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## Dative Alternation in Croatian<sup>1</sup>

Dative alternation is fairly rare in case-marking languages. However, Croatian exhibits this type of alternation with a small number of verbs. This paper analyzes the syntactic and semantic characteristics of Croatian dative verbs and their arguments, based on data from the *Croatian National Corpus*, and attempts to determine the most appropriate theoretical framework for the description of dative alternation in Croatian. We prove that certain generalizations about the dative alternation are valid cross-linguistically, but we also show that this type of alternation exhibits many language specific features as well.

### 1. Alternate choices for direct objects

The term 'dative alternation' refers to the variable expression of recipient arguments which is characteristic of certain verbs such as *poslužiti* 'serve'<sup>2</sup>:

- (1) a. *Lena je poslužila gost-ima čaj-Ø i keks-e.*  
serve.PERF.3sgF.PAST guest-DAT.pl tea-ACC.sg and  
biscuit-ACC.pl  
'Lena served tea and biscuits to the guests.'
- b. *Lena je poslužila gost-e čaj-em i keks-ima.*  
serve.PERF.3sgF.PAST guest-ACC. pl tea-INST.sg and  
biscuit-INST.pl  
'Lena served the guests tea and biscuits.'

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2 The abbreviations used in the glosses are as follows: PERF = perfective, IMPF = imperfective, ITER = iterative, ACC = accusative, DAT = dative, INST = instrumental

The class of verbs that allow dative alternation<sup>3</sup> differs from one language to another but prototypically involves verbs denoting (potential) transfer of a theme argument between an agent and a recipient. There are two major approaches to the analysis of dative alternation.

The first approach is primarily semantically motivated and assumes that dative verbs have two distinct meanings which give rise to two different realizations of arguments. Thus in each variant different arguments fulfil the semantic conditions for being considered objects or affected arguments (e. g., Oehrle, 1976; Pinker, 1990; Goldberg, 1995). The second approach assumes that dative verbs have a single meaning but may give rise to two related syntactic structures or argument expressions, which involve a change in grammatical relations but no change in the semantic roles of participants (e. g., Bresnan, 1982; Dryer, 1986; Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997). Such an approach is primarily syntactically motivated since it implies that there is no difference in truth-conditional meaning of the two variants, regardless of whether they are considered to be derivationally related or not. We take side with this approach assuming that the same semantic structure underlies both the dative and the alternated variant of a given verb and take into account that, although syntactically motivated, this approach does not preclude explanations based on semantic properties or discourse and pragmatic functions.

It is often the case that generalizations about the dative alternation are based primarily on English and in many instances such generalizations are not actually applicable to languages such as Croatian. For example, the English equivalent of sentence (1. b)

(2) *Lena served the guests tea and biscuits.*

has three direct<sup>4</sup> core arguments, whereas that of (1. a) has only two:

(3) *Lena served tea and biscuits to the guests.*

This fact leads some authors (e. g. Aoun & Li, 1989; Dryer, 1986; etc.) to consider variant (2) as basic. However, in Croatian, which is a case-marking language, all arguments in both (1. a) and (1. b) may be considered direct in this sense, so neither variant can be taken as basic. Either the theme or the recipient argument can be found in the accusative case, which is the direct object case in Croatian<sup>5</sup>. The other object is in an oblique case, the instrumental, and can be omitted, leaving a grammatical sentence in both instances:

3 In case-marking languages such as Croatian, Recipients prototypically appear in the dative case. Therefore verbs which have recipient arguments are often called dative verbs and we adopt this term as well.

4 'Direct' in the sense that they are not preceded by a preposition.

5 The only exception are direct objects found in the so called partitive genitive and the Slavonic genitive or genitive of negation but they too can be replaced by the accusative case. This issue, however, is not relevant for our present discussion.

- (4) a. *Ana je poslužila (gostima) čaj-Ø i keks-e.*  
 serve.PERF.3sgF.PAST (guest-DAT.pl) tea-ACC.sg and  
 biscuit-ACC. pl  
 'Ana served tea and biscuits (to the guests).'
- b. *Ana je poslužila gost-e (čaj-em i keks-ima.)*  
 serve.PERF.3sgF.PAST guest-ACC.pl (tea-INST.sg and  
 biscuit-INST. pl)  
 'Ana served the guests (tea and biscuits).'

It is worth noting that the Croatian examples in (1) are syntactically the analogy of examples such as (5) below, and not of their respective translations in (6):

- (5) a. *Lena presented the award to John.*  
 b. *Lena presented John with the award.*
- (6) a. *Lena served tea and biscuits to the guests.*  
 b. *Lena served the guests tea and biscuits.*

If we assume that English *to* is analogous to DAT in Croatian and that *with* is analogous to INST, only constructions with two objects in the same case would be considered true double object constructions in Croatian. According to Silić and Pranjković (2005) such constructions do exist in Croatian, but they are not subject to the dative alternation. We shall therefore reserve the term double object construction for English examples of the type (6. b) whereas the Croatian examples such as (1. b) will be termed 'alternated constructions'.

The focus of research on dative alternation has often been on the attempts to determine which of the two objects in sentences such as (1. b) shares most properties with the direct objects of mono-transitive sentences. Here too, many generalizations do not seem to hold for Croatian. Hudson (1992), for instance, claims that the direct object in an English double object construction is always the second object. However, there is a problem with such an analysis and it appears to be language specific: second objects in double object constructions do not pass or barely pass the main test for object-hood, which is passivization. Thus English passive sentences such as

- (7) *?Tea and biscuits are served the guests.*

are acceptable to some but not all speakers of English, while in Croatian second objects in alternated constructions cannot be passivized at all. In other words, sentence (8. a) can only be the passive of (1. a) and not of (1. b), whereas the only passive available for (1. b) is (8. b):

- (8) a. *Čaj-Ø*            *i*        *keks-i*                    *su posluženi*  
 tea-NOM.sg    and    biscuit-NOM.pl    serve.PERF.3pl. PASS  
*gost-ima*.<sup>6</sup>  
 guest-DAT.pl  
 'Tea and biscuits are served to the guests.'
- b. *Gost-i*                    *su posluženi*                    *čaj-em*            *i*  
 guest-NOM. pl    serve.PERF.3pl. PASS    tea-INST.sg and  
*keks-ima*.  
 biscuit-INST.pl  
 'The guests are served tea and biscuits.'

First objects do not comply with Hudson's (1992) claims either: they do not require the overt presence of a second object (see (4. b)) and they are not fixed in position between the verb and the second object, since Croatian is a language with free word order. Thus second objects can actually precede first objects, especially if the first object is the s. c. heavy NP, as in (9. b):

- (9) a. *Lena*        *je poslužila*                    *čaj-em*        *i*        *keks-ima*  
                   serve.PERF.3sgF.PAST    tea-INST.sg and    biscuit-INST.pl  
*gost-e*.  
 guest-ACC.pl  
 'Lena served the guests tea and biscuits.'
- b. *Lena*        *je poslužila*                    *čaj-em*        *i*        *keks-ima*  
                   serve.PERF.3sgF.PAST    tea-INST.sg and    biscuit-INST.pl  
*svako-ga*            *tko*    *je došao*                    *na domjenak*.  
 anyone-ACC.sg    who    come.PERF.3sgM.PAST    to reception  
 'Lena served anyone who came to the reception tea and biscuits.'

In some instances Croatian allows recipient arguments in alternated constructions to be omitted, which is yet another language specific feature of dative alternation:

- (10) a. *Djed Mraz*        *je darivao*    *slatkiš-ima*.  
 Santa Claus    give.as.gift.IMPF.3sgM.PAST    candy-INST.pl  
 'Santa Claus gave \_\_\_\_\_ candy.'
- b. *Konobar*        *je nudio*    *šampanjc-em*.  
 waiter        offer.IMPF.3sgM.PAST    champaign-INST.sg  
 'The waiter offered \_\_\_\_\_ champaign.'

In research conducted on the dative alternation in Croatian (cf. Zovko, 2001) 32 out of 44 native speakers thought that (10. a) was acceptable while 33 thought the same for (10. b). There appears to be no particular reason why certain sentences with omitted recipient arguments would be preferred over others, except for aspect: sentences with imperfective verb forms were found

6 The agent argument is usually omitted from passive sentences in Croatian.

acceptable even with recipient arguments being omitted while those same sentences with perfective verb forms were found unacceptable by all speakers. Also, all native speakers stressed the importance of other factors that influence the choice between the dative and the alternated construction, such as context of situation, stylistic meaning, formal/informal register, etc. We return to these issues in section 2 of this paper.

The syntactic characterization of objects in Croatian is unambiguous: direct objects are always in the accusative case while objects in one of the oblique cases (genitive, dative, locative or instrumental) are considered indirect objects. It is thus fairly easy to explain the dative alternation in Croatian in syntactic terms: it is an alternation by which indirect objects of certain verbs are allowed to become direct objects and behave as such. They receive the accusative case marking and become subjects of the corresponding passive sentences. Former direct objects become indirect objects and receive the instrumental case. However, such characterization of the dative alternation in Croatian is rather vague and incomplete because it does not take into account the semantic implications and the discourse function of dative alternation. The alternation itself is very uncommon in any case-marking language<sup>7</sup>; if it exists, it is always limited to few of the verbs whose basic semantic structure involves a willing transfer of a Theme between an Agent and a Recipient. In all dative constructions Recipients are realized as indirect objects and Themes as direct objects, whereas in alternated constructions such indirect objects can become direct, thus increasing their topicality. Many authors claim that topicality is the crucial reason for the existence of dative alternation in any language. Dryer (1986) thus argues that there is a separate set of grammatical relations which he calls 'primary object' and 'secondary object' and which is distinct from traditional grammatical relations such as subject, direct object or indirect object. In constructions with dative verbs, it is always the first object after the verb that is considered primary, while the other one remains syntactically secondary. Dryer (1986) claims, much in Givón's (1984) vein of thought, that the function of primary object marking is to distinguish between a more topical and less topical object, i. e.

'... the PO/SO distinction can be viewed as a grammaticalization of secondary topic vs. non-topic.' (Dryer, 1986: 841)

Keeping in mind that the economy of language prevents the existence of any two constructions that carry the exact same meaning within a given language, we believe that the existence of dative alternation in all languages that allow it is motivated by the need to make the recipient argument more topical than the theme argument. English appears to be more free in this respect since it allows the dative alternation with more than 30 verbs as opposed to Croatian where the dative alternation is a rare occurrence that appears with no

7 The dative alternation is not mentioned in any of the numerous grammars of the Croatian language.

more than eight verbs<sup>8</sup> (cf. the data in Table 1 in section 3). This distinction is not, in our opinion, due to the fact that the former language signals grammatical relations through argument position while the latter uses case-marking. It can rather be ascribed to some general tendency of a particular language to topicalize one type of argument over another and to use different means in doing so. The morpho-syntactic means by which the dative alternation is grammaticalized differ from one language to another but it is evident that this type of alternation in any language cannot be defined exclusively within syntax. We therefore attempt to describe other factors that influence this particular kind of alternation in Croatian.

## 2. Alternate expressions of recipients

The idea that subject and object assignment possibilities are in some way sensitive to a hierarchy of thematic relations<sup>9</sup> such as Agent, Goal, Theme, etc. was first formulated by Fillmore (1968) and further advanced by many other authors (cf. Jackendoff, 1972; Givón, 1984; Dik, 1989; Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997, among others). Since thematic relations are part of semantics, it is actually the semantic component that determines the acceptability of sentences obtained by syntactic rules. Therefore, the interpretation and acceptability of double object sentences is also determined by thematic relations. This idea is present in one form or the other in many subsequent theories of grammar.

Givón (1984) considers different object assignment to be a matter of topicality and sees subject and object as “grammaticalized (i. e. ‘syntactically coded’) pragmatic case-roles” (1984: 138). Objects are thus secondary clausal topics<sup>10</sup> and represent a simultaneous coding of semantic and pragmatic functions of discourse participants. Givón (1984: 139) establishes a hierarchy of semantic roles, which he calls topic hierarchy and which determines the probability of appearance of a particular semantic role as subject or object in a simple active clause (with the exception of Agent which cannot be assigned to object):

- (11) AGT > DAT/BEN > PAT > LOC > INSTR/ASSOC > MANN<sup>11</sup>

However, there are strong arguments against such complete identification of subjects and objects with pragmatic functions. One such counter-argument is the fact that in Givón’s hierarchy the role of Dative/Benefactive outranks the Patient role. Kučanda (1998: 28) points out that this order is problematic from the point of view of Croatian because in Croatian the semantic role of Da-

8 The actual number of verbs is even smaller – three – with the remaining verbs being not separate verbs but aspectual counterparts.

9 Or, in Fillmore’s terms, to a hierarchy of case relations (cf. Fillmore, 1968: 33)

10 As opposed to subjects which are primary clausal topics.

11 The abbreviations refer to Agent > Dative/Benefactive > Patient > Locative > Instrumental/Associative > Manner adverbs respectively. The semantic role of Patient is in some theories called Theme, whereas others (cf. Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997) distinguish both Patients and Themes.

tive/Benefactive is morphologically coded by the dative case. Such arguments cannot be direct objects nor can they become subjects in a passive sentence. Therefore, they cannot be topicalized in this way although they are high in the topic hierarchy. In other words, Givón (1984) claims that the direct object is also a pragmatic function. Taking into account that the semantic roles of Dative/Benefactive are coded by the dative case and are more often animate than inanimate, in a sentence with two objects the one in the dative case would be considered a secondary clausal topic, i. e. direct object. The dative would thus wrongly outrank the accusative case in choosing which of the two NPs is the direct object.

Functional Grammar (Dik, 1989) also keeps the traditional notions of subject and object but considers them to be primarily semantic notions which represent different perspectives or 'vantage points' "from which the state of affairs designated by a predication can be presented" (Dik, 1989: 209). The choice of semantic roles to which the grammatical relations of subject and object will be assigned is governed by the following hierarchy (Dik, 1989: 226)<sup>12</sup>:

(12)	Ag	>	Go	>	Rec	>	Ben	>	Instr	>	Loc	>	Temp
Subj	+	>	+	>	+	>	+	>	+	>	+	>	+
Obj			+	>	+	>	+	>	+	>	+	>	+

Object assignment defines a secondary 'vantage point', once the primary 'vantage point' has been established through subject assignment. Thus in sentence (1. a) the grammatical relation of object would be assigned to the theme argument and in (1. b) to the recipient argument. Dik (1989: 212, 210) concludes:

'I believe it is a distinct advantage of the FG approach that we can distinguish Subjects and Objects in terms of the underlying semantic functions to which they have been assigned (...) There are languages without Obj assignment, and even languages without Obj *and* Subj assignment. In languages which do have these assignments, however, accessibility appears to be systematically determined by a number of factors which can be formulated across languages.'

The hierarchy of semantic functions (12) thus appears to be universal in languages that allow such a choice in assignment. The more we move to the right, the more such subjects or objects are marked, as a consequence of the difference between the most natural perspective (Agent as subject, Goal/Theme as object) and the perspective in a particular sentence. According to Dik (1989) the (non)existence of dative alternation determines the relevance of the syntactic function of object in a particular language. Thus the syntactic function of

<sup>12</sup> The abbreviations of thematic relations are Agent, Goal, Recipient, Beneficiary, Instrument, Location, and Temporal respectively. Note that Dik's Goal refers to what in other theories is usually called Theme.



Van Valin & LaPolla (1997) and Van Valin (2005) establish the following case-marking rules for regular case marking in accusative languages:

- (14) a. assign nominative case to the highest-ranking macro-role argument
- b. assign accusative case to the other macro-role argument
- c. assign dative case to non-macro-role arguments (default)

Instrumental, however, is not a default case and its application depends on specific conditions. Instrumental case is assigned according to the following rule (cf. Van Valin, 2005: 110):

- (15) Assign instrumental case to non-M[acro]R[ole] *b* argument if, given two arguments, *a* and *b*, in a logical structure, with (1) both as possible candidates for a particular macro-role and (2) *a* is equal or higher (to the left of *b*) on the A[ctor]U[ndergoer]H[ierarchy], *b* is not selected as that macro-role.

The Role and Reference Grammar system may thus account well for the kind of dative alternation that exists in Croatian (cf. the discussion in Zovko, 2000, 2001). Examples such as (13) are seen as an interaction of rules (14. c) and (15): in (13. a) the lowest ranking argument, *kolač-* is chosen as Undergoer, while the non-macro-role argument *Ivan-* receives dative case. In (13. b), on the other hand, both *Ivan-* and *kolač-* are potential Undergoers but since *Ivan-* is chosen as Undergoer and it is to the left of *kolač-* in the logical structure<sup>13</sup>, *kolač-* becomes the non-macro-role argument and receives instrumental case, following the rule in (15). (13. a) thus represents the unmarked choice for Undergoer, whereas the instrumental case in (13. b) is an instance of a marked choice for Undergoer. The analysis provided by Role and Reference Grammar is equally applicable to all languages that allow the dative alternation. We therefore believe that it is the most appropriate theoretical framework for the description of this type of alternation in Croatian as well, leaving nonetheless room for some refinement.

Levin & Rappaport Hovav (2002) thus further develop the idea that the dative alternation should not be seen as an alternate choice for direct object, but as an alternate expression of recipient arguments as either possessors or animate goals. In their opinion, the fact that recipients are open to two semantic analyses is universal:

'Recipients have two possible modes of expression: a core grammatical relation dedicated to the expression of possessors [and] an oblique grammatical relation associated with goals.' (Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 2002: 2)

Recipients as possessors may be expressed either as a dative case-marked NP or as the first object in a double object construction, while recipients as goals are expressed using a locative or allative case marker or adposition. Recipients in Croatian are thus expressed as goals in canonical dative construc-

13 The logical structure that Role and Reference Grammar provides for the verb *darovati* 'give as a gift' in (13) would be the following: [**do**' (Iris-, Ø)] CAUSE [BECOME **have**' (Ivan-, kolač-)]



- b. *Darovali su bolnic-i medicinsk-u*  
 give.as.gift.PERF.3plM.PAST hospital-DAT.sg medical-ACC.sg  
*oprem-u, ali ju nije dobila.*  
 equipment-ACC.sg but it did not get it.  
 'They gave medical equipment to the hospital as a gift, but it did not get it.'

Many researchers note, however, that first objects are actually intended Recipients. Whether the Theme is conceived as received or not depends not only on the construction, but on the meaning of each dative verb itself.

As for the heaviness constraint, it does not influence the choice of a variant in Croatian. Rather, it conditions the preference of different word orders in both variants, depending on the heaviness of arguments:

- (18) a. *Ponudili su svakom-u tko*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST everyone-DAT.sg who  
*je došao na vjenčanje šampanjac-Ø.*  
 come.PERF.3sgM.PAST to wedding champagne-ACC.sg  
 (lit. They offered to everyone who came to the wedding champagne.)  
 'They offered champagne to everyone who came to the wedding.'
- a'. *Ponudili su šampanjac-Ø svakom-u tko*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST champagne-ACC.sg everyone-DAT.sg who  
*je došao na vjenčanje.*  
 come.PERF.3sgM.PAST to wedding  
 'They offered champagne to everyone who came to the wedding.'
- b. *Ponudili su svakog-a tko*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST everyone-ACC.sg who  
*je došao na vjenčanje šampanjc-em.*  
 come.PERF.3sgM.PAST to wedding champagne-INST.sg  
 (lit. They offered to everyone who came to the wedding champagne.)  
 'They offered everyone who came to the wedding champagne.'
- b'. *Ponudili su šampanjc-em svakog-a*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST champagne-INST.sg everyone-ACC.sg  
*tko je došao na vjenčanje.*  
 who come.PERF.3sgM.PAST to wedding  
 (lit. They offered champagne everyone who came to the wedding.)  
 'They offered champagne to everyone who came to the wedding.'

Although all four sentences in (18) are grammatical and acceptable, there is a slight preference for examples where the heavy NP comes last, as in (18. a') and (18. b'). This distinction becomes more striking if the heavy NP is the theme argument:

- (19) a. *Ponudili su*                      *gostima*                      *šampanjac*  
 offer.PERF. 3plM.PAST      guest-DAT.pl      champagne-ACC.sg  
*koji*      *su uvezli*    *iz Francuske.*  
 which      import. PERF. 3plM.PAST      from France  
 'They offered to the guests the champagne which they imported from France.'
- a'. ?*Ponudili su*                      *šampanjac-Ø*                      *koji*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST      champagne-ACC.sg      which  
*su uvezli*    *iz Francuske*      *gostima.*  
 import.PERF.3plM.PAST      from France      guest-DAT.pl  
 'They offered the champagne which they imported from France to the guests.'
- b. *Ponudili su*                      *gost-e*                      *šampanjc-em*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST      guest-ACC.pl      champagne-INST.sg  
*koji*      *su uvezli*    *iz Francuske.*  
 which      import.PERF.3plM.PAST      from France  
 'They offered the guests the champagne which they imported from France.'
- b'. ?? *Ponudili su*                      *šampanjc-em*                      *koji*  
 offer. PERF.3plM. PAST      champagne-INST. sg      which  
*su uvezli*    *iz Francuske* *gost-e.*  
 import.PERF.3plM.PAST      from France      guest-ACC. pl  
 (lit. They offered the champagne which they imported from France the guests)  
 'They offered the guests the champagne which they imported from France.'

Examples (19. a) and (19. b) are perfectly grammatical and acceptable, while (19. a') and (19. b') are on the verge of being ungrammatical and would never appear in language use. Obviously this fact has nothing to do with the grammatical relation of direct object but with the semantic roles of heavy NPs in question: heavy Recipients appear to be rather unconstrained as to their position, whereas heavy Themes have to appear in sentence-final position. Since this is the position of unmarked focus (cf. Lambrecht, 1994) in a sentence, we might suppose that the focus has to be on Themes if they are heavy NPs. Consequently, heavy Themes have to appear in sentence-final position, while heavy Recipients are not subject to such a constraint. This issue, however, yet remains to be fully explained.

### 3. Semantic constraints on dative verbs in Croatian

Based on a study of 260 languages, Siewierska (1998) concludes that no language with a “true” dative case<sup>15</sup> has a double object construction, i. e. that crosslinguistically dative NPs and first objects are in complementary distribution. Levin & Rappaport Hovav (2002: 4) adopt this claim and state that

‘Cross-linguistically (...) three frames are associated with the expression of recipients:

ALLATIVE FRAME (recipient as goal): theme – object, recipient – allative /locative NP/PP;

DOUBLE OBJECT FRAME (recipient as possessor): theme – second object, recipient – first object;

DATIVE FRAME (recipient as possessor): theme – object, recipient – dative NP

(...) a given language will have only one of the last two syntactic frames.’

This claim is borne out in Croatian as well. There are three verbs (eight, if we count their aspectual pairs) that allow the dative alternation in Croatian: *darivati* (IMPF/ITER)/*darovati* (PERF)/*podariti* (PERF) ‘to give as a gift’, *nuditi* (IMPF)/*ponuditi* (PERF) ‘to offer’, and *služiti* (IMPF)/*poslužiti* (PERF)/*posluživati* (ITER) ‘to serve’. Alternated constructions are much less frequent than the canonical dative constructions, as can be seen from the *Croatian National Corpus*. Table 1. gives the number of examples with the alternation in the first 500 random examples taken from the corpus for each verb form:

	<b>no. of constructions with alternation per 500 examples</b>
<i>darivati</i>	45
<i>darovati</i>	3
<i>podariti</i>	12
<i>nuditi</i>	4
<i>ponuditi</i>	17
<i>služiti</i>	4
<i>poslužiti</i>	11
<i>posluživati</i>	9

Table 1. Double object constructions in the corpus

15 If a language uses a separate marker for the dative, distinct from allative or locative markers, it may be said to have a ‘true’ dative case.

With all verbs, except *darivati/darovati/podariti* 'give as a gift', the alternated construction appears more often with the perfective than with the imperfective verb form. Also, the verb *darivati* (IMPF) is the most frequent verb associated with dative alternation in Croatian. We see two major reasons for this. The first is that the verbs *darivati/darovati/podariti* 'to give as a gift' belong to the class of verbs that Levin & Rappaport Hovav (2002: 2) call "core dative verbs [which] lexicalize a causation of possession meaning", as opposed to other verbs which "lexicalize a causative change of location meaning". The basic semantic structure of core (or prototypical) dative verbs is a successful transfer of Theme between a volitional Agent and a willing Recipient. The prevalence of the imperfective form *darivati* in alternated constructions is, in our opinion, due to the fact that the imperfective form is also the iterative form and it is natural for repeated action to increase the affectedness of object. In alternated constructions with imperfective forms, the theme argument can be omitted, while the same examples with perfective forms would be considered morbid or comic, i. e. the object would be more likely conceived as a Theme rather than a Recipient:

- (20) a. *Bogati su darivali* *djec-u.*  
 rich give.as.gift.IMPF.3pl. PAST child-ACC.pl  
 (lit. The rich gave the children \_\_\_\_\_ as gift)  
 'The rich gave the children gifts.'
- b. *Bogati su darovali* *djec-u.*  
 rich give.as.gift.PERF.3pl.PAST child-ACC.pl  
 (lit. The rich gave the children as gift)  
 'The rich gave away the children.'

It is worth noting that the verbs *darivati/darovati/podariti* 'to give as a gift' are unconstrained as to the nature of the arguments involved: the Agent need not be animate, the Recipient need not be willing and what is being transferred can be an effect rather than an actual object. Thus, the verbs *darivati/darovati/podariti* allow a detachment from the basic semantic structure. Goldberg (1995) sees this detachment as a result of certain conventional systematic metaphors. One of the more productive among them involves "understanding causing an effect in an entity as transferring the effect, construed as an object, to that entity" (Goldberg, 1995: 144) This claim is valid for Croatian verbs *darovati/darivati/podariti* as well:

- (21) *Novine su darivale* *dužnosnik-a*  
 newspapers give.as.gift.IMPF.3plF.PAST official-ACC.sg  
*pogrđn-im* *izraz-ima.*  
 derogatory-INST.pl word-INST.pl  
 'The newspapers bestowed derogatory words upon the official.'

However, the remaining Croatian verbs that allow the dative alternation, *nuditi* (IMPF)/*ponuditi* (PERF) 'to offer' and *služiti* (IMPF)/*poslužiti* (PERF)/*posluživati* (ITER) 'to serve', do not allow such detachment from the basic se-

mantic structure. A possible reason for this might be the fact that these verbs are not core dative verbs. It is our opinion that they lexicalize a causative change of location, rather than a causative change of possession<sup>16</sup>. The verbs *nuditi/ponuditi* 'to offer' and *služiti/poslužiti/posluživati* 'to serve' are subject to yet another constraint: when they are involved in the alternation, as in (1. b) repeated here as (22), the agent and the recipient arguments must be human and the theme arguments are restricted to things that are consumed through the mouth, i. e. food, beverage and cigarettes/cigars or, in the case of *služiti/poslužiti/posluživati* just food and beverage:

- (22) *Lena je poslužila gost-e čaj-em i keks-ima.*  
 serve.PERF.3sgF.PAST guest-ACC.pl tea-INST.sg and  
 biscuit-INST.pl  
 'Lena served the guests tea and biscuits.'

If the theme argument of the verbs *nuditi/ponuditi* 'to offer' is something other than food or drinks, only the dative construction is available<sup>17</sup>:

- (23) a. *Ponudili su m-e čokolad-om/viski-jem/ \*novc-em/ \*prijevoz-om kući.*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST I-ACC chocolate-INST.sg/  
 whiskey-INST.sg/ \*money-INST.sg/ \*ride-INST.sg home  
 'They offered me chocolate/whiskey/money/a ride home.'
- b. *Ponudili su m-i čokolad-u/viski-Ø/ novac-Ø/ prijevoz-Ø kući.*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST I-DAT chocolate-ACC.sg/  
 whiskey-ACC. sg/ money-ACC. sg/ ride-ACC. sg home  
 'They offered chocolate/whiskey/money/a ride home to me.'

There is a further constraint on theme arguments in alternated constructions that involve the verbs *nuditi/ponuditi* 'to offer': if they refer to a single entity, then only the alternated construction conveys the meaning 'offer to eat/drink'. Canonical dative constructions in this case are more likely to convey a different meaning, such as 'offer to buy/take away':

16 There is nothing in either variant of these verbs that would imply the success of the transfer. If what is being offered or served is not consumed, we cannot say that the (intended) Recipient took possession of the Theme. The prevalence of perfective forms in alternated constructions would then indicate that the transfer was most likely successful.

17 Curiously enough, there is a single example in the corpus where the Theme in the alternated construction is nothing to be consumed:

(i) *Tomu čovjeku je neobično laskalo da su ga ponudili kandidaturom za saborskoga zastupnika.*

'This man was unusually flattered in that he was offered the candidature to become a parliamentary representative.'

Such use, however, can be seen as intentional and ironic, conveying the sense that some people think political functions can be offered on a platter like a dish, thus depriving these functions of any decorum. This example may thus be considered a metaphor.

- (24) a. *Ponudili su m-e tort-om/*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST I-ACC cake-INST.sg/  
*pečen-im puran-om.*  
 baked-INST.sg turkey-INST.sg  
 'They offered me a cake/baked turkey (to eat).'
- b. *Ponudili su m-i tort-u/*  
 offer.PERF.3plM.PAST I-DAT cake-ACC.sg/  
*pečen-og puran-a.*  
 baked-ACC.sg turkey-ACC.sg  
 'They offered me a (whole) cake/baked turkey (to buy/take away).'

If the theme argument is a partitive expression, e. g. a slice of cake or a glass of wine, then both the dative and the alternated construction carry the meaning 'offer to eat/drink'. This leads us to conclude that Croatian alternated constructions with the verbs *nuditi/ponuditi* also carry inherent partitive meaning, which in the dative constructions has to be expressed using a partitive expression or partitive genitive case. This constraint does not apply to the verbs *služiti/poslužiti/posluživati* 'to serve'. With these verbs both the dative and the alternated construction convey the meaning that something is served to be eaten, drunk or smoked, regardless of whether the argument is a partitive expression or not. In our opinion this is due to the meaning of the verbs themselves: if they have three arguments, an Agent, a Recipient and a Theme, then the verbs can only mean 'serve somebody something to eat or drink', as opposed to constructions with two arguments that mean 'to be a servant to' (*Služio je gospodara(ACC)/gospodaru(DAT) mnogo godina*. 'He served his master for many years').

Finally, there is a certain number of perfective verb forms that have the same stem as *darivati* (IMPF)/*darovati* (PERF)/*podariti* (PERF) 'to give as a gift' and *nuditi* (IMPF)/*ponuditi* (PERF) 'to offer': *obdariti* (PERF) 'to endow with', *nadariti* (PERF) 'to bestow upon'<sup>18</sup> and *zanuditi* (PERF) 'to offer'. These verbs cannot be considered dative verbs since they can only appear with Recipients as direct objects. However, they share a number of features with the semantically related dative verbs. Just like *darovati*, *darivati* and *podariti*, the verbs *obdariti* and *nadariti* are unconstrained as to the semantic nature of their theme arguments although *obdariti* most often appears with abstract Themes of positive value such as mercy, courage, goodness, etc. where the Agent is either nature or God:

- (25) *Bog ga je obdario čudesn-im*  
 God he.ACC endow.with.PERF.3sgM.PAST amazing-INST.sg  
*talent-om.*  
 talent-INST.sg  
 'God endowed him with amazing talent.'

18 The imperfective forms of *obdariti* and *nadariti* would be *obdarivati* and *nadarivati*. However, these imperfective forms are almost never used. We found only one example with *obdarivati* and no examples with *nadarivati* in the *Croatian National Corpus*.

All verbs of giving as a gift are interchangeable in some but not all contexts and their use in alternated constructions is perceived as belonging to a more formal, often literary or even archaic style or canon. In this respect we may consider all dative alternation constructions in Croatian as semantically marked, and the canonical dative constructions as unmarked and therefore much more frequent in language. This claim is strengthened by the fact that both *obdariti* and *nadariti*, which have Recipients as direct objects, have a very low frequency – the corpus contains 73 examples with the former and only 26 examples with the latter verb. The verb *zanuditi* (PERF) 'to offer' appears in only one example in the corpus, with (as expected) milk as the theme argument. The use of this verb is also perceived as literary and archaic:

- (26) *Zanudila je dijete svojim mlijekom.*  
 offer.PERF.3sgF.PAST child-ACC.sg her-INST.sg milk-INST.sg  
 'She offered the child her milk.'

A possible reason why the verbs *obdariti*, *nadariti* and *zanuditi* cannot have dative Recipients might be the fact that they inherently require their Recipients to be more affected than their Themes. This assumption, however, is beyond the scope of this paper and remains to be explored.

#### 4. Conclusion

Although it is a case-marking language, Croatian has eight dative verb forms that allow the dative alternation. These verbs include the core dative verbs *darivati* (IMPF/ITER)/*darovati* (PERF)/*podariti* (PERF) 'to give as a gift, to bestow upon', and verbs that are not considered core dative verbs: *nuditi* (IMPF)/*ponuditi* (PERF) 'to offer' and *služiti* (IMPF)/*poslužiti* (PERF)/*posluživati* (PERF) 'to serve'. The core dative verbs allow a detachment from the basic semantic structure and are therefore unconstrained as to the nature of their theme and recipient arguments. The dative verbs of offering and serving, on the other hand, are subject to specific semantic constraints: when they are found in alternated constructions, their agent and recipient arguments can only be human and their theme arguments are limited to things consumed through the mouth – food, beverage and cigarettes/cigars. When found in alternated constructions, the recipient arguments of these verbs share all the properties of canonical direct objects in Croatian: they are marked with the accusative case and can become subjects of corresponding passive sentences. However, we believe that the dative alternation in Croatian is not primarily syntactically motivated since promoting indirect objects to direct objects is possible only with recipient arguments of a small number of dative verbs and not with other types of indirect objects. The dative alternation, therefore, is not about alternate choices for direct objects but about alternate ways of expressing recipient arguments. It increases the affectedness of recipient arguments by turning them into direct objects – a grammatical relation that is "reserved" for the argument most affected by the transfer. The dative alternation in Croatian

complies to the generalizations that are valid cross-linguistically for this type of alternation, but at the same time it exhibits a number of language specific features. The dative alternation in Croatian also raises a number of issues that have not been fully explored yet, such as information structure and heaviness considerations, as well as various semantic constraints on verbs and arguments involved.

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### *Dativna alternacija u hrvatskome*

Dativna je alternacija rijetka pojava u jezicima s padežnim označavanjem, no u hrvatskome se taj tip alternacije pojavljuje s ukupno osam glagola. U ovome se radu na temelju podataka iz *Hrvatskoga nacionalnog korpusa* analiziraju sintaktička i semantička svojstva hrvatskih dativnih glagola i njihovih argumenata kako bi se odredio najprikladniji teorijski okvir za opis dativne alternacije u hrvatskome jeziku. Broj i vrsta glagola koji dopuštaju dativnu alternaciju različiti su od jezika do jezika, no svima je zajedničko da su to prototipno glagoli koji označavaju (potencijalni) transfer nekog Pacijensa/Teme između voljnog Agensa i Primatelja (Recipijensa). Dva su osnovna pristupa analizi dativne alternacije: prvi je semantički motiviran i pretpostavlja da tzv. dativni glagoli imaju dva odvojena značenja koja rezultiraju dvama različitim ostvarajima argumenata. Drugi pristup pretpostavlja da dativni glagoli imaju jedno značenje, ali mogu rezultirati dvjema povezanim sintaktičkim strukturama u kojima dolazi do promjene gramatičkih odnosa, ali ne i do promjene semantičkih odnosa u rečenici. U ovome se radu priklanjamo potonjem pristupu koji, iako prvenstveno sintaktički motiviran, ne isključuje tumačenja utemeljena na semantičkim svojstvima ili diskursnim i pragmatičkim funkcijama. Mišljenja smo da isključivo sintaktičko tumačenje dativne alternacije kao različitog izbora izravnih objekata u rečenici ne daje zadovoljavajući prikaz te alternacije jer je ona u svim jezicima u kojima postoji motivirana potrebom da se argumenti sa semantičkom ulogom Primatelja dodatno topikaliziraju te da se poveća učinak koji glagolska radnja ima na objekt »promicanjem« Primatelja iz neizravnih u izravne objekte. Stoga prednost dajemo funkcionalnim pristupima, a osobito gramatici uloga i referenci, koji dativnu alternaciju tumače kao mogućnost različitog izražavanja Primateljâ (Recipijensâ). Pritom je u dativnoj konstrukciji Primatelj izražen kao Cilj, dok je u alterniranoj konstrukciji izražen kao Posjednik (engl. *Possessor*). Postavke gramatike uloga i referenci o varijabilnom pridruživanju semantičke makrouloge Primateljima jednako su primjenjive na sve jezike u kojima se javlja dativna alternacija, a u hrvatskome se takvo varijabilno pridruživanje odražava u različitom padežnom označavanju argumenata. Mnoge generalizacije o dativnoj alternaciji primjenjive su i na hrvatski jezik, no taj tip alternacije u isto vrijeme pokazuje i određen broj jezično specifičnih svojstava, odnosno semantičkih ograničenja, na koja se osvrćemo u trećem dijelu ovoga rada. Ta se ograničenja odnose prije svega na mogućnost različitog položaja argumenata u odnosu na glagol, zatim na mogućnost ispuštanja određenih argumenata, kao i na promjene u značenju uzrokovane inherentnim semantičkim svojstvima samih argumenata.

**Key words:** dative alternation, functional syntax, Role and Reference Grammar, semantics, Croatian

**Ključne riječi:** dativna alternacija, funkcionalna sintaksa, gramatika uloga i referenci, semantika, hrvatski jezik