Znanstveni radovi

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Is Dative Subject a Viable Syntactic Notion?*

The so–called dative subjects are characterized by two anomalous coding properties: oblique case marking and lack of agreement. On the other hand, dative subjects show two syntactic properties typical of nominative subjects: control of reflexivization and the ellipsis of the implicit subjects of the infinitive. These two properties are taken as crucial evidence for the subjecthood of the dative NP.

This paper argues against the claim that datives are subjects at a more abstract level of syntactic analysis. Croatian evidence shows that unlike typical nominative subjects putative dative subjects cannot antecede the possessive–reflexive *svoj* and that the control of the implicit subject of the infinitive can be accounted for in pragmatic terms. Semantically, the dative encodes Experiencer to whom things involuntarily happen.

1 Introduction

In the grammatical tradition, there have been two distinct notions that recur in characterizing the subject as a gramatical category. The notional (or more precisely the pragmatic), approach according to which, as Jespersen (1924: 146) has put it »the subject is what you talk about«, that is, the subject has been identified with what is known in modern linguistics as the topic. The second notion heavily relied on semantics and identified subject with the Agent. Both these notions heavily correlate with the morphosyntactic characterization of subject as a nominative NP which determines agreement. It was only in the cases of discrepancy between pragmatic, semantic and morphosyntactic notions, as for example in passive constructions, that the notions like grammatical and logical subject were resorted to. Some more recent studies

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take the view that universally (e. g. Keenan 1976) or prototipically (e. g. Comrie 1981) the subject is the intersection of Agent and Topic coupled with a number of coding, behavioural and control properties.

The so–called dative subjects (or more precisely oblique subjects, which are often subsumed under the general notion Dative Subject Construction) do not fit nicely into any of the above characterizations of subject, except the pragmatic definition of subject as topic. On the one hand, dative subjects are characterized by anomalous coding properties (oblique case marking and lack of agreement), and on the other hand they never encode an Agent, as is exemplified by (1)–(10):

(1) Croatian
Meni   je   hladno.
me–Dat   is   cold–3. sg. n.
'I'm cold.'

(2) German
Mir   ist   kalt.
Me–Dat   is   cold
'I'm cold.'

(3) Modern Icelandic (Andrews 1982: 463)
Mér   er   kalt.
Me–Dat   is   cold
'I'm cold.'

(4) Polish (Wierzbicka 1988: 415)
Adamowi   było   smutno.
Adam   be–past   sad
'Adam felt sad.'

(5) Kannada (Sridhar 1979: 102)
avanige   jvara   bantu
him–Dat   fever   came
'He got a fever.'

(6) Bengali (Klaiman 1981: 20)
taar   asukh   hoyeche
he–Gen   illness has become
'He is unwell.'

(7) Kashmiri (Kachru, Kachru and Bhatia (1976: 96)
ladkas   peyl   m'ə j   ts' atas
boy   Dat   fall mother   remember
'The boy remembered his mother.'

(8) Malayalam (McAlpin 1976: 183)
enikku viśakkunnu.
me–to be hungry
'I am hungry.'

(9)   Quechua (Cole and Hermon 1981: 12)
Juzi–ta   rupa–n
Jose–Acc   be hot
'Jose is hot.'

(10) Choctaw (Davies 1986: 86)
Holisso am–   ihaksi   –tok
book   me–Dat   forget   past
'I forgot the book.'

As this small sample shows, oblique subjects do not occur only in European languages (e. g. Croatian, German, Russian, Modern Icelandic) but also in many genetically or areally unrelated languages, such as Quechua and Choctaw (Amerind) and Bengali, Malayalam, Kannada and Kashmiri (South Asian).

Since the datives in the above examples are the only referential NPs, the fact that they are topics cannot be denied, and to this extent they fit the notional definition of the subject. However, what is at issue here is the use of the notion subject in the description of these NPs unless some evidence can be found that they have a number of properties peculiar to indisputable subjects only. In other words, the view adopted in this paper is that the syntactic notion of subject must be clearly kept apart from the pragmatic and semantic notions of subject, that is, we must clearly separate those properties that a subject has *qua* syntactic category from those that it has provided certain semantic (role related) and pragmatic (reference related) conditions are met (cf. Faarlund 1988). A clear case of the independence of syntactic subjecthood from the pragmatic and semantic notions of subjecthood is provided by English, in which *it, there* and idiom chunks behave like subjects with respect to raising and tag questions although they have neither a semantic nor a pragmatic function. Compare (11)–(16)

(11) They believe there to be beer without alcohol.
(12) There is beer without alcoholol, isn't there?
(13) Jack believes it to be raining in London.
(14) It is raining in London, isn't it?
(15) They believe tabs to be kept on all dissidents.
(16) Tabs are kept on all dissidents, aren't they?

In what follows I will try to find what evidence there is, if any, that datives are subjects from the syntactic point of view. The two most often quoted pieces of evidence that datives, or to be more precise oblique NPs have subject–like properties are control of subject ellipsis in participial and infinitival complement clauses and the control of reflexivization, both of which have been taken from Keenan's (1976) list of universal subject properties. The languages in which oblique NPs are controllers and/or victims (targets) of subject ellipsis include Bengali (Klaiman 1981), Hindi (Kachru, Kachru and Bhatia 1976), Malayalam (Mohanan 1982), Kannada (Sridhar 1976, 1979), Choctaw (Davies

1986), Quechua (Cole and Hermon 1981), and Modern Icelandic (Zaenen; Maling and Thráinsson 1985). Oblique NPs can antecede reflexives in Bengali (Klaiman 1981), Hindi (Kachru, Kachru and Bhatia 1976), Kannada (Sridhar 1976, 1979), Malayalam (Mohanan 1982), Choctaw (Davies 1986), Quechua (Cole and Hermon 1981), Georgian (Harris 1984), Japanese (Perlmutter 1984), Russian (Perlmutter 1980) and Modern Icelandic (Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985). Control of the implicit subject of the infinitive is illustrated by (17) from Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson (1985). (18) from Sridhar (1979) and (19) from Davies (1986) illustrate control of reflexivization:

(17) Hann seigist vera duglegur, en ___ finnst verkefnið of Þungt.
he(N) says.self to–be diligent but ___ (D) finds the homework too hard.
'He says he is diligent, but finds the homework too hard.'

(18) sōmanige tānu fumba ishṭa
Soma(D) self much liking
'Soma is very fond of himself.'

(19) Lli– am– ahchiba –h
REFL IDAT tired PRED
'I am tired of myself.'

The argumentation that oblique NPs really behave like subjects has been most thoroughly developed within the framework of Relational Grammar, a theory that distinguishes grammatical relations subject, direct object and indirect object at multiple levels of syntactic analysis. The basic procedure illustrated here by Perlmutter's (1980) analysis of conditions on antecedents of reflexives in Russian is this. First, it has to be shown that only subjects control a certain syntactic phenomenon, as in (20):

(20) Boris mne rasskazal anekdot o sebe.
NOM me/DAT told joke about REFL
'Boris told me a joke about himself/*myself.'

In (20) it is the subject *Boris* that antecedes the reflexive *sebe* but not the dative *mne*. The next step is to prove that both passive subjects and passive chômeurs (demoted active subjects) also qualify as antecedents, as in (21) and (22):

(21) Rebenok byl otpravlen k svoim roditeljam.
child was sent to REFL's parents
'The child was sent to his parents.'

(22) Èta kniga byla kuplena Borisom dlja sebja.
this book was bought INSTR for REFL
'This book was bought by Boris for himself.'

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Since it has been established by now that only subjects irrespective of their position or semantic role antecede reflexives, it is obvious that the dative *mne* in (23)

(23) Mne   žal'   sebja.
     me/DAT   sorry   REFL
     'I feel sorry for myself.'

must also have been the subject at the level at which reflexivization took place, or in other words the necessary condition on antecedents of reflexives in Russian can be stated as follows: »Only a nominal heading a 1–arc (*i.e. the subject*) can serve as antecedent of a reflexive.« (Perlmutter, 1980: 207).

However, the control of reflexivization should be taken with a grain of salt. Some authors treat as reflexive any construction containing the reflexive morpheme irrespective of whether the construction is transitive or not. Since dative subjects never encode Agent, the dative subject construction is fairly low on the Hopper–Thompson (1980) transitivity scale. In Croatian, there is a fairly systematic difference between the so called reflexive possessive *svoj* and the possessives *moj, tvoj, njegov*, etc. *Svoj* is subject controlled, whereas the *moj–tvoj* series can have arbitrary reference:

(24) Petar$_i$ radi   u   svom$_i$ /njegovom$_j$ vrtu.
     Peter$_i$–Nom works   in   his$_{i, j}$ garden
     'Peter is working in his garden'

Putative dative subjects take the *moj–tvoj* set, whereas the nominative subjects take *svoj*:

(25) Petru$_i$ je   žao   njegove$_{i, j}$ sestre.
     Peter$_i$–Dat be   sorry   his$_{i, j}$ sister–Gen
     'Peter is sorry for his sister'

(26) Petar$_i$ žali   svoju$_i$/njegovu$_j$ sestru
     Peter$_i$–Nom feels   sorry his$_{i, j}$ sister–Acc
     'Peter feels sorry for his sister.'

Croatian, then, does not provide any evidence that datives can antecede reflexives. Reflexivization is a governed phenomenon in Croatian and only nominatively marked subjects control reflexivization.

In the remaining part of this paper I will argue that Croatian, in which datives can also control subject ellipsis in infinitival and participial complement clauses, does not provide any conclusive evidence that they are subjects at a more abstract level of syntactic analysis. More specifically, I will argue that multiple levels of syntactic analysis are unnecessary and that the apparent subject–like behaviour of datives can be accounted for in pragmatic terms. Before taking up this major issue, something should be said about the semantics of dative subjects.

2 A Note on the Semantics of Dative Subjects

It is generally acknowledged that dative subjects, and occasionaly genitive or accusative subjects, as is the case in Bengali and Quechua respectively, have the semantic role Experiencer. Masica (1976) argues that the dative subject construction is a defining feature of the whole linguistic area. He offers what Klaiman (1981) has termed the Subjective Hypothesis to account for the semantics of the Dative Subject Construction: »Predications involving experiences, particularly experiences of states or conditions, that can be definitively 'known' (or somehow pertain) only or primarily to the subject undergoing them are treated differently in some languages from predications involving external acts, states, or conditions, while other languages make no distinction here. Such experiences which we may call 'subjective', typically include liking and disliking, states of health or sickness, happiness and unhappiness, dreaming, feeling, remembering, thinking, embarrasement, pity, doubt, pain, thirst, hunger, sleepiness, anger, urgency, and 'knowing' itself. The category of 'subjective experience', as we might call it, is paradoxically marked, in the languages that distinguish it, by describing it from an EXTERNAL point of view — that is, by putting the experiencing subject in an OBLIQUE CASE (most commonly the dative), and either making the experience itself the grammatical subject, or less commonly using an impersonal (and generally deleted) grammatical subject. Put another way, in languages without this distinction — or viewpoint — the subject DOES or IS, or very typically, HAS these things, like everything else; in languages possessing it they HAPPEN or COME or EXIST with reference to him.« (Masica 1976: 160). The range of predicates that take an oblique subject varies a great deal from language to language. According to Sridhar (1979: 101), the dative subject is used in Kannada with predicates expressing »knowledge, doubt, judgement, belief, perception, liking, disliking, wanting, need, necessity, obligation, ability, physical and mental attributes and dispositions, transient physical states as well as inherent and inalienable properties, kinship and other kinds of relationship, and of course possession.« In Croatian, dative subjects predominantly occur with experiential adjectival predicates like **toplo** (*warm*), **vruće** (*hot*), **teško** (*difficult*), **dobro** (*well*), **udobno** (*comfortable*), **dosadno** (*bored*), **drago** (*glad*), etc. There is also general consensus that in languages in which there is a competition between a nominative and a dative subject with the same predicate, the nominativelly marked NP exercises a higher degree of control, whereas the dative encodes a non–volitional Experiencer, as in the following examples from German and Kannada:

   (27) German (Draye 1996: 193)
       Mir   ekelt   vor   fetten   Speisen.
       Me–Dat nauseates before   fat   victuals.
       'I'm nauseated by fat food/fat food nauseates me.'

(27a) Ich   ekle   mich   vor   fetten   Speisen.
       I–Nom   nauseate   refl   before   fat   victuals
      'I'm nauseated by fat food/fat food nauseates me.'

(28) Kannada (Sridhar 1979: 102)
     avanige   jvaru   bantu
     him–Dat   fever   came
     'He got a fever.'

(28a) avanu   jvara(–vannu)   barisikonda
      he–Nom   fever(–acc)   cause–come–past
      'He got a fever.'

However, this apparent semantic uniformity of dative subjects cannot be generalized either language–internally or cross–linguistically. In Croatian, for example, experiential predicates such as **hladno** (*cold*), **vruće** (*hot*), ***dosadno*** (*bored*) take a dative subject, whereas **gladan** (*hungry*), **žedan** (*thirsty*), **umoran** (*tired*) and **pospan** (*sleepy*) take a nominative subject, although there is no clear semantic difference in the degree of control exercized by either the dative or nominative NP. Similarly, it is not clear what the difference between *Mich hungert/dürstet* and *Ich habe Hunger/Durst* might be. In the few cases where Croatian allows both the dative and nominative constructions, as in (29) and (29a),

(29) Njoj   je   hladno.
     she–Dat   is   cold–3. s. n.
     'She is (feeling) cold.'

(29a) Ona   je   hladna.
      She–Nom   is   cold–3. s. f.
      'She is (emotionally) cold.'

there is a clear morphosyntactic and semantic difference, but the semantic difference has nothing to do with the degree of control or volitionality. (29) is an experiential predication, whereas (29a) is a property assignment construction like *She is nice/pretty/intelligent*. The two constructions also behave differently when embedded under a raising predicate. The nominative subject can be raised into the matrix clause, while the dative has to remain in the embedded *da* clause:

To sum up: dative subjects seem to be lexically determined both language–internally and cross–linguistically although they are cross–linguistically restricted to a fairly well defined semantic class of experiential or, as some authors call them, psychological predicates. After this brief discussion of the semantics of dative subjects, I turn to the main issue, namely the apparent subject–like behiviour of oblique subjects.

3 The Syntax of Dative Subject Constructions

For quite some time it has been argued in the literature that Croatian is a language which allows only subject control of the ellipsis of implicit subjects of dependent infinitival clauses[1]. For example, Perlmutter (1971: 16) has stated that »the rule of Equi–NP Deletion is optional in the case of subject–subject identity, while in the case of object–subject identity Equi–NP Deletion does not apply at all.«, and this generalization has also been accepted by Andrews (1985: 113). If this generalization were true, it would be a strong argument in favour of the claim that some datives are subjects at either the surface level or some more abstract level of syntactic analysis. Croatian data adduced in this paper, however, do not support either of these two possibilities. In addition to nominative subjects, direct objects (marked with the accusative) and indirect objects (marked with the dative) are also possible controllers of subject deletion in complement infinitival clauses, as exemplified by (30)–(32):

Subject control

(30) Petar   želi   ići   kući.
Petar–Nom   wants   go–inf.   home.
'Peter wants to go home.'

Direct object control

(31) Pustili   su   je   otići.
let–3.pl   be–3.pl.   her–cl.Acc   leave–inf.
'They let her leave.'

Indirect object control

(32) Dozvolili   su   joj   otići.
allow–3.pl.   be–3.pl.   her–cl.Dat   leave–inf.
'They allowed her to leave.'

Direct object control verbs include **poticati** (*incite*), **goniti** (*force),* **tjerati** (*urge*), **vidjeti** (*see*) and **čuti** (*hear*), whereas the verbs **pomoći** (*help*), **braniti** (*prohibit*), **dopustiti** (*allow*), **dati** (*allow*) and some other verbs allow indirect object control. It might perhaps be argued that the dative in (32) is the result of subject raising from a dependent *da*–clause in (33)

(33) Dozvolili   su   da   ona   ode.
allow–3.pl.   be–3.pl.   that   she–Nom   leave–3.sg.
'They allowed her to leave.'

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1   The term implicit subject of the infinitive is used for ease of exposition. More precisely, one should speak of the implicit argument of the infinitive since this argument never gets realised as subject.

which would support the claim that the dative is the subject at the level at which infinitivization applies, that is, as Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1971: 356) have put it »Infinitives arise regularly when the subject of an embedded sentence is removed by a transformation, or else placed into an oblique case, so that in either case agreement between subject and verb cannot take place.« Such an analysis, however, seems implusible for two reasons. First, the dative is a semantic argument of a verb like pomoći (*help*) and the raising hypothesis does not apply. Secondly, the raising hypothesis cannot account for sentences like (34)

(34) Uspjelo   mu   je   pobjeći.
     manage–3.sg.n.   he–Dat   be   escape
     'He managed to escape.'

since there is no corresponding clause from which the dative could have been raised:

(35) *Uspjelo   je   da   on   pobjegne.
     manage–3.sg.   is   that   he–Nom   escape–3.sg.

Given that direct objects in the accusative and indirect objects in the dative are possible controllers of subject ellipsis, it is not surprising that the putative dative subjects, as in (36) and (37) should also have the same property.

(36) Dosadilo   mi   je   slušati   tvoje   pritužbe.
     bored–3.sg.n.   me–Dat   be   listen–inf.   your   complaints–Acc
     'I am fed up with listening to your complaints.'

(37) Hladno   joj   je   stajati   na   toj   zimi.
     cold–3.sg.n.   her–Dat be   stand–inf.   on   this   cold
     'She feels cold standing in this cold weather.'

Since the datives in (36) and (37) could not have been derived from a dependent clause, the fact that they control the ellipsis of the implicit subject of the infinitive would have to be accounted for by postulating an abstract syntactic level at which the dative is the subject. Such an abstact level, however, would not be independently motivated since there is no other syntactic process for which it would be needed. The second problem with this analysis is that datives do not control verb agreement, which is an exclusive property of the nominatively marked subject in Croatian and other languages with a developed nominative–accusative case marking system. In Croatian, the predicate in Dative Subject Constructions (DSC) is invariably third person, singular neuter. The proponents of the Dative Subject Hypothesis were also aware of this problem, but the most they could do was to postulate an ad hoc rule along the following lines: »... the dative NP indeed originates as the subject in the DSC and acts like a subject with respect to transformations that refer to the subject,

but *at the stage of derivation* at which the rule of verb agreement applies, the dative NP is no longer the subject, hence its failure to control verb agreement.« (Sridhar, 1979: 120). This explanation is again motivated only by the wish to save the Dative Subject Hypothesis, that is to support the claim that every sentence must have a subject[2].

In my own view, the subject is not an obligatory constituent of every sentence, that is, an argument of a predicate need not have a clear syntactic function if it has a semantic and/or a pragmatic function. In the case of protypical subjects, the independently established morphosyntactic properties of subjects coincide with the semantic function Agent and the pragmatic function Topic. As Shibatani (1991) has convincingly argued, even this need not be the case cross–linguistically because some properties typically associated with subjects may be topic dependent, as in the Philippine languages or languages with split ergative syntax. This leaves open the possibility that the apparent subject–like properties of putative dative subjects are semantically or pragmatically determined, that is, languages may differ with respect to which they have grammaticalized a particular semantic or pragmatic function as subject. A clear case of a high degree of grammaticalization of dative as subject seems to be Modern Icelandic, in which datives pass the following seven tests for subjecthood: (i) Raising; (ii) Reflexivization; (iii) Subject–Verb Inversion; (iv) Extraction; (v) Indefinite Subject Postposing; (vi) Subject Ellipsis, and (vii) Infinitive Complements (Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson, 1985: 461–462). Unlike Modern Icelandic, Croatian has not grammaticalized datives as subjects at all and the fact that they control subject ellipsis can be accounted for in pragmatic terms.

Since Croatian is a free word order language in which all logical combinations of S, V and O are possible, it is obvious that the control does not operate on the basis of proximity. A closer look at the semantic classes of verbs which allow direct object and indirect object control of the implicit subject of the infinitive reveals a possible explanation. Direct object control verbs mainly include verbs of forcing and ordering, and the indirect object control verbs are the verbs of allowing and disallowing, but in both cases the object retains a high degree of control over the activity expressed by the infinitive, that is, in order for sentences like (31) and (32) to make sense pragmatically the speaker must presuppose that the addresee, which is encoded as a direct or indirect object, must have the ability to bring about the action expressed by the infinitive. A pragmatic approach to control phenomena is independently needed for a sentence like (38)

(38) Pomogao   mi   je odnijeti   namještaj   na treći kat.
     helped–3.sg.m. me–Dat   is carry–inf. furniture   on third floor
     'He helped me to carry the furniture to the third floor.'

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2 Meteorological predications like **kiši** (raining), **grmi** (thundering), **smrkava se** (getting dark refl.) are true subjectless predications and they should not be confused with the pro–drop parameter.

which makes sense only if both the subject and the indirect object are understood as coreferential with the implicit subject of the infinitive. Although it is generally agreed that the implicit subject of the infinitive is controlled by either the subject or the object of the main clause, (38) shows that this is not necessarily the case, or, as Comrie (1985: 51) has put it »... the understood subject of the infinitive is interpreted as a set properly containing the controlling noun phrase, rather than as being strictly coreferential with the controlling noun phrase.« The argument that control in general, and the coreference between the controlling noun phrase and the implicit subject of the infinitive demands a pragmatic explanation is given further support by (39)

(39) Otac   je   pomogao sinu   završiti   studij.
     father–Nom be   helped son–Dat   finish–inf. studies
     'Father helped his son to graduate.'

which, unlike (38) makes sense only if the indirect object is understood as coreferential with the implicit subject of the infinitive.

Now, given that direct and indirect object control can be accounted for in pragmatic terms without postulating a deeper syntactic level at which either the direct or indirect object is the subject, we can easily explain the fact that putative dative subjects can control subject ellipsis in infinitive clauses. Since the dative is the only referential NP in such constructions, the speaker uses the most economical linguistic expression: the one in which the mentioning of the coreferential NP, that is, the implicit subject of the infinitive, is avoided. An additional piece of evidence in support of the argument that subject ellipsis in non–finite clauses is pragmatically determined is provided by the control of implicit subjects of participial clauses. In Croatian, like in English, implicit subjects of participles are usually coreferential with the subject of the main clause, as in (40):

(40) Vraćajući se   kući,   kupio   je   ženi   cvijeće.
     returning refl home   bought–3.sg.m. be   wife–Dat flowers–Acc
     'While returning home, he bought his wife some flowers.'

Putative dative subjects are also possible controllers of subject ellipsis in participial clauses:

(41) Smučilo mu   se   gledajući u   provaliju.
     get sick him–Dat   refl looking   into   abyss
     'He got sick while looking into an abyss.'

Unlike the implicit subjects of infinitives, implicit subjects of participles can also have the so–called dative of possession as the controller:

(42) Smrzli su   mi   se   prsti   beruči   jabuke.
     froze   are   me–Dat refl fingers–Nom   picking   apples–Acc
     'My fingers got frozen while picking apples.'

At first sight it might appear that the controlling NP is the nominative subject **prsti** (*fingers*), as is also suggested by the English translation of the Croatian sentence. However, the correct paraphrase of (42) is (42a):

(42a) Smrzli su mi se prsti dok   sam   brao   jabuke.
                              while   be–1.sg. pick–sg.   apples–Acc
      'I got my fingers frozen while I was picking apples.'

The paraphrase in (42a) clearly shows that the dative **mi** rather than the nominative subject **ruke** is the actual controller of the implicit subject of the participle in (42), and this is also reflected in the English translation of this sentence in (42a), which, in fact, is the more felicitous translation of (42). The purpose of these examples is to show again that control phenomena in Croatian have to be explained in pragmatic rather than in syntactic terms, unless we want to devise a very elaborate derivational process in which the dative would be a subject at some very abstract level of syntactic analysis. From a pragmatic point of view, the explanation of the fact that dative possessors are elligible as controllers of implicit subjects of participles is much simpler and more in line with the general nature of the so–called dative possessors. In the literature on dative possessors there is more or less general consensus that this type of construction is used to present the state of affairs as affecting or being experienced by the referent of the dative, that is, although only a part of the body may have been affected, the state of affairs expressed by the sentence is presented as affecting the whole person.

4 Conclusions

The Croatian examples adduced in this paper do not provide any evidence for the claim that only subjects, including putative dative subjects, can control the ellipsis of implied subjects of infinitives and participles. The control phenomena in Croatian can be accounted for in pragmatic terms, and this brings into question the claim that the control of subject ellipsis is cross–linguistic evidence for the existence of dative subjects as a syntactic category. A detailed analysis of other languages with a putative dative subject might reveal that the control phenomena in these languages are also pragmatically controlled and that the notion of dative subject should be abandoned. It should also be noted that the majority of languages with the so–called dative subjects have a fairly rich case marking system and relative word order freedom, both of which diminish the need for grammaticalization of some syntactic processes. This, of course, is not meant to suggest that languages may not differ with respect to the degree to which they have grammaticalized datives as subjects, but Croatian is an obvious counterexample to this tendency.

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Je li subjekt u dativu sintaktička kategorija?

Za takozvani subjekt u dativu karakteristična su dva atipična svojstva kodiranja: kosi padež i odsutnost sročnosti s predikatom. S druge strane, u literaturi o subjektu u dativu najčešće se spominju kontrola refleksivizacije i elipsa implicitnog subjekta infinitiva kao sintaktička svojstva koja dokazuju subjektnost imenskog izraza u dativu.

Kontrola refleksivizacije u hrvatskomm pokazuje da antecedent povratno–posvojne zamjenice *svoj* može biti samo subjekt u nominativu. Kontrola elipse implicitnog subjekta infinitiva nije svojstvena samo subjektu, već kontrolori elipse mogu biti i direktni i indirektni objekt i posesivni dativ. Činjenica da i takozvani subjekt u dativu može biti kontrolor elipse implicitnog subjekta stoga ne dokazuje da je dativ subjekt. Kontrola se može objasniti pragmatičkim motivima jer u svim slučajevima kontrole implicitni subjekt zadržava visoki stupanj kontrole i agentivnosti. Sa semantičke strane, uporaba subjekta u dativu leksički je uvjetovana bilo unutar jednog jezika bilo između više jezika, ali ne postoji sustavni obrazac jer i u okviru istog jezika i između više jezika semantički ekvivalentni predikati mogu zahtijevati sintaktički različite argumente. Hrvatski ne pruža ni jedan sintaktički ni semantički dokaz za pretpostavljanje subjekta u dativu kao posebne sintaktičke kategorije.

Key words: *dative subject, syntax, reflexivization, control, pragmatics, Croatian language*

Ključne riječi: *subjekt u dativu, sintaksa, refleksivizacija, kontrola, pragmatika, hrvatski jezik*