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SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN SERBO-CROATIAN
AND EVIDENCE FOR LINGUISTIC THEORIES

0. Introduction

This paper concentrates on the relation between Serbo-Croatian language data and the sort of evidence they can provide for the treatment of the syntactic functions Subject and Object in two linguistic theories in which assignment of syntactic functions is a prominent analytical device, viz. Functional Grammar (cf. Dik 1978 etc.) and Relational Grammar (cf. Perlmutter 1981 etc.). Subject and Object are conceived of as defined not only on the basis of their formal properties (including determination of congruence), but also on the basis of their semantic properties, as not contributing to the definition of the state of affairs designated by the predication as such, but rather to the particular way in which the state of affairs is presented (cf. Dik 1980: 13). The state of affairs as such is consequently not changed by a differential syntactic function assignment. Against the background of these preliminaries, this paper tries to show that an analysis of a formal difference between two sentences exclusively in terms of a differential syntactic function assignment presupposes an analysis of the sentence semantics (including the state of affairs) first, without which the proposed analysis can neither be claimed to be correct nor be used as evidence for considering one linguistic theory more adequate than the other.

The Serbo-Croatian language data to be considered here are those for which a differential syntactic function assignment has been claimed to be able to account for the observed difference (cf. Kučanda 1984), viz. a differential Subject assignment either to Agent, in active sentences, or to Goal, in passive ones, and a differential Object assignment in sentences of the type *Oni su ponudili Ivanu bijelo vino* 'They offered to John white wine' vs. *Oni su ponudili Ivana bijelim vinom* 'They offered John white wine', with *bijelo vino* as Object in the first example, and *Ivana* in the second. On the basis of formal properties of sentences such as these two above, Kučanda (1984) claimed that Serbo-Croatian does have a differential assignment of Subject and Object, unpredictable from semantic properties of the involved predicate frames (for which he without investigating them assumed that they would be the same in sentences with the

observed formal differences of the type illustrated above). In addition to this claim that Serbo-Croatian has a differential Subject and Object assignment, Kučanda further claimed that differentiability of syntactic function assignment provides an argument in favour of a multileveled assignment of syntactic functions. Given the fact that Functional Grammar allows only for a single level of syntactic function assignment, this would then provide an argument against Functional Grammar and in favour of Relational Grammar, which has multileveled assignment of syntactic functions as one of its basic tenets.

A discussion of semantic properties of the given Serbo-Croatian sentences shows that semantic differences which can be ascribed solely to a different syntactic function assignment are never the only ones involved. Crucially, there is always a change of the argument structure and/or of the semantic characterization involved as well (discussed for passive sentences by Milošević 1972 already, and disregarded by Kučanda). This leads to an analysis in terms of predicate differences ascribable to predicate formation, instead of an analysis in terms of a differential syntactic function assignment. The Serbo-Croatian data consequently do not provide evidence for the assumed differential syntactic function assignment, and thus also not for a multileveled syntactic function assignment. The latter is in fact one of the theoretical axiomata of Relational Grammar, for which no decisive language evidence can be found. On the other hand, relevance of the semantic characterization of the states of affairs in connection with such Serbo-Croatian sentences can be seen as providing an argument in favour of Functional Grammar over Relational Grammar, because semantic characterization of the states of affairs plays a prominent role in the former, but not in the latter.

1. *Some basic differences between Functional Grammar and Relational Grammar*

Whereas both Functional Grammar and Relational Grammar posit the syntactic functions Subject and Object that are independent of the semantic functions Agent, Goal, Recipient etc., the two frameworks differ in that Relational Grammar allows for a multileveled assignment of syntactic functions (the differences among the levels being that of either promotion or demotion of the syntactic functions, as will be shown below), whereas Functional Grammar allows for a single syntactic level only, and accounts for all semantic differences other than those ascribable to a differential assignment of Subject and Object only, as due to predicate formation and/or to additional assignment of the pragmatic functions Topic or Focus inside a predication, and Theme or Coda outside a predication.

As a necessary addition to that approach, Functional Grammar formulates the following semantic characterization of the states of affairs designated by nuclear predicate frames (from Dik 1978: 32ff.):

| | + Dynamic | — Dynamic |
|-----------|---|---|
| + Control | <i>Action</i> John kissed Jane | <i>Position</i> John held Jane in his arms |
| — Control | <i>Process</i> John fell in love with Jane | <i>State</i> John is in love with Jane |

Each predicate frame in Functional Grammar is characterized by the arguments it takes, these being variables labelled for semantic functions. A nuclear predicate frame, characterized by its arguments, can further be extended by means of »satellite« positions, i.e. positions for satellite terms which specify further properties of the nuclear state of affairs as a whole. Satellites consist of variables labelled for the semantic functions Instrument, Beneficiary, Reason, Manner, Purpose etc. The difference between arguments and satellites is thus determined by their semantic functions.

The different states of affairs defined above, distinguished on the basis of \pm Dynamic (defined by Dik as »whether or not the state of affairs involves any change«, but in view of both Slavic perfective and imperfective verbs being + Dynamic, it seems better to define it as »whether or not the state of affairs evolves along the time dimension«) and \pm Control (i.e. »whether or not one of the entities involved has the power to determine whether or not the state of affairs will obtain«), are characterized by the following semantic functions in the position of the first argument:

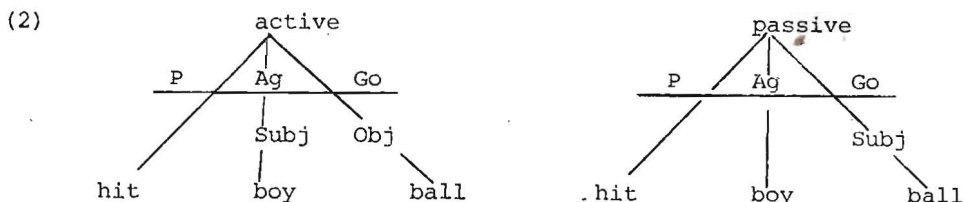
- the first argument of an Action predication always has Agent function; the Agent is the entity presented as controlling the Action;
- the first argument of a Position predication always has Positioner function; the Positioner is the entity presented as controlling the Position;
- the first argument of a Process predication is assigned Force function; it is the entity presented as a non-controlling instigator of a process;
- the first argument of a state is not assigned any particular semantic function.

The second argument of an Action or a Position is assigned the semantic functional Goal, and that of a Process, the semantic function Processed. As an example of an Action, and of the way in which predicate-frames are assumed to be coded in the lexicon, the predicate frame of 'to hit' can be mentioned.

(1) $\text{hit}_V(x1: \text{animate}(x1))_{AG}(x2)_{GO}$

The semantic functions Agent, Goal etc. defined above can be assigned the syntactic functions Subject and Object in a differential way,

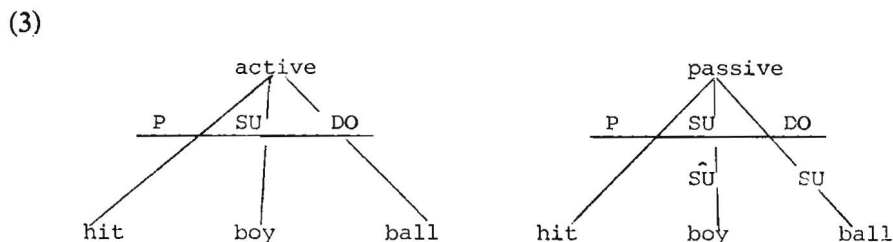
as illustrated by the following treatment of the active-passive relation in Functional Grammar as defined by Dik (1980:61):



(where P = Predicate, Ag = Agent, Go = Goal, Subj = Subject, and Obj = Object).

In Functional Grammar, one consequently starts with a predicate (P) taking arguments in the semantic functions of Agent (Ag) and Goal (Go). This structure is neutral as between active and passive realization. In order to get at the active, Subject (Subj) must be assigned to Ag and Object (Obj) to Go; in order to get at the passive, Subj must be assigned to Go. There are consequently no relation-changing transformations.

In Relational Grammar, on the other hand, one starts with a predicate (P) taking a Subject (SU) and a Direct Object (DO). When no promotion and demotion rules are applied to this basic structure, the active construction comes out. For a derivation of the passive construction, the basic grammatical relations are changed: DO is promoted to SU, and SU is demoted to $\hat{S}U$, which can be read as »demoted Subject«, or »Chômeur«, as follows.



It is against the background of these basic notions in Functional Grammar (FG) and Relational Grammar (RG) that syntactic function assignment in Serbo-Croatian will be discussed in the present paper.

2. Does Serbo-Croatian have passive pendants of active sentences?

This question can be — and has indeed been — tackled from two points of view, viz. on the basis of formal properties of lexical stems occurring in such sentences, or on the basis of the meaning as connected with formal properties of lexical stems occurring in such sentences.

On the basis of the form, there are two candidates for passive pendants of active sentences: a reflexive sentence which Dik and Gvozdanović (1981) have called pseudo-reflexive, and a sentence containing the auxiliary *biti* and a passive past participle, which Dik and Gvozdanović (1981) have not discussed in view of Milošević (1972), as will be elaborated below. These types of sentences can be illustrated by the following examples.

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| (4a) Graditelji grade kuću builders _{nom.} build house | '(The) builders are building a/the house.' |
| (4b) Kuću grade graditelji | |
| (4c) Grade kuću graditelji | |
| (5a) Kuća se gradi house _{nom.} refl. build | 'The/a house is being built.' |
| (5b) Gradi se kuća | |
| (6) Graditelji su sagradili kuću builders _{nom.} aux. built _{a.p.p.} house | '(The) builders have built a/the house.' |
| (etc. in either word order, which I shall not mention from now on) | |
| (7) Kuća je sagrađena house _{nom.} aux. built _{p.p.p.} | 'The/a house is built/has been built.' |
| (8) Kuća je sagrađena od drveta house _{nom.} aux. built _{p.p.p.} from wood _{gen.} | 'The/a house is built/has been built from wood.' |
| (9) Kuća je sagrađena drvetom house _{nom.} aux. built _{p.p.p.} wood _{instr.} | 'The/a house is built/has been built by means of wood.' |
| (10) Kuća je građena od drveta house _{nom.} aux. built _{p.p.p.} from wood _{gen.} | 'The/a house is built/used to be built from wood.' |
| ? Kuća biva građena baš ovog trenutka house _{nom.} being built _{p.p.p.} right this moment _{gen.} | |
| (11) Kuću grade baš ovog trenutka house _{nom.} build _{s.pl.} right this moment _{gen.} | 'They are building the/a house right this moment.' |
| (12) Kuća se gradi baš ovog trenutka house _{nom.} refl. build right this moment _{gen.} | 'The/a house is being built right this moment.' |

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| <p>(13) Kuća se je gradila prošle godine house_{nom.} refl. aux. build_{a.p.p.} last year_{gen.}</p> <p>* Kuća se je sagradila prošle godine house_{nom.} refl. aux. built_{a.p.p.} last year_{gen.}</p> | <p>'The/a house was being built last year.'</p> |
| <p>(14) Kuća je sagrađena prošle godine house_{nom.} aux. built_{p.p.p.} last year_{gen.}</p> | <p>'The/a house was built last year.'</p> |
| <p>(15) Nastavnik hvali učenika teacher_{nom.} praise pupil</p> | <p>'The/a teacher praises/is praising a/the pupil.'</p> |
| <p>(16) Učenik se hvali pupil_{nom.} refl. praise</p> | <p>'The/a pupil is boasting, lit. the/a pupil is praising himself.'</p> |
| <p>(17) Učenika se hvali pupil_{acc.} refl. praise</p> | <p>'The/a pupil is being praised.'</p> |
| <p>(18) Nastavnik je hvalio učenika teacher_{nom.} aux. praised_{a.p.p.} pupil_{acc.}</p> | <p>'The/a teacher was praising/used to praise a/the pupil.'</p> |
| <p>(19) Učenik je hvaljen pupil_{nom.} aux. praised_{p.p.p.}</p> | <p>'The/a pupil is praised/used to be praised.'</p> |
| <p>(20) Nastavnik je pohvalio učenika teacher_{nom.} aux. praised_{a.p.p.} pupil</p> | <p>'The/a teacher (has) praised a/the pupil.'</p> |
| <p>(21) Učenik je pohvaljen pupil_{nom.} aux. praised_{p.p.p.}</p> | <p>'The/a pupil is praised/has been praised.'</p> |
| <p>(22) Učenika se je hvalilo pupil_{acc.} refl. aux. praised_{a.p.p.}</p> <p>* Učenika se je pohvalio pupil_{acc.} refl. aux. praised_{a.p.p.}</p> | <p>'The/a pupil was being praised.'</p> <p>'The/a pupil got praised.'</p> |

(The following abbreviations are used: *nom.* = nominative, *gen.* = genitive, *dat.* = dative, *acc.* = accusative, *loc.* = locative, *instr.* = instrumental, *aux.* = auxiliary, *refl.* = reflexive, *a.p.p.* = active past participle, and *p.p.p.* = passive past participle; gender, number, and tense have not been indicated in the literally translations.)

The above sentences illustrate restrictions on the usage of perfective verbs (characterized formally by means of a prefix in the given examples) in the pseudoreflexive sentences, and inadequacy of the construction with

the passive past participle to express actuality of the Action of the predication, but rather a characteristic deriving from it, either as a result (with perfective verbs) or as connected with the specification of the Action as nonactual (e.c. by means of an adverbial).

Sentences containing the construction with the passive past participle have the Subject in the nominative case irrespectively of its specification as either animate or inanimate, whereas in pseudo-reflexive sentences, this can occur only with an inanimate Subject.

Can the Agent be expressed in a sentence containing a pseudo-reflexive construction or one with a passive past participle (which latter I call 'a passive construction' for the sake of brevity)?

Belić (1933: 264) and Stevanović (1964: 364) stated that it cannot be. Spalatin (1933: 118) stated that it is »not acceptable in Standard Serbo-Croatian, although it is occasionally heard or seen in print«. Maretić (1899: 631) and Mihajlović (1974, 1976) pointed to its occasional expression by means of an *od* + genitive construction, without reference to the norm to which Spalatin was referring, and finally, Barić *et al.* (1979: 373) presented passive sentences with the *od* + genitive specification of the presumed Agent without discussing their acceptability or meaning at all.

It is characteristic of the approaches which do allow for an *od* + genitive expression of the presumed Agent that they do not discuss the meaning of passive sentences (Mihajlović 1974: 33) even explicitly stated that »the line of demarcation between the passive and pseudo-passive sentences is not as clear cut as it would seem from the above examples; nor is it always possible to delimit with formal vigour real passives from combination of the copula *be* + V-en adjective«. They only point to rare occurrences of *od* + genitive constructions in such cases. And these occurrences are rare, indeed, as shown by Plotnikova (1968: 61), who found it in 1,8% of the cases in sentences with a pseudo-reflexive construction, and in 4,6% of the cases in sentences with a passive construction in modern Serbo-Croatian prose. Is this rare occurrence related to semantics of this construction? This question has not been answered so far.

For a consideration of the meaning of the *od* + genitive construction, cf. the following Serbo-Croatian sentences.

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| (8) Kuća je sagrađena od drveta house _{nom.} aux. built _{p.p.} from wood _{gen.} | 'The/a house is built/has been built from wood.' |
| (23) Kuća se je srušila od kamenja house _{nom.} refl. aux. fell down _{a.p.p.} from stones _{gen.} | 'The/a house fell down from stones.' |
| * Kuća se je srušila kamenjem house _{nom.} refl. aux. fell down _{a.p.p.} stones _{instr.} | |
| (24) Kuća je srušena kamenjem house _{nom.} aux. broken down _{p.p.p.} stones _{instr.} | 'The/a house is broken down/was broken down by (means of) stones.' |

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|---|---|
| ?(24) Kuća je srušena od lavine house _{nom.} aux. broken down _{p.p.p.} from snowstorm _{gen.} | 'The/a house is broken down/was broken down from snowstorm.' |
| (25) Kuća se je srušila od lavine house _{nom.} refl. aux. fell down _{a.p.p.} from snowstorm _{gen.} | 'The/a house fell down from snow- storm.' |
| (26) Kuća se je srušila house _{nom.} refl. aux. fell down _{a.p.p.} | 'The/a house fell down.' |
| (27) Kuća je srušena house _{nom.} aux. broken down _{p.p.p.} | 'The/a house is broken down/was broken down.' |

In Serbo-Croatian, the instrumental case without preposition is the expression means of Instrument. And *od* + genitive is apparently the expression means of Source, as shown by the above examples. Both are satellites in terms of FG, and both are omittable, as shown by examples (25) and (26) above.

Example (24) is acceptable if *od lavine* is interpreted as Source connected with the state of affairs. In (28), there is a comparable Source, but in view of its lexical specification as + Animate interpretable as the instigator of the Action referentially equalling the Agent. Its semantic status of Source accounts for omittability (cf. (21)).

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| (28) Učenik je pohvaljen od na- stavnika pupil _{nom.} aux. praised _{p.p.p.} from teacher _{gen.} | 'The/a pupil is praised/has been praised by the teacher.' |
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If it is correct, indeed, that the meaning of *od* + genitive is that of Source, then sentence (28) must be viewed as not containing an Agent specification, and — consequently — as not being the passive correlate of the active sentence mentioned under (20) above. If correct, this must be related to a shift in the meaning of the predicate itself as well.

Existence of this shift in the meaning of the predicate has been illustrated above already, where it was shown that a sentence with a passive construction cannot be used in the meaning of actuality, specifically, in the meaning of the real present. It cannot, consequently, be used in order to denote a state of affairs evolving along the time dimension, which means that it cannot be used as + Dynamic, as already observed by another native speaker of Serbo-Croatian, namely by Milošević (1972: 71 etc.), and preceding her in short remark by Stevanović (1964: 367). This holds also for imperfective verbs, which can be used in such constructions if accompanied by a specification (e.g. an adverb) in combination with which the meaning of a characteristic, which is — Dynamic, is expressed.

In terms of FG, a —Dynamic state of affairs is not characterized by Agent as its first argument. Consequently, a sentence with a passive construction differs more from the corresponding active sentence than only due to a differential assignment of Subject. Its semantic differences must be viewed as due to predicate formation.

A sentence containing a pseudo-reflexive construction, on the other hand, can denote a +Dynamic state of affairs, but it cannot have a +Animate Subject in the passive meaning as undergoing the action. It can have a —Animate Subject in the passive meaning, but any *od* + genitive construction accompanying it has the meaning of Source with the interpretation of 'deriving from'. Even though the referent of Source may equal Agent, its meaning in language does not equal that of Agent.

Semantically the designated states of affairs are either +Dynamic, —Controlled, as in sentence (29) below, or —Dynamic, +Controlled, as in example (30) below, but never both.

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| (29) | Kuća se ruši od kamenja house _{nom.} refl. fall down from stones _{gen.} | 'The/a house is falling down from stones.' |
| (30) | Pismo se piše perom letter _{acc.=nom.} refl. write pen _{instr.} | 'A letter must be written with a pen, lit. a letter is written with a pen.' |

Dik and Gvozdanović (1981) have originally proposed two solutions for pseudoreflexive constructions in Serbo-Croatian: either in terms of Subject assignment to the Goal term of a predicate, or in terms of predicate derivation in view of an argument shift. The semantic characteristics discussed above lead to the conclusion that the second solution is the correct one.

Pseudo-reflexive constructions being the only possible candidate for a differential Subject assignment in Serbo-Croatian, we can now conclude that Serbo-Croatian does not have an independent Subject function, but only one predictable from the semantic functions characteristic of a predicate-frame.

3. Does Serbo-Croatian have a differential Object assignment?

In the absence of a differential Subject assignment, possibility of a differential Object assignment is relevant to establishing whether the language does or does not have an independent level of syntactic functions.

Kučanda (1984) argued that Serbo-Croatian does have a differential Object assignment in view of examples (31), (32) and (33), for which he proposed the following notation in terms of syntactic and semantic functions.

- (31) Oni_(AgSubj) su Ivanu_(Rec) ponudili bijelo vino_(GoObj) 'They offered white wine to J.'
 they_{nom.} aux. John_{dat.} offered_{a.p.p.} white wine_{acc.=nom.}
- (32) Oni_(AgSubj) su Ivana_(RecObj) ponudili bijelim vinom_(Go) 'They offered J. white wine, i.e. they treated J. with w.w.'
 they_{nom.} aux. John_{acc.} offered_{a.p.p.} white wine_{instr.}
- (33) Ivan_(RecSubj) je ponuđen bijelim vinom_(Go) 'J. is offered white wine.'
 John_{nom.} aux. offered_{p.p.p.} white wine_{instr.}

(The following additional abbreviations have been used: *Ag* = Agent, *Go* = Goal, *Rec* = Recipient, *Subj* = Subject, *Obj* = Object, *J.* = John.)

Kučanda wrote that (32) is a syntactic paraphrase of (31), whereas (33) is syntactically related to (32) only. In his approach to FG, Object is assigned to Recipient in (32), and this is why (32) has (33) as its passive correlate. He assumed all the three sentences to have the same semantic structure, without investigating the latter.

Do sentences (31), (32) and (33) have the same semantic structure indeed, formalized by Kučanda as in (34)?

- (34) $\text{ponuditi}_v (x1: \text{animate } (x1))_{Ag} (x2)_{Go} (x3: \text{animate } (x3))_{Rec}$

For an analysis of the semantic structure, consider the following sentences.

- (35) Oni su Ivana ponudili 'They treated John.'
 they_{nom.} aux. John_{a.c.c.} offered_{a.p.p.}
- * Oni su Ivanu ponudili
 they_{nom.} aux. John_{dat.} offered_{a.p.p.}
- (36) Oni su ponudili vino 'They offered wine (for sale).'
 they_{nom.} aux. offered_{a.p.p.}
 wine_{acc.=nom.}

We can see that a sentence becomes ungrammatical if one of the arguments of the predication is left out. (It is acceptable only if the given argument is inferrable from its direct context.) Grammaticality of (36) is connected with the semantic shift by which *ponuditi* does not any more mean only 'to offer', but 'to offer for sale', i.e. without a Recipient specification. And grammaticality of (35) is connected with a comparable

semantic shift by which *ponuditi* does not mean only 'to offer', but 'to treat', without specifying by means of what. In other words, *Ivana* is semantically not a Recipient in (35), but rather a Goal, as it is also in sentence (37).

- (37) Oni su Ivana ponudili Petru 'They offered J. to P. as a correspon-
za dopisnika dendent.'
they_{nom.} aux. John_{acc.} offer-
ed_{a.p.p.} Peter_{dat.} for correspon-
dent_{acc.=gen.}

Whereas *ponuditi* in (37) has the predicate frame formulated in (34), *ponuditi* in (35) must be seen as having a derived predicate-frame with only two argument positions, viz. those of Agent and Goal, and with a corresponding semantic shift as compared with the basic predicate-frame of (34).

The derived predicate frame of *ponuditi* illustrated by means of (35) can further be extended by means of an Instrument satellite, as in sentence (32) above. With the given meaning, the derived predicate cannot be extended by means of a Recipient.

Object is in all the discussed sentences automatically predictable from the Goal of a predicate-frame. It is never assigned so as to be the only difference between two otherwise identical sentences. It is consequently not an independent syntactic function in Serbo-Croatian which — in the absence of a differential Subject assignment as well — does not have an independent level of syntactic functions.

Relevance of the semantic differences discussed above can well be analysed in terms of FG, but not in terms of RG, which latter does not specify the states of affairs designated by a predication, and consequently lacks a means of establishing whether a formal difference is automatic or semantically motivated. RG consequently lacks a means of testing the proposed existence of a multivalued syntactic function assignment, which is one of its basic tenets.

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S a ž e t a k

SUBJEKT I OBJEKT U SRPSKO-HRVATSKOM I DOKAZ ZA LINGVISTIČKE TEORIJE

Autor analizira upotrebu subjekta i objekta u srpskohrvatskom književnom jeziku i moguće dokaze koje ta upotreba daje za opću lingvističku teoriju, specijalno za dva teoretska pristupa u kojima se ističu sintaktičke funkcije: za relacijsku gramatiku i funkcionalnu gramatiku. Upotreba sintaktičkih funkcija ne može se odrediti bez osvrta na rečeničnu semantiku, koja pokazuje da, pored ostalog, razlika između aktivnih i pasivnih rečenica nije samo u perspektivi izraženoj subjektom, nego i u predikativnoj semantici, pa stoga analiza razlike samo u smislu subjekta nije dovoljna. Razlike u semantičkoj specifikaciji predikata mogu se adekvatno analizirati u funkcionalnoj gramatici, dok analitički aparat relacijske gramatike pokazuje stanovite nedostatke.