



UDC 811.163.42'36+811.11'36

Original scientific paper

Accepted for publication on 26 September 2003

## Non-canonical Case Marking of Subjects in some West-Germanic Languages and Croatian

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Non-canonical case marking of subjects (also known as dative subjects, oblique subjects, oblique subject-like NPs, preverbal oblique nominals, 'quirky case') has been a matter of considerable debate for quite some time. In most traditional grammars the dative was simply assumed to be the subject because it was the 'thing being talked about', or because logic told us that it was the subject.<sup>1</sup> Since Keenan's (1976) seminal paper on the coding, behavioral and control properties of subjects linguists have been trying to find at least one syntactic criterion that an oblique NP shared with the indisputable nominative subjects at some level of syntactic representation. This paper compares the so-called dative subjects in Croatian (henceforth oblique subjects) with the situation in Modern Icelandic, which provides a wealth of evidence for the existence of oblique subjects. Mention will also be made of some earlier stages of English, Mainland Scandinavian and German, which had case systems similar to that of Modern Icelandic. Given that the loss of case system and the rigidification of word order in English and Mainland Scandinavian have led to the loss of oblique subjects, one would expect that Croatian and Modern German with their rich case systems would pattern more like Modern Icelandic than like English or Mainland Scandinavian.

### 1. Introduction

Nominative case-marking and control of verb agreement have long been the defining features of subjecthood cross-linguistically. Nevertheless, grammars of many languages recognized the existence of the so-called dative subjects,<sup>2</sup> which were marked by the lack of these properties and defined in 'logical' or pragmatic terms. The definition of subject as

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<sup>1</sup> See Jespersen 1924 and Sandmann 1954 for extensive discussions of the notion dative subject.

<sup>2</sup> The number of papers on dative subjects was particularly numerous during the heyday of Relational Grammar in the 1970s and early 80s (cf. Kučanda 1998b) for some references).





an NP in the nominative was more often than not circular. Thus, for example, the subject was defined as an NP in the nominative, and the nominative case was defined as the case of the subject (cf. Brabec *et al.* 1969, p. 193 and p. 222).<sup>3</sup>

The first problem encountered by such a definition was posed by ergative languages, and especially those called syntactically ergative languages in which the absolutive NP has a greater number of subject-like properties than the ergative NP, which typically encodes the semantic function Agent (cf. Dixon 1994).

Ever since the publication of Keenan's (1976) seminal paper on cross-linguistic properties of prototypical subjects linguists have tried to prove two points:

(i) the inadequacy of Keenan's proposal, i.e. many linguists have called into question the universal nature of subjects, as for example the proponents of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG): "RRG has a very different view of grammatical relations from the other theories. [...] the theory does not attribute cross-linguistic validity to the traditional grammatical relations of subject, direct object and indirect object, and therefore does not employ them as theoretical or analytical constructs. Rather, it adopts a construction specific conception of grammatical relations and postulates only a single one, which is called the 'privileged syntactic argument' " (Van Valin 2001:212)<sup>4</sup>.

(ii) The second point at issue is the status of the so-called dative subjects (oblique subjects, preverbal oblique nominals, oblique subject-like NPs, 'quirky' subjects). Ever since Andrews (1976), and especially Zaenen *et al.* (1985), Modern Icelandic has been discussed in the literature as a model language which exhibits a large number of subject-like behavioral properties, their number ranging from 4 in Andrews (1976) to 8 in Zaenen *et al.* (1985), and finally 13 in Barðdal (ms).

In this paper a comparison will be made between the syntactic behavior of Icelandic and Croatian non-nominative subjects with the aim of finding out whether there is any syntactic evidence for postulating dative subjects in Croatian. Evidence in support of the claim that Croatian dative-marked NPs do not exhibit subject-like behaviour will be supported by examples from Old English, Old Scandinavian and German, i.e. languages which had fairly rich case marking systems coupled with relative word order freedom.

<sup>3</sup> See Barðdal 2000a for a lengthy discussion of the inadequacies of making nominative case-marking and control of agreement either a necessary or sufficient condition for subjecthood of an NP.

<sup>4</sup> See also, among others, Dixon (1994), Blake (1994), Aikhenwald *et al.* (2001), all of whom are reluctant to use the term subject for what they call A/S or 'core argument', but as long as the same set of criteria is used to identify such arguments as is used by Keenan (1976) to characterize subjects cross-linguistically, the difference between the various approaches is a terminological one.



## 2. Behavioral properties of oblique subjects

It has frequently been argued that the change from impersonal to personal constructions in languages like English and Mainland Scandinavian is due to the loss of morphological case. Keenan has formulated this approach as *The Principle of Covariation of Functional Equivalents*: “Syntactic and (morphological) processes which have the same ‘function’ covary in their distribution across languages. By covary we mean that the more a language has one of the processes the less it need have the other. By ‘have the same function’ we mean something like ‘code the same semantic or syntactic information’ (a notion which is obviously not too well defined). For example, case-marking and word-order restrictions on major constituents of basic sentences have somewhat the same function of coding major grammatical relations, e.g. ‘subject of’, ‘direct object of’ etc. The principle predicts that the more we assign a language overt case marking the freer can be its basic word order and conversely.” (Keenan, 1978:120; cf. also Aikhenwald 2001, Faarlund 2001a).

This principle further predicts that the change from impersonal to personal constructions should not happen in languages where morphological case distinctions are largely intact, as in some Slavic languages or Modern Icelandic, Faroese and German (see Kučanda 1998b and Aikhenwald 2001 for further references). The notion dative (oblique) subject had for centuries been taken for granted although it is a contradiction, because the subject was defined by the same grammarians as the NP in the nominative, which controls agreement and oblique subjects were thus excluded by definition. On the other hand, in languages without case marking distinctions and with fixed word order (e.g. English, Mainland Scandinavian) the question of oblique subjects does not arise at all. The explanation that the loss of case marking in English was caused by changes of word order is often attributed to van der Gaaf (1904) and Jespersen (1909-49).<sup>5</sup>

To my knowledge, it was only after the publication of Keenan’s (1976) paper that linguists started searching for syntactic arguments which would show that an oblique subject shares some syntactic properties with a typical nominative subject. The nominative case and verb agreement, which had been a *sine qua non* of any definition of subjects, had to be dispensed with first, because as Barðdal (2000a) puts it, if subject is *a priori* defined as being the nominative NP, then oblique subjects are excluded by definition.

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<sup>5</sup> See, however, van Gelderen (2001) and Schüsler (2001) who argue that case marking and fixed word order coexisted for quite some time in Old English and Old French, respectively, and that the loss of case making could not have been caused by the rigidification of word order.



### 2.1 Oblique subjects in Modern Icelandic

A language whose oblique NPs proved to provide a large array of subject-like behavioral properties is Modern Icelandic, in which the subject can be marked by any of the following cases:<sup>6</sup>

- (1) Nominative (Eythórsson, 2002)
- |                                   |              |    |       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----|-------|
| Bátarnir                          | ráku         | að | landi |
| the boats-nom                     | drifted-3.pl | to | land  |
| 'The boats drifted to the shore.' |              |    |       |
- (2) Genitive (Andrews, 2001)
- |                                |              |      |  |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------|--|
| Verkjanna                      | gætir        | ekki |  |
| Pains-gen                      | is noticable | not  |  |
| 'The pains are not noticable.' |              |      |  |
- (3) Dative (Barðdal and Eythórsson, to appear)
- |                         |       |          |           |
|-------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|
| Heni                    | líkar | þessi    | hákarl    |
| she-dat                 | likes | this-nom | shark-nom |
| 'She likes this shark.' |       |          |           |
- (4) Accusative (Eythórsson, 2002)
- |                                   |              |    |       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----|-------|
| Bátana                            | rak          | að | landi |
| The boats-acc                     | drifted-3.sg | to | land  |
| 'The boats drifted to the shore.' |              |    |       |

However, although oblique subjects in Modern Icelandic have attracted a great deal of attention, it should be borne in mind that the most common subject case is the nominative, and that only about 350 verbs take an oblique subject, mostly the dative or accusative, and less frequently the genitive (cf. Eythórsson 2000; 2002). In Modern Icelandic there is a tendency to replace accusative oblique subjects by nominative subjects (compare (1) and (4)). This process, which is known as Nominative Sickness (NS), primarily affects accusative theme subjects. NS competes with another type of change, which affects accusative subjects of experienter verbs, that is, accusative subjects are replaced by dative subjects, as in (5) and (6):

- (5) Menninna
- |                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| vantar                 | hnifa      |
| the men-acc            | needs-3.sg |
| 'The men need knives.' |            |
- (6) Mönnum
- |                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| vantar                 | hnifa       |
| the men-dat            | needs-3.sg. |
| 'The men need knives.' |             |

<sup>6</sup> See Barðdal (2001), Barðdal (ms.), Barðdal and Eythórsson (to appear), Faarlund (2001b), Zaenen *et al.* (1985). Another language that exhibits almost the same range of behavioral properties of oblique NPs is Faroese (cf. Barnes 1986; Faarlund 2001b).



Eythórsson (2000; 2002) shows that NS affects subjects which are themes, whereas accusative themes are immune to Dative Sickness (DS). DS, on the other hand, affects accusative experiencers in Modern Icelandic. According to Eythórsson (2000; 2002) neither NS nor DA affects the meaning. Finally, he claims that DS is semantically motivated since DS is a change from one inherent case to another, whereas NS is a change from inherent to structural case, that is, it is syntactically motivated.

These two processes clearly show that the semantics of an oblique subject cannot be read off the way it is coded, and that in some languages, at least, experiencer verbs do not necessarily require a dative subject (in Bengali, for example, oblique subjects are predominantly in the genitive case – cf. Klaiman 1980; Onishi 2001b).

## 2.2. *Oblique subjects in Croatian*

First of all, the term oblique subject is a contradiction in Croatian. If one accepts Katičić's (1986 : 72) characterization of subject as 'the NP which must agree with the predicate in person and number, then oblique subjects are excluded by definition since they never determine agreement (cf. also Težak and Babić (1992) for a similar definition). Barić *et al.* (1979 : 337) also define the subject in terms of nominative case marking and agreement in number and person, but they stress that instead of the traditional label dative subject they use the terms an adverbial denoting the Agent or a direct object. The semantic/pragmatic definition offered by Brabec *et al.* (1969) is not helpful either, since the authors claim that the dative in (7)

- |   |            |            |            |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| (7) Meni  | se         | radi.      |            |
| I-dat   | refl.      | work-3.sg. |            |
| 'I feel like working.'  |            |            |            |
| is the subject because the sentence has the same meaning as (8) |            |            |            |
| (8) Ja  | hoću       | da         | radim.     |
| I-nom   | want-1.sg. | that       | work-1.sg. |
| 'I want to work.'   |            |            |            |

without giving any syntactic evidence why *meni* and *ja* should have the same syntactic function. In fact, none of the above grammarians give a single syntactic piece of evidence for postulating dative subjects in Croatian.

In what follows I will first discuss some syntactic properties of oblique subjects and I will then compare them with the so-called dative subjects in Croatian. Given that Croatian, Modern Icelandic, Faroese and Modern German have kept their case-marking systems intact, one would expect that oblique subjects in these languages have more properties in common with one another than with languages like Modern English or Mainland Scandinavian, which have changed from case-marked free word order languages to rigid SVO languages (cf., for example Allen (1995), (Fisher *et al.* 2000), (Barðdal 1998), Barðdal and Eythórsson (to appear)).



### 3. Oblique subjects in Croatian compared with oblique subjects in some West-Germanic languages

As has already been pointed out, the number of subject-like behavioral and control properties of oblique subjects in Modern Icelandic ranges from four in Andrews (1976) to thirteen in Barðdal (ms). It is not only the number of subject-like properties that differs, but the properties themselves are sometimes quite incompatible. Thus, for example, Onishi (2001a:8) proposes the following seven “syntactic properties of non-canonically marked A/O/S:

1. imperatives;
2. constraints on the coreferentiality of A/O/S in complementation;
3. targets of valency-changing derivations;
4. antecedent control over reflexive pronouns;
5. constraints on relativization (e.g. types of arguments which can stand as heads of relative clauses);
6. conditions under which A/S or O/S ‘pivot’ of the two clauses are shared or not shared (e.g. ‘same subject conditions’ in switch-reference systems and other types of clause or predicate conjoining); and/or
7. Coreferential deletion of the core argument (A/S or O/S ‘pivot’) shared by the two clauses.”

Almost all other authors mentioned in the references emphatically reject the idea that non-canonically marked subjects could control imperatives since they never encode prototypical Agents: “The most important observation is that it (i.e oblique subject – added by D.K).<sup>7</sup> does not occur with arguments that one might describe as the semantic prototype of ‘Agent’, that is volitional actions whose outcome is under the control of the doer (regardless of whether the verb is transitive or intransitive, that is whether the Agent is an A or an S. It is also observed that dative tends to be associated with psychological states, accusative with more physiological ones, although there doesn’t seem to be fully predictable principle here” (Andrews, 2001:99). The fact that oblique subjects, provided that they have subject-like properties, behave in semantically unpredictable ways was long ago pointed out by Massica (1976:160) “Predications involving experiences, particularly experiences of states or conditions that can be definitely ‘known’ (or somehow pertain) only or primarily to the subject undergoing them are treated differently in some languages from predications involving external acts,

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Kučanda (1998a) for arguments that the control of imperatives is not a syntactic property of all (nominative) subjects, but only of those which can be pragmatically interpreted as some sort of Agent.



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 or unhappiness, dreaming, feeling, remembering, thinking, embarrassment, 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 marking 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.” Faarlund (2001b) mentions the following eight properties of oblique subjects in Modern Icelandic (Subject-to subject raising; Subject-to-object raising; Cliticization; Subject PRO in infinitival clauses; Clause-bound reflexivization; Long distance reflexivization; Conjunction reduction, and Quantifier float), but unlike Barðdal (1998, 2000b) he claims that Old Icelandic did not have any oblique subjects and that they are a recent development due to their frequent occurrence in SpecI position.

Andrews’ (2001) argument that datives tend to be associated with psychological, and accusatives with physiological states can only be upheld if one considers examples like<sup>8</sup>

- |      |                       |          |                |
|------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| (9)  | Meni                  | je       | hladno         |
|      | I-dat                 | be-3.sg. | cold           |
|      | ‘I’m (feeling) cold.’ |          |                |
| (10) | Boli                  | me       | glava.         |
|      | ache-3.sg             | I-acc    | head-f.sg.acc. |
|      | ‘I have a headache.’  |          |                |

Unlike Askedal (2001) and Faarlund (2001b), who argue that oblique subjects are a fairly recent development, Barðdal argues in a number of papers (Barðdal 1998; 2000b; Barðdal and Eythórsson, to appear) that they represent a continuum in some languages (Modern Icelandic, Faroese, German), whereas in some other languages (English, Mainland Scandinavian) case marking and free word order have given way to rigid SVO order. Despite her endeavours to show that oblique subjects were found in the majority of Old West Germanic languages, she is sometimes unjustly critical of the notion subject itself as a cross-linguistic or language-internal category: “...different scholars have assumed different constructions to be criterial of subjecthood, partly because of language-specific

<sup>8</sup> In Modern Icelandic, for example, experiencer verbs like *dreyma* ‘dream’, *gruna* ‘suspect’, *langa* ‘want’, *minna* ‘remember’, *vanta* ‘lack, need’, etc. occur more often with accusative than with dative subjects ((cf. Barðdal (2001) and Eythórsson (2000, 2002)).



differences, but partly, it seems, to suit their own theoretical purposes: nominative case has been excluded as a subject criterion in Icelandic since the goal has been to investigate the syntactic behavior of subject-like non-nominatives, whereas nominative case and verb agreement have been defined as subject criteria in German, thus *a priori* excluding the oblique in the Oblique experiencer first construction. This is an example of both CROSS-LINGUISTIC METHODOLOGICAL OPPORTUNISM, and LANGUAGE-INTERNAL METHODOLOGICAL OPPORTUNISM (see Croft 2001:133ff). Cross-linguistic methodological opportunism is manifested as different criteria being used for subjects in different languages, and language-internal methodological opportunism manifests itself as some properties being assigned the status of being criterial without a principled way of making the choices.” (Barðdal, ms.p.7). Although language-internal methodological opportunism is more than apparent in the definitions of the subject in Croatian grammars, many linguists, including the present author (cf. Kučanda 1998a), when they speak of subject-like properties do not have in mind a set of Aristotelian necessary and sufficient conditions, but a set of attributes (in the sense of prototype theory)<sup>9</sup>, which are characteristic of a subject either language-internally or cross-linguistically.

Barðdal (ms.) proposes a set of thirteen most widely used subject criteria in Icelandic and German: 1. First position in declarative clauses; 2. Subject-verb inversion; 3. First position in subordinate clauses; 4. Subject-to-object raising; 5. Subject-to-subject raising; 6. Long distance reflexivization; 7. Clause-bound reflexivization; 8. Control infinitives; 9. Conjunction reduction; 10. Nominative case; 11. Verb agreement; 12. Deletion in imperatives; 13. Deletion in telegraph style. The first six criteria have been used as tests for subjecthood in Icelandic, but not in German. Criteria (10)-(13) are specific to German, and only (7), (8) and (9) have been used in both languages. In other languages a different set of criteria may overlap (cf. Kučanda 1998a).

Given the limited scope of this paper, I will discuss only three criteria: Conjunction reduction, Control infinitives, and Subject-to-subject raising. Another important piece of evidence in support of dative subjects is Clause-bound reflexivization, but since it is not entirely clear what individual authors mean by reflexivization, it will not be discussed here. For example, Perlmutter (1980) used the Russian reflexive *sebja* and possessive reflexive *svoj* as a crucial piece of evidence that in I-Constructions (Inversion Construction) the dative is indirect object in the final stratum and subject in the initial stratum. However, Moore and Perlmutter (2000) and Fortuin (2003) include also *odin* (‘alone’) and *sam* (‘self’ – Fortuin’s translation) among items which have a similar function as reflexives. It seems that in some cases any element co-indexed with an NP is claimed to be a reflexive element, and this is then used as evidence that that NP is the subject. This argument is obviously circular. Compare also the following sentences from Icelandic:

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Taylor (1995) and the references therein.







(11) Askedal (2001:69)

- a. Ég vonast til að vanta ekki peninga.  
 I-nom hope-refl to to PRO lack not monney-acc.  
 'I hope that I shall not lack money.'
- b. Honum finst verkefnið of þungt.  
 him-dat finds-refl homework-the-nom too hard  
 'He finds the homework too hard.'

(12) Faarlund (2001b:108)

- a. Flosi<sub>i</sub> bjó sik<sub>i</sub> aust-an  
 Flosi-nom prepared himself-acc east-from  
 'Flosi got ready to go west.'
- b. hon-um gaf han-n<sub>i</sub> alla hina beztu grip-i sina<sub>i</sub> halfa við sik<sub>i</sub>  
 him-dat gave he-nom all the best treasure-pl-acc his half with  
 himself  
 'He gave him half of all his most valuable things.'

3.1 Conjunction reduction (*Equi-NP deletion*)

Conjunction reduction is one of the most widely used tests for the subjecthood of an NP because the subject of the second conjunct can be left unexpressed only if it is coindexed with the subject of the first clause. In English, for example, sentence (13) can only mean (13a) but not (13b):

- (13) a. The man hit the woman and ran away.  
 b. The man hit the woman and he ran away.  
 c.\*The man hit the woman and she ran away.

In Modern Icelandic the subject of the second conjunct can be omitted if it is coindexed with the subject of the first clause, independently of the morphological case of the subject in the first clause and of the morphological case of the subject of the coordinated clause, as in the following examples from Barðdal (2000b : 30):

- (14) a. Hann<sub>i</sub> elskar bækur og (hann<sub>i</sub>) skilur þær.  
 he<sub>i</sub>-nom loves books and (he<sub>i</sub>-nom) understands them
- b. Hann<sub>i</sub> elskar bækur og (honum<sub>i</sub>) finnst þær skemmtilegar.  
 He<sub>i</sub>-nom loves books and (he<sub>i</sub>-dat) finds them entertaining
- c. Honum<sub>i</sub> leiðast bækur og (hann<sub>i</sub>) hatar að lesa þær.  
 He<sub>i</sub>-dat is bored by books and (he<sub>i</sub>-nom) hates reading them

Barðdal (ms.) argues that in German conjunction reduction is not a test for subjecthood but rather a case test, i.e. the coindexed NP in the second conjunct can be omitted only if



it is marked for the same case as the subject-like NP in the first clause (note the ungrammaticality of (16):

- (15) a. Er kam schnell vorbei und \_\_\_\_ mußte gleich zurück.  
 he-nom came quickly to-here and Ø-nom had-to immediately back  
 'He came by in a hurry but had to leave again immediately.'
- b. Mich hungert nach Brot und \_\_\_\_ dürstet nach Wasser.  
 me-acc longs for bread and Ø-acc thirsts for water  
 'I long for bread and water.'
- c. Mir wird's schlecht und \_\_\_\_ graut's vor der Zukunft.  
 me-dat is-it bad and Ø-dat fear-it for the future  
 'I feel sick and fear for the future.'
- (16) \*Ihm war kalt und \_\_\_\_ ging ins Bett.  
 him-dat was cold and Ø-nom went in bed  
 'He was freezing and went to bed.'

The deletion of the coinexed NP in coordinated clauses was also used as a subject test in Old English (cf. Allen 1995:112ff):

- (17) a. Eft ða ða him twynode, and be sumon dæle deaf  
 later then when him-dat doubted, and by some part \_\_\_\_ sank  
 'Then when he later doubted, and sank a bit...'
- b. ac gode ne licode na heora geleafleast ne  
 but God-dative not liked not their faithlessness-nom not  
 heora ceorung, ac \_\_\_\_ asende him to fyr  
 their grumbling-nom but \_\_\_\_ sent them to fire  
 'but God did not like their unbelief or their grumbling, but sent fire to them.'

It is difficult to find equivalent examples in Croatian because it is a pro-drop language and in finite clauses the verb is marked for person and number (and gender) of the subject, that is, the second clause in (18) can stand as an independent sentence (*Otišao je u krevet*). Compare first the Croatian equivalent of (16):

- (18) Bilo mu je hladno i otišao je u krevet.  
 was him-dat be-3.sg cold and went-3.sg.m be-3.sg in bed-acc

However, the subject-like oblique NP cannot be omitted even when two NPs are coinexed whether they are in the same oblique case or not:

- (19) a. On<sub>i</sub> je gladan i jede mu<sub>i</sub> se.  
 he-nom be-3.sg hungry and eat-3.sg him-dat refl.



- ‘He is hungry and feels like eating.’  
 \*On je gladan i jede \_\_\_ se  
 (20) a. Meni<sub>i</sub> je hladno i pije mi<sub>i</sub> se čaj.  
       I-dat be-3.sg cold and drink-3.sg I-dat refl tea  
       ‘I’m cold and feel like drinking tea.’  
 b. \*Meni je hladno i pije \_\_\_ se čaj.

As is evident from the examples above, conjunction reduction does not show that the subject-like oblique NPs behave like subjects with respect to this property. Nominative subjects always pass this test, as in the Croatian translation of (13) above:

- (21) Čovjek je udario ženu i pobjegao.  
       Man-nom be-3.sg hit-3.sg.m. woman-acc and ran away-3.sg.m.

### 3.2. Control Infinitives (Subject PRO in infinitival clauses)

In Control Constructions, the subject argument of the infinitive is controlled by an NP in the matrix clause, as in (22a) and (22b):

- (22) a. Jack<sub>i</sub> promised Jane [PRO<sub>i</sub><sup>10</sup> to leave]  
       b. Jack persuaded Jane<sub>i</sub> [PRO<sub>i</sub> to leave]

Since only the NP which would have been the subject of the corresponding finite clause can be controlled by an NP in the matrix clause, Control Constructions are a reliable test for the subjecthood of PRO, independently of its morphological case in a corresponding finite clause. In Croatian, either the subject or the object of the matrix clause is the controller:

- (23) a. Ivan joj je obećao donijeti cvijeće.  
       Ivan<sub>i</sub>-nom she-dat be-3.sg promised [PRO<sub>i</sub> bring-inf flowers]  
       ‘Ivan promised her to bring some flowers.’  
 b. Dozvolite mi otići.  
       Allow I<sub>i</sub>-dat [PRO<sub>i</sub> leave-inf]  
       ‘Allow me to leave.’

(24) and (25) are from Modern Icelandic:

- (24) Barðdal (2000b:39)

<sup>10</sup> PRO is used here in a theory-neutral way in order to distinguish the unexpressed argument of the infinitive from unexpressed arguments in coordinate constructions, which are usually marked as Ø or \_\_\_\_.



- a. Hann<sub>i</sub> lofar [að PRO<sub>i</sub> lesa bókina]  
 ‘He<sub>i</sub> promises [to PRO<sub>i</sub> read the book].’
- b. Hann<sub>i</sub> lofar [að PRO<sub>i</sub> finnast bókinn skemmtileg]<sup>11</sup>  
 ‘He<sub>i</sub> promises [to PRO<sub>i</sub> find the book entertaining].’
- (25) Barðdal (2001:53)
- a. það er ágætt að henta þETTA.  
 It is good to [PRO] suit this-nom  
 ‘It is good to be pleased with this.’
- b. það er ágætt að henta HONUM.  
 It is good to [PRO] suit him-dat  
 ‘It is good to please him.’

As Barðdal (2001:53) puts it commenting sentences (25a) and (25b) “... both arguments of the verb *henta*, the Dative human argument and the Nominative stimulus, can occur as the syntactic subject in Control Constructions.” More generally, oblique subjects can be deleted not only in Modern Icelandic, but this was also possible in Old Icelandic (26), and in Old English (27)

- (26) Rögnvaldsson (1996:60)
- a. þorgils kvaðst leiðast þarvistin.  
 Þorgils said-refl be-bored-inf there-stay-the  
 ‘þorgils said that he was bored by staying there.’
- b. þórður kvaðst þykja tvennir kostir til  
 þórður said-refl feel-inf two possibilities exist  
 ‘þórður said that he felt that two possibilities existed.’
- (27) Seefrantz-Montag (1983:133)
- a. him burþ to liken well his lif  
 he should like well his life  
 Seefrantz-Montag (1983:134)
- b. good is, quap Joseph, to dremen of win  
 good is, said Joseph, to dream of wine

Barðdal (ms) argues that the unexpressed argument of the infinitive (PRO) can be in the dative case in German ((cf. (28)), and that these sentences corroborate her argument that oblique subjects in German have some, although not as many subject properties as oblique subjects in Modern Icelandic:

- (28) a. Mir gefällt es, **geholfen zu \_\_\_\_\_ werden.**  
 me-dat likes it helped to PRO-dat be-inf  
 ‘I like to be helped.’

<sup>11</sup> Note that *finnast* takes an oblique subject in finite clauses.



- b. Statt **warm zu**        **sein**, war ihm jetzt plötzlich kalt.  
 instead warm to PRO-dat be-inf was him-dat all-of-a-sudden cold  
 ‘Instead of feeling warm, he all of a sudden felt cold.’

Now, given that Croatian is an inflectional free word order language with a rich case-marking system, one would expect that its oblique subjects would conform to the pattern found in languages (modern or old) with developed case marking systems, such as Old and Modern Icelandic, Old Swedish, Old English and German. However, consider sentences in (29), both of which are unacceptable in Croatian according to my intuition and the intuition of my native speaker informants:

- (29) a. ??Meni se sviđa biti pomognut.  
 I-dat refl like [PRO] be-inf helped  
 ‘I like to be helped.’  
 b. \*Ivan je gladan, ali mu se ne jesti.  
 Ivan-nom be-3.sg hungry but he-dat refl not [PRO] eat-inf  
 ‘Ivan is hungry, but doesn’t feel like eating.’

### 3.3 Subject-to-subject raising

Subject-to-subject raising is a syntactic rule which moves the subject of the dependent (embedded) clause into the subject position of the matrix clause, as in (30):

- (30) a. It seems that he is hungry.  
 b. He seems to be hungry.

In English, the raised subject is in the unmarked (nominative) case in both clauses. Subject-to-subject raising occurs most frequently with *seem* and *appear*. The Icelandic equivalent of *seem* may take either a nominative (31a) or a dative (31b) raised subject:

- (31) Barðdal (2001:53)  
 a. FYRIRKOMULAGIÐ virðist henta HONUM ágætlega.  
 The arrangement-nom seems to please him fine  
 ‘The arrangement seems to please him.’  
 b. HONUM virðist henta FYRIRKOMULAGIÐ ágætlega.  
 him seems to please the arrangement-nom fine  
 ‘He seems to be pleased with the arrangement.’

Since only subjects can be raised out of embedded clauses, the raising of an oblique subject-like NP into the subject position of *seem* (and its equivalents in other languages) is a reliable test that the raised NP is the subject. In Croatian, subject-to-subject raising is possible only out of embedded clauses with the structure NP-nom – be- NP/adj.



- (32) a. Čini mi se da je Ivan budala/pametnan  
 Seem I-dat refl that be-3.sg Ivan-nom fool / clever  
 'It seems to me that Ivan is a fool/clever.'  
 b. Ivan mi se čini budalom/pametnim.  
 Ivan-nom I-dat refl seem fool-instr/clever-instr

Datives cannot be raised out of embedded clauses:

- (33) a. Čini mi se da Ivanu nije dobro.<sup>12</sup>  
 Seem I-dat refl that Ivan-dat not-be-3.sg well  
 'It seems to me that Ivan is not well.'  
 b. \*Ivanu mi se čini ne dobro.  
 Ivan-dat I-dat refl seem not well

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has shown that Croatian subject-like dative NPs fail to pass three of the most widely used tests for subjecthood: Conjunction reduction, Control infinitives and Subject-to-subject raising. Since Croatian is a case-marking language one would expect it to pattern like other case-marking languages. In Modern Icelandic (and Faroese), oblique subject-like NPs pass all three tests for subjecthood. In German, obliques pass two tests, but in Croatian they fail to pass any of them. There is also some diachronic evidence that obliques behaved like subjects in Old English, Old Icelandic and Old Mainland Scandinavian. Since datives do not behave like indirect objects either (as is sometimes claimed), their syntactic function in Croatian is not clear and what is needed is further diachronic and synchronic research into the nature of subject-like dative NPs. Given that they encode Experiencers and that they have a fairly clear pragmatic function (topic), one might speculate that they have only a semantic and a pragmatic function, but no obvious syntactic function

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<sup>12</sup> In (33) *dobro* 'well' is an adverb, which is not marked for person, number or gender. Alternatively, one could argue that its default marking is third person, singular, neuter.



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## NEKANONIČKO PADEŽNO KODIRANJE SUBJEKTA U NEKIM SJEVERNOGERMANSKIM JEZICIMA I HRVATSKOM

Nekanoničko padežno kodiranje subjekta (takozvanog subjekta u kosom padežu ili subjekta u dativu) već duže vrijeme privlači pozornost lingvisti. U većini tradicionalnih gramatika za takav se subjekt kaže da je on “ono o čemu se govori”, ili da nam u takvim rečenicama logika kaže koja je riječ subjekt, ali se ne navode nikakvi sintaktički kriteriji koji karakteriziraju takav subjekt. Od objavljivanja Keenanovog (1976) članka o svojstvima kodiranja, ponašanja i kontrole tipičnog subjekta lingvisti pokušavaju naći bar nekoliko sintaktičkih karakteristika koje su zajedničke subjektu u nominativu i subjektu u dativu kako bi opravdali uporabu pojma subjekt u dativu (kosom padežu). U ovom radu uspoređuju se sintaktičke karakteristike takozvanog subjekta u dativu u hrvatskom i modernom islandskom, a navode se i neki primjeri iz staroengleskog, njemačkog i skandinavskih jezika. Budući da hrvatski ima razvijeni padežni sustav, moglo bi se očekivati da će se subjekt u dativu ponašati slično kao subjekti u kosim padežima u islandskom. Rezultati analize pokazuju da testovi koji pokazuju subjektnost nekog nominalnog izraza u kosom padežu u drugim jezicima pokazuju da se u hrvatskom dativ ne ponaša kao subjekt.

