); but with a little imagination, such things nevertheless seem to be possible IP-A combinations.

(i) *nekaj nevidnega vidnega*
something invisible visible
‘some invisible visible thing’

does not. Now, if Matushansky (2004) is right in her claim that superlatives are always attributive, then the contrast in (21) is yet another one that points in the same direction as the ones provided above, namely, that adjectives combining with *nekaj* are prenominal/attributive and that the adjectives combining with *nekdo* are not attributive.

- (21) a. *Tole je pa nekaj najlepšega na svetu.*
 this is ptcl something most.beautiful on world
 ‘This is a most beautiful thing.’
 b. **Tole je pa nekdo najlepší na svetu.*
 this is ptcl someone most.beautiful on world
 (intended: ‘This is a most beautiful person.’)

Note that the only way to get a superlative as the complement of *nekdo*-type IPs is inside a PP, parallel to the English *someone from among the best ones*, (22). (Cf. also Cinque 2007 for relevant discussion.)

- (22) *Tole je pa nekdo od najlepših na svetu.*
 this is ptcl someone from most.beautiful on world
 ‘This is someone from among the most beautiful ones.’

2.6 Summary

Slovenian indefinite pronouns *nekaj* ‘something’ and *nekdo* ‘someone’ behave differently in several respects. Like German indefinite pronouns, *nekaj* combines with an adjective that behaves as if it is prenominal/attributive. On the other hand, *nekdo* combines with an adjective that behaves as if it is postnominal/predicative, just like the adjective combining with English IPs.

Both types of IPs have other members in the group in Slovenian; for example, *nobeden* ‘noone’ and *en* ‘someone’ pattern with *nekdo*, while *nič* ‘nothing’ patterns with *nekaj*. It is important to note that not all IPs of the *nekdo* class are [+animate]. For example, of the pair *vsi/vse* ‘everyone’/‘everything’, *vsi* is used for [+animate/human] and *vse* for [–animate/human], but both of them combine with adjectives in nominative case, (23), and neither of them allow stacked adjectives, (24).

- (23) a. *Vsi rojeni pred 1980 naj stopijo korak naprej.*
 all born-nom before 1980 shall step step forward
 ‘Everyone born before 1980 should make a step forward.’
 b. *Vse narejeno v bivši Jugi je za v muzej.*
 all made-nom in former Yugoslavia is for in museum
 ‘Everything made in the former Yugoslavia should be put in a museum.’
- (24) a. **Vsi visoki temni so že na seznamu.*
 all tall dark aux already on list
 ‘Everyone tall dark is already on the list.’

Two Strategies for Combining Adjectives with Indefinite Pronouns

- b. * *Vse veliko temno je že na seznamu.*
 all big dark aux already on list
 ‘Everything big dark is already on the list.’

Similarly, both *vsi* and *vse* combine with postnominal adjectives, as seen from the fact that inside the AP that follows *vsi/vse*, the adjective precedes its complement, (25)-(26), and from the fact that both *vsi* and *vse* are followed by adjectives which only have an unambiguous, episodic interpretation, (27).

- (25) a. * *Vsi do tujcev nestrpni morajo domov.*
 all to foreigners intolerant must home
 b. *Vsi nestrpni do tujcev morajo domov.*
 all intolerant to foreigners must home
 ‘Everyone intolerant to foreigners must go home.’

- (26) a. * *Vse okolici nevarno mora pod ključ.*
 all environment dangerous must under key
 b. *Vse nevarno okolici mora pod ključ.*
 all dangerous environment must under key
 ‘Everything dangerous to the environment must be locked up.’

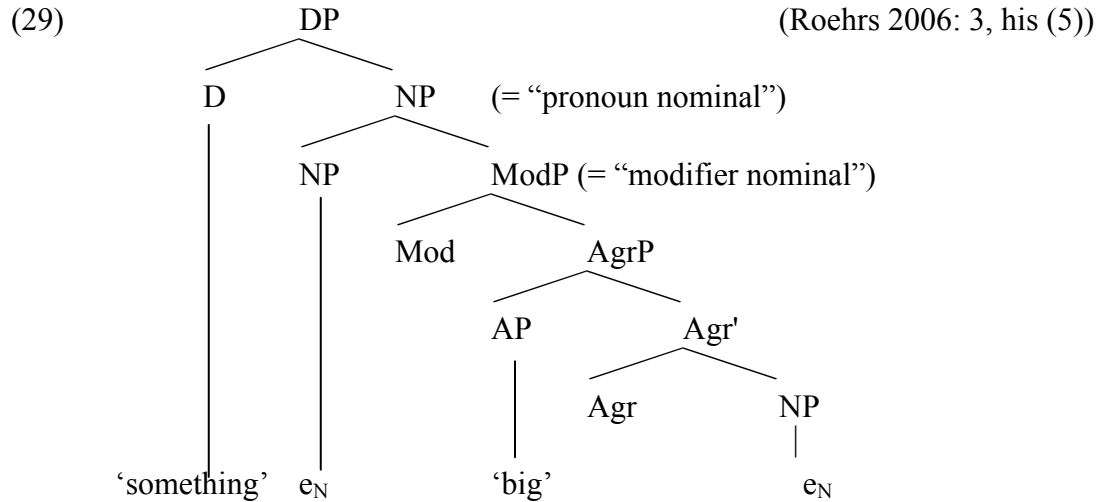
- (27) a. # *vsi vidni, ki so ta hip nevidni*
 all visible that aux this moment invisible
 ‘everyone visible that is invisible at the moment’
 b. # *vse vidno, ki je ta hip nevidno*
 all visible that aux this moment invisible
 ‘everything visible that is invisible at the moment’

And lastly, neither *vsi* nor *vse* allow superlatives as their complements, (28), thereby patterning with *nekdo* also on the fifth one of the tests used above, and confirming once again that the adjective cooccurring with *vsi/vse* is not attributive and that the prenominal/postnominal adjective split between the two types of IP-As does not simply reduce to [+/-animate/human].

- (28) a. * *vsi največji*
 all biggest
 b. * *vse največje* (idiomatic exception: *Vse najboljše!*)
 all biggest All (the) best!

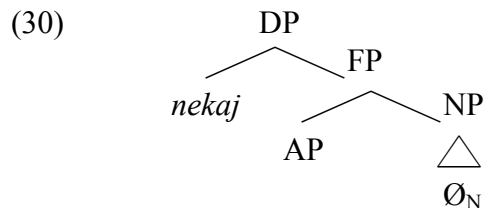
3. Proposal

Though we agree with Roehrs’ (2006) claim about German IP-As and also say that Slovenian *nekaj* ‘something’-type IP-As behave like German IP-As, we do not adopt Roehrs’ (2006) account, which is given in (29) (see Leu 2005 for a comparable proposal).



It is not clear from this structure how to derive the restriction observed with English IPs and with Slovenian *nekdo*-type IPs to only postnominal adjectives, nor is there any reason for why—if stacked adjectives are available in IP-As in German—one should not also find them with English IPs and with *nekdo*-type IPs. (29) is also roughly the structure that is proposed for German IP-As (or more accurately, for one class of German IP-As, cf. Fn. 3) in Roehrs (2008), but unlike Roehrs (2006), Roehrs (2008) does not try to extend the structure for the German IP-As to all IP-As and ascribes the English IP-As a different structure, with the ModP replaced by AP. The modified structure presumably also takes care of the problems pointed out with respect to the structure in (29).

Contra Roehrs’ (2006) approach to the differences between German and English IP-As—but in line with Roehrs (2008)—we propose that Slovenian adjectives combine with IPs with *two* separate mechanisms. As we showed in section 2, *nekaj* cooccurs with prenominal/attributive adjectives. We also showed that the IP *nekaj* behaves just like the existential quantifier *nekaj*. Therefore, we propose to consider both of these cases as one and the same element, so that *nekaj* is in fact seen as a quantifier in both cases, and when it acts as an IP, it is really seen as heading an ordinary DP, with an ordinary NP complement to the D. The only difference between an ordinary nominal phrase like ‘some red book’ and the IP-A is that in the IP-A, the noun is null, as shown in (30).



Note that if *nekaj*-type IPs head just a regular DP, we actually predict that such IP-As will allow both prenominal and postnominal adjectives and modifiers, not just prenominal ones. But this is in fact just what we find. As we have already shown in section 2.3, complex APs that follow *nekaj* can have either the prenominal or the

Two Strategies for Combining Adjectives with Indefinite Pronouns

postnominal adjective-complement order. Furthermore, prepositional phrases are only allowed postnominally in Slovenian, as shown in (31), and as expected, PPs are allowed both after *nekdo* and after *nekaj*, (32).

- (31) a. *človek* *s* *severa*
 man from north
 ‘a man from the north’
- b. **s* *severa* *človek*
 from north man
- (32) a. *nekdo* *s* *severa*
 someone from north
 ‘someone from the north’
- b. *nekaj* *s* *severa*
 something from north
 ‘something from the north’

Since we said above that *nekaj* only allows genitive-marked modifiers, we should add that Slovenian postnominal adjectives agree with the noun in case (and gender and number) just like prenominal adjectives do. Therefore, we would never expect non-genitive adjectives following *nekaj*, simply because *nekaj*, when heading an ordinary DP, also requires that the postnominal APs are in the genitive, as shown in (33).

- (33) *nekaj velikih hribov* *visokih* *skoraj kot* *Triglav*
 some big-gen mountais-gen tall-gen nearly as Triglav
 ‘some big mountais that are nearly as tall as Triglav’

We can now turn to the question posed at the end of section 2.1, namely, why can the IP *nekaj* take oblique case morphology but the determiner *nekaj* cannot? We suggest that case morphology needs to be realized inside the DP. If the DP has an overt noun, then case morphology is realized on the noun and the quantifier keeps its uninflected form. But when the noun is null, case morphology cannot be realized on it, and it is then hosted by the quantifier. As for the other question posed there (i.e. why only count-noun complements of the quantifier *nekaj* decline in oblique cases), we will have to leave it open, since answering it would lead us too far astray from the current topic.

Turning now to *nekdo*, let us repeat that unlike *nekaj*, *nekdo* does not allow prenominal adjectives and cooccurs only with postnominal adjectives. Partly adopting Roehrs’ (2006, 2008) proposal, we propose that *nekdo* is a pronominal element in the complement of D.

- (34)
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- ```

 graph TD
 DP --> ProP1[ProP]
 DP --> RRC[RRC]
 ProP1 --> ProP2[ProP]
 ProP1 --> AP[AP]
 ProP2 --> Tri1[△]
 ProP2 --> nekdo[nekdo]
 AP --> Tri2[△]

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Adjoined to the pronoun is the reduced relative clause that contains the postnominal/predicative adjective. Since *nekdo* is a personal pronoun/a pronominal noun,

the main frame of this DP is deficient, lacking the adjective-hosting FPs (note that personal pronouns normally cannot cooccur with adjectives), which explains why no prenominal/attributive adjectives are allowed with *nekdo*.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we suggested that the conflicting interpretations of crosslinguistic IP-A data that are found in the literature can be avoided if we accept the possibility that the data actually fall into two different sets, each of which with different properties that are a result of different structures. That is, we proposed that the whole set of IP-A data should not be captured with a single structure, but that what we are seeing across these constructions are two different structures, one instantiated in the previous literature with German IP-As and the other with English IP-As. We showed, however, that the two structures can also be found within a single language, such as Slovenian. We provided several arguments to support the claim that like German IPs, Slovenian *nekaj*-type IPs combine with prenominal/attributive adjectives, but that like English IPs, Slovenian *nekdo*-type IPs combine with postnominal/predicative adjectives. We claimed that *nekaj* heads a regular DP with a null noun, and that *nekdo*, on the other hand, heads a deficient pronominal phrase which only accepts adjoined reduced relative clauses.

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University of Nova Gorica  
Vipavska 13,  
SI-5000 Nova Gorica  
Slovenia

franc.marusic@p-ng.si  
rok.zaucer@p-ng.si