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## **A Contrastive View on Non-Canonical Subjects: Prototype Effects, Semantic Roles and Metonymy\***

The mapping between primary grammatical relations (subject, direct object, indirect object) and semantic roles is largely discussed in terms of which semantic role can be mapped onto which grammatical relation (or vice versa) as if semantic roles imposed absolute constraints in the sense that a language systematically excludes the mapping between some grammatical relations and semantic roles (semantic functions) beyond a cut off point on the Semantic Function Hierarchy. Any deviation from the semantic prototype of the subject has as a consequence non-canonical morphosyntactic properties of subjects (e. g. oblique case marking, inability to undergo some syntactic processes and lack of properties which are not peculiar to subject *qua* grammatical relation), that is, such semantically non-prototypical subjects do not exhibit the full array of subject-like properties. This paper argues that semantic roles do not impose absolute constraints on the mapping between grammatical relations and semantic roles. The mapping between a semantic role low on the Semantic Function Hierarchy and the grammatical relation subject is possible in cases of some referential metonymies, i. e. only some uses or meanings of a semantic role allow such mapping.

Our aim in this paper is not to provide a detailed contrastive analysis of non-canonically marked subjects in any two languages. We want to point to some aspects that have been largely neglected in contrastive analyses of non-nominative subjects.

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### **1. Introduction**

Ever since Fillmore's (1968) seminal paper linguists have been interested in the relation between semantic roles (semantic functions, theta roles, deep cases in Fillmore's terminology) and the primary grammatical relations (syn-

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tactic functions) subject, direct object and indirect object. In the past, the subject was frequently equated with the semantic role Agent and direct object with the semantic role Patient. Fillmore (1968) was among the first to point out that there is no necessary correlation between semantic roles (deep cases in his terminology) and ‘surface’ grammatical relations. To our knowledge, he was also the first linguist to point out that semantic roles are mapped onto grammatical relations in accordance with a hierarchy of semantic roles: “If there is an A, it becomes the subject, otherwise if there is an I, it becomes the subject, otherwise, the subject is O.” (Fillmore 1968: 33). The idea that subject and object assignment cannot be divorced from semantic roles was later taken up by functionalists (e. g. Dik, 1978, 1989; Givón 1984) and contrastivists (Hawkins 1981, 1986; Kučanda 1998).

The functionalists posited various types of semantic function hierarchies which showed the ease or difficulty with which a particular semantic role could be mapped onto a grammatical relation. These hierarchies were implicational in character and suggested that subject and object assignment become more difficult as we move down the hierarchy until the cut off point is reached, after which the mapping between a grammatical relation and a semantic function becomes impossible (cf. Buljan and Kučanda, in print). Dik (1978), for example, proposed that subject is assigned in accordance with the Semantic Function Hierarchy (SFH) in (1):

- (1) Ag > Go > Rec > Ben > Inst > Loc > Temp

In English, the cut off point is Beneficiary since, according to Dik (1978), subject assignment to Locative or Instrument results in an ungrammatical sentence (*\*This room was signed the contract in; \*This knife was cut the salami with by John*). On the other hand, some contrastivists argued that “one can compare semantically equivalent (or near-equivalent) predicates in the two languages, and ask whether some argument, A, can be mapped onto the subject relation in one or the other language, without necessarily having to resolve the issue whether A is a semantic ‘benefactive’, ‘dative’ or ‘experiencer’” (Hawkins 1986: 62). This point of view is exemplified by (2) and (3):

- (2) *This hotel* forbids dogs.<sup>1</sup>  
*\*Dieses Hotel* verbietet Hunde.  
*\*Ovaj hotel* zabranjuje pse. ‘Ovaj hotel zabranjuje ulaz psima.’
- (3) *This tent* sleeps four.  
*\*Dieses Zelt* schläft vier.  
*\*Ovaj šator* spava četvero.

1 (2) and (3) are from Hawkins (1986); (4) and (5) are from Brdar-Szabó and Brdar (2003b). Croatian translations have been provided by the authors of this paper. Subjects are italicised.

What both these approaches neglected was the role of metonymy in subjectivization.<sup>2</sup> Examples (4) and (5) clearly show that semantic locatives can be mapped onto the grammatical relation subject despite their position on the SFH (we return to this issue in section 3).

- (4) *Bonn* gab Zusage für Kanal-Bau. [*Die Welt*, October 5 1982, 5]  
*Bonn* dao suglasnost za izgradnju kanala.
- (5) *Tel Aviv* baut Siedlungen im Westjordangebiet weiter aus  
'?Tel Aviv further extends settlements in the area of West Jordan'  
*Tel Aviv* i dalje gradi naselja u području Zapadnog Jordana.

Some other aspects that have been largely neglected in contrastive studies or descriptions of dative subjects (also called oblique subjects, non-nominative subjects, quirky subjects, non-canonically marked subjects) in individual languages are discussed in Sections 2 and 3 (see also Farrell 2005 for a distinction between dative subjects and quasi subjects). Most of these studies concentrated on the syntactic subjecthood or the lack of it in the case of putative dative subjects (see, for example, Barðdal m. s., Moore and Perlmutter 2000, Sigurðsson 2002, Kučanda 1998b, 2002–2003, Onishi 2001, and the papers in Bhaskararao and Subbarao 2004). One of the most conspicuous problems with most of the syntactic analyses of such approaches was the attitude that a single criterion or a set of criteria were both sufficient and necessary to single out a dative NP as the subject of the sentence:

“But how is it possible to argue that they are not subjects, given their ability to antecede reflexives? Isn't that sufficient to conclude that they are subjects, even if they fail to raise like other subjects. That need not be fatal to the Dative-subject Hypothesis. All we need to do is amend the Case Hypothesis as follows:

- (5) CASE HYPOTHESIS (revised): Only nominative subjects can raise, and only nominative subjects can determine subject-predicate agreement.

With this revised version of the Case Hypothesis, putative dative subject's status as subjects is not compromised by their inability to raise.

Obviously, this stratagem can be continued indefinitely. Each additional test of subjecthood that putative dative subjects fail can be added to the list of subject behaviours restricted to nominative subjects under a generalized Case Hypothesis:

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2 For the purposes of discussion in this paper we have adopted the following two definitions of metonymy: “Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model.” (Radden and Kövecses (1999: 21). “Metonymy is a mapping with a primarily referential purpose, in which the source and the target are entities in the same domain.” (Barcelona 2003: 228).

- (6) CASE HYPOTHESIS (GENERALIZED): Where putative dative subjects behave differently from other surface subjects, a grammar can account for their behaviour by formulating the rule or constraint as applying only to subjects in the nominative case.

Left unchecked, this practice would deprive the Dative–subject Hypothesis of whatever content it might otherwise have. The Dative–subject Hypothesis could easily become an article of faith, immune to falsification.” (Moore and Perlmutter 2000: 375–376).

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses some syntactic and semantic properties of prototypical subjects and non-canonically marked subjects. We show that the deviation from the semantic prototype of the subject results in non-canonically case marking and anomalous syntactic behaviour of the subject. In section 3 we discuss the mapping between grammatical relations and semantic roles and show that metonymy plays an important role in such mappings. In 4 we suggest some tentative conclusions.

## **2. Case marking and syntactic behaviour of semantically deviant subjects**

Conflating Lakoff (1977) and Hopper and Thompson (1980) Taylor (1995: 206ff) has come up with 11 semantic properties which characterize a transitive prototype; seven of these properties are relevant for the semantic characterization of subjects:

- a. “The construction describes events involving two, and only two participants, encoded by the subject and direct object NPs respectively.
- b. The two participants are highly individuated, i. e. they are discrete, specific entities (from this it follows that both the NPs in the construction have specific reference) distinct both from each other, and from the background environment.
- c. The event is initiated by the referent of the subject NP, i. e. by the agent. Responsibility for the event thus lies exclusively with the agent. Furthermore, the subject NP is the sentence topic; the subject is what the sentence is about.
- d. The agent acts consciously and volitionally, and thus controls the event. Since consciousness and volition are typically human attributes, it follows that the agent is typically a human being.
- e. The agent’s action on the patient usually involves direct physical contact, and the effect on patient is immediate.
- f. The event has a causative component – the agent’s action causes the patient to undergo a change.
- g. Typically, agent and patient are not only clearly differentiated entities, often they also stand in an adversative relationship.”

Any non-conformity with the above semantic prototype is reflected in case marking and/or syntactic behaviour.<sup>3</sup> A typical agent acts consciously and volitionally and controls the event; however, events can be beyond the conscious and volitional control of one of the participants in the event. NPs which do not encode volitional agents are often case-marked differently from those that encode agents. Non-volitional participants are frequently coded by the dative case as in the following examples from Croatian and German respectively:

- (6) a. Ispali su *mi* ključevi u vodu.  
 b. *Mir* sind die Schlüssel ins Wasser gefallen.  
 lit. ‘To me fell the keys into the water’ i. e. ‘I’ve dropped the keys into the water.’

Such non-volitional dative-marked participants fail to exhibit the syntactic behaviour of typical nominative subjects (cf. Kućanda 1999a, b for a discussion of Croatian and Barðdal ms. on German; see also Kućanda 2002–2003 for a discussion of some similarities and differences between Croatian, German and Modern Icelandic.). Consider also the following examples from Ewe, a Kwa language of West Africa:

- (7) a. “*Experiencer as Object*  
 Aha tsri-mi  
 Alcohol hate-1SG  
 lit: ‘Alcohol hates me.’  
 b. *Experiencer as Subject*  
 Me-tsri aha  
 1SG-hate alcohol  
 ‘I don’t want (to have alcohol).’

In the Experiencer as Subject Construction, the Experiencer is seen as being volitionally involved in the experiential situation. When the Experiencer is coded as Object it is construed as a non-volitional participant in the situation. This interpretation is also evident in situations where the Experiencer can only have a Subject function in an experiential construction. For instance, emotions viewed as dispositions only allow the Experiencer to occur in the Subject function implying that the Experiencer is involved as a volitional participant.” (Ameka 2002: 347).

The question that arises in connection with such non-agentive, non-canonically marked arguments is whether they are subjects. In a discrete single-criterion (Aristotelian) approach the lack of nominative case marking and the inability to control agreement would be sufficient evidence that they are not subjects. On the other hand, if the membership in a category is not determined by a single feature but by a cluster of characteristic features, it turns out that in addition to prototypical members (i. e. members that exhibit all or the largest number of those features) categories contain members that resem-

3 In this paper case is understood in the traditional sense of nominal inflections (see Blake 1994 and Davidse and Lamiroy 2002 for a different treatment of case).

ble the prototype to the extent that they have some, but not all, features of a prototypical member of the category. Such a cluster approach to subjecthood was proposed by Keenan (1976: 307): “Note further, that on this type of definition, subjects of certain sentences, and more specifically of certain sentence types, will be more subject-like than the subjects of others. The reason is that they will exhibit more of the complement of properties which characterize b-subjects in general. Thus the subjecthood of an NP is a matter of degree.”

An obvious counterexample to the claim that dative-marked subject-like NPs fail to behave syntactically as subjects is Modern Icelandic.<sup>4</sup> In addition to nominatively marked subjects, Modern Icelandic has also syntactic subjects in the accusative, dative or genitive, as in (8) (cf. Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003):

- (8) a. Hún sér víkinginn.  
 she.NOM sees Viking-the.ACC  
 ‘She sees the Viking.’  
 b. Hana langar i brennivín  
 she.ACC longs in schnapps.ACC  
 ‘She wants schnapps.’  
 c. Henni likar þessi víkingur.  
 she.DAT likes this.NOM Viking.NOM  
 ‘She likes the Viking.’  
 d. Hennar missti við  
 she.GEN missed with  
 ‘She was missing.’ or ‘She passed away.’

Such oblique subject-like NPs pass the following subjecthood tests (see also Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985, Barðdal 2001 and Sigurðsson 2002: 706, who refers to his 1997 paper in which he lists 16 subject-like properties of quirky subjects in Icelandic):

- (a) Syntactic position
- (b) Conjunction reduction
- (c) Clause-bounded reflexivisation
- (d) Long distance reflexivisation
- (e) Subject-to-object raising
- (f) Subject-to-subject raising
- (g) PRO-infinitives (‘Equi-NP deletion’)

As (9) shows, the dative argument of *lika* ‘like’ behaves in the same way as the nominative argument of *sjá* ‘see’ in control infinitives:

- (9) a. Ég geri ráð fyrir að \_\_\_\_\_ sjá þennan víking.  
 I.NOM assume to PRO see.INF this.ACC Viking.ACC  
 ‘I assume that I will see this Viking.’

4 Faroese seems to be one more language in which oblique NPs behave syntactically like subjects (cf. Barnes 1986; see also Bickel 2003, 2004 for a difference between Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages and Yadava 2004 on Maihili).

- b. Ég geri rað fyrir að \_\_\_\_\_ lika þessi víkingur.  
 I.NOM assume to PRO.DAT like.INF this.NOM Viking.NOM  
 ‘I assume that I will like this Viking.’

“As is evident, both the dative of *lika* ‘like’ and the nominative of *sjá* ‘see’ are the unexpressed argument (labelled PRO) of the infinitive of the control predicate *gera rað fyrir* ‘assume. Thus, these oblique subject-like NPs are syntactic subjects in Modern Icelandic.” (Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003: 441). Although Icelandic dative NPs have a large number of syntactic subject-like properties, they fail to control agreement. On the other hand, Bickel (2003, 2004) shows that there exists a major typological split between Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages in the sense that in the latter languages non-nominative subject can also control agreement. (See also Yadava 2004, who shows that Maithili has two sets of agreement affixes: one set for nominative subjects and a different set for non-nominative subjects – dative, genitive, locative and instrumental subject-like NPs).

In Modern English there is no dative case, and non-volitional participants are marked the same way as volitional participants.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, a sentence like (10)

- (10) I’ve dropped my keys into the water.

is potentially ambiguous between volitional and non-volitional interpretation. In English this sentence can be disambiguated by adding manner adverbs such as *deliberately* or *accidentally*. If a speaker of Croatian or German wanted to indicate that the action was not intentional he would use the dative and the verbs *ispasti* or *fallen* (*Ispali su mi ključevi u vodu*, *Mir sind die Schlüssel ins Wasser gefallen*). To denote a deliberate action he would use a nominative subject with verbs like *baciti* or *werfen* ‘to throw’ (*Bacio sam ključeve u vodu*, *Ich habe die Schlüssel ins Wasser geworfen*). In both languages the difference between these two sets of verbs is similar to the difference between *kill* and *murder* (cf. Van Valin and Wilkins 1996). Volition or the lack of it is attributed to the agent rather than the subject, as is evident in the passive:

- (11) a. I’ve deliberately/accidentally dropped the keys.  
 b. The keys have been deliberately/accidentally dropped.

However, although there is no difference in case marking of volitional and non-volitional subjects (agents) the latter fail to behave syntactically in the same way as the former. For example, non-volitional subjects fail to undergo raising, that is, sentences with raised non-volitional subjects are rejected by some speakers<sup>6</sup> :

5 Allen (1995: 70) gives the following example of a subject-like dative NP from Old English:  
 ða ælcum men ðuhte genog on ðære earðan wæstum  
 when each.DAT man.DAT seemed enough on the earth’s fruit

6 Acceptability/unacceptability judgements concerning some of the examples vary from speaker to speaker. The acceptability of (11)–(14) has been judged by our native speaker informant.

- (12) a. We believe John to have deliberately dropped the keys.  
 b. ?We believe John to have accidentally spilt the milk.  
 (13) a. We expect Bill to deliberately drop the keys.  
 b. ?We expect Bill to accidentally drop the keys.

Non-volitional subjects do not normally appear as PRO in control infinitives<sup>7</sup>:

- (14) a. We told Bill to deliberately leave the room.  
 b. ?We told Bill to accidentally leave the room.

Typological research into subjecthood has revealed a high degree of correlation between the syntactic notion of subject, the semantic notion of agent, and the pragmatic notion topic (cf. Comrie 1981; Shibatani 1991; Givón 1997). Non-canonically marked arguments in the examples above lack the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of typical subjects, yet they are subject-like to the extent that they are what the sentences are about, viz. clausal topics. Consider also the following example from Nepali (Givón 1997: 13):

- (15) a. **Active**  
*Ava-le*      *Maya-lay*      *hirka-y-in*  
 Ava-erg      Maya-DAT      hit-past-3sf  
 ‘Ava hit Maya.’  
 b. **De-transitive**  
*Maya-lay*      *Ava-dwara*      *hirka-i-y-o*  
*Maya-DAT*      *Ava-OBL*      hit-DETRANS-past-1sm

In the detransitive construction the Dative semantic role occupies the subject/topic position but it does not surface as ergative NP and fails to control agreement, that is the dative is the subject of the sentence to the extent that it is sentence topic. Instead of referring to the NPs in sentences like (10) and (15b) as semantic Datives/Experiencers we shall use the term involuntary agent, which reflects the fact that the participant does not participate voluntarily in the event denoted by the verb<sup>8</sup>. One of the advantages of this ap-

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One referee finds both (12b) and (13b) fine. The other referee finds (24) quite acceptable. We find it quite unacceptable and so do colleagues we have consulted. This, however, does not invalidate the claim that non-prototypical subjects are less susceptible to some syntactic processes than prototypical subjects.

7 The view that dative subjects often express non-volitional participants in an event is also shared by Andrews (2001: 99): “The most important observation is that it (i. e. oblique subject – added by D. K & G. B.) does not occur with arguments that one might describe as 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.”

8 Involuntary agent is a rather unfortunate term because on most definitions of agent it would be an oxymoron. A more appropriate term would be effector, which could be both volitional and non-volitional (cf. Van Valin and Wilkins 1996). However the term involuntary



proach is that we do not have to postulate two different predicate frames for, say, *drop*, one with an Agent NP and the other with a Dative NP. In English both types of Agent are encoded as nominatives and without further specification sentences like (10) are potentially ambiguous. In Croatian (and many other languages) semantic non-prototypicality of the subject is case-marked.

Many authors have proposed that in languages in which there is a competition between a nominative and a dative subject with the same predicate, the nominatively marked NP exercises a higher degree of control, whereas the dative encodes a non-volitional experiencer, as in the following examples from German and Kannada:

- (16) German (Draye 1996: 193)  
 Mir ekelt vor fetten Speisen.  
 me-Dat nauseates before fat victuals  
 ‘I’m nauseated by fat food/fat food nauseates me.’
- (16) b Ich ekle mich vor fetten Speisen  
 I-Nom nauseate refl before fat victuals  
 ‘I’m nauseated by fat food/Fat food nauseates me.’
- (17) Kannada (Sridhar 1976: 102)  
 avanige jvaru bantu  
 him-Dat fever came  
 ‘He got a fever.’
- (17) a avanu jvara(-vannu) barisikonda  
 he-Nom fever(-acc) cause-come-past  
 ‘He got a fever.’

On the other hand, Bickel (2004: 95) argues that this is not a general rule: “It has been suggested that the exclusion of dative experiencers from pivot-hood in control construction may be due to the fact that the dative case imposes nonvolitional or even uncontrollable semantics (e. g. Sridhar 1976, Klaiman 1979, 1980). While this may be so in some Indo-Aryan languages, it is not the general rule. Nepali datives at least do not deprive experiencers of control in a semantic sense: with many predicates they still exert control over whether or not to *allow* the experience. As a result of this, it is possible to form imperatives with such predicates: [...]. The only generalization that holds true of all Indo-Aryan languages under review is that dative case-marking blocks access to pivot-hood (with the Shina exception noted above). *This is a purely syntactic constraint, although its historical root and*

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agent is also used by Comrie (2004: 118) to describe the role of the NP marked with the possessive case in the following example from Tsez (Nakh-Daghestanian language family):

- (i) uži -q č'ikay y-exu-s  
 boy-POSS glass-POSS II-break-PSTWIT  
 ‘The boy [accidentally] broke the glass.’

To indicate that the boy deliberately broke the glass the noun *boy* would be marked with the ergative case ending. The point we are trying to make is that oblique (non-nominative) case is frequently used to encode a non-prototypical subject.

*functional motivation may well be found in the semantics of the dative.*” (our italics).

Bickel (2003: 714) gives four examples to show that in control constructions Primary Syntactic Arguments (PSAs) are case-sensitive, that is, that the controllee must be in the nominative case (or in the ergative in a language like Nepali). The dative cannot function as the controllee. Bickel adduces two examples from Maithili and two examples from Nepali to illustrate the point, but all four examples are translated into English as ‘Ram told Hari not to be afraid.’ These examples show indeed that only nominative and ergative NPs can function as controllees, but his conclusion that “control construction PSAs make crucial reference in their definition to case” seems unwarranted. It is not entirely clear from his examples whether nominative subjects imply a greater degree of control and it would be interesting to see how the difference between such pairs of verbs as Croatian *ispasti* vs. *baciti* or German *fallen* vs. *werfen* is expressed in Maithili or Nepali. In any case, the differences in the coding of volitional and non-volitional Effectors (and Experiencers) are worth looking into in any detailed contrastive study before typological generalizations are made.

Consider next the behaviour of anaphoric pronouns in (18) and (19):<sup>9</sup>

(18) The first violin has the flu. She cannot practice today.

(19) The mushroom omelet left without paying his bill. He jumped in a taxi.

Speaking strictly syntactically (18) and (19) should be ungrammatical because the anaphoric pronouns do not agree with their antecedents in gender. The reason why (18) and (19) are not ungrammatical is that their subjects are understood metonymically as ‘the (female) person who plays the first violin’ and ‘the (male) customer who ordered the mushroom omelet’, that is, the anaphoric pronouns agree with the metonymic target rather than the metonymic vehicle. In the following AUTHOR FOR WORK metonymy not only are selection restrictions violated but also the use of an anaphoric pronoun agreeing either with the metonymic target or the metonymic vehicle would be highly unusual: *The earlier linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, published posthumously in 1916, had distinguished [...]*.<sup>10</sup> Selection restrictions of the predicate are also violated in (18) and (19), and this is precisely the way metonymies usually work: “the given noun phrase violates the verb’s selection restrictions and this violation has to be accommodated by contiguity based reference. The selection restrictions of the predicate tell the hearer what kind of linguistic expressions would ordinarily be expected in the given syntactic slot; the conti-

9 (16) is from Panther and Radden (1999: 10); (17) is from Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal Campo (2002: 129).

10 Stuart C. Poole 1999. *An Introduction to Linguistics*. Houndmills: Palgrave. p. 90.

guity relation ensures that the expression will nevertheless be correctly understood.” (Waltereit 1999: 235).

Finally, we mention one more misconception about the syntactic behaviour of subjects. It has often been argued that subjects are addressees of imperatives and that the failure of an oblique subject-like NP to control an imperative is sufficient evidence that such an NP is not the subject. Some linguists have gone so far as to claim that the control of imperatives was the defining property of subjects: “An imperative sentence, for instance, involves the speaker requesting the addressee to do something; in every language an imperative must, in the deep structure, have an underlying second person S or A NP. A further example involves jussive constructions, complex sentences that have a main clause involving a verb like *tell* or *order*, e. g. *I told him to return*, *She ordered me to eat up the meat*. Here the object of the main clause must be, at the level of deep structure, correferential with the S or A NP in the subordinate clause. [...] The participant must be agent, and thus subject, for the subordinate clause.” (Dixon 1980: 440). The use of the terms deep structure and subject is rather confusing here because Dixon (*ibid*) intended the subject to be “an entirely semantic definition, linking together the sole core NP in an intransitive sentence with that NP in a transitive sentence whose referent has the potentiality of initiating and/or controlling the activity (if anything has).” Linguists who made a distinction between Role related Subject properties and Reference related Subject properties (e. g. Schachter 1976, 1977; Faarlund 1988) described the fact that the subject is frequently the addressee of imperative as a Role related property. Both these views are largely irrelevant because it is not the subject as a syntactic notion that is the addressee of the imperative; the addressee is the subject only when it simultaneously encodes the semantic role Agent or when the subject is attributed agent-like properties. This explains why non-canonically marked oblique subjects are not addressees of imperatives: they do not encode semantically prototypical subjects. This also explains why semantically deviant subjects are not addressees of imperatives (e. g. experiencer or benefactive subjects):

- (20) a. I liked the play.  
b. \*He asked me to like the play.
- (21) a. I have a new house.  
b. \*He told me to have a new house.

We have mentioned above that Modern Icelandic is a language in which subject-like oblique NPs have a large number of syntactic subject properties. To our knowledge, Icelandic oblique subjects cannot function as addressees of imperatives. A quick look at more than 100 verbs that take an oblique subject in Modern Icelandic reveals that most of them take non-agentive subjects (mostly Experiencers – cf. Barðdal 2001b).

### 3. Mapping between semantic roles and grammatical relations from a cognitive perspective

(4) and (5), repeated here for convenience as (22) and (23) show that the mapping between the semantic role Locative and the grammatical relation subject is not completely excluded in either German or Croatian:

- (22) a. *Bonn* gab Zusage für Kanal-bau.  
b. *Bonn* dao suglasnost za gradnju kanala.
- (23) a. *Tel Aviv* baut Siedlungen im Westjordaniengebiet weiter aus.  
b. *Tel Aviv* i dalje gradi naselja u području Zapadnog Jordana.

However, it seems to be the case that PLACE FOR INSTITUTION metonymies are more frequent in English than in German or Croatian (cf. Brdar–Szabó and Brdar 2003a). As Taylor (1995: 214ff.) points out, metonymic mappings of subjects onto Instrument (24), Locative (25) or Temporal (26) semantic roles are quite frequent in English unlike German, in which such metonymic mappings are not possible. They are also unacceptable to many speakers of Croatian:

- (24) a. The key opened the door.  
b. ?Der Schlüssel öffnete die Tür.  
c. \*Ključ je otvorio/otključao vrata.
- (25) a. This tent sleeps six.  
b. \*Das Zelt schläft sechs.  
c. \*Šator spava četvero.
- (26) *The fifth day* saw our departure.  
\**Peti je dan* vidio naš odlazak.

Although literal translation of a sentence like (24) gives an unacceptable sentence in Croatian (\**Ključ je otvorio vrata*) it gets much better when the subject is used referentially: *Ovaj ključ otvara sva vrata* ‘This key opens all doors’ (the meaning of such an expression can be roughly paraphrased as ‘This is a master key and it will open any door’). In what follows we shall take a closer look at the mapping between semantic Locatives and subjects.

It seems that the most frequent translation equivalent of English Locative subjects in Croatian is a prepositional phrase (cf. Kučanda 1998; see Hawkins 1981, 1986 on German)<sup>11</sup>:

- (27) a. *This hotel* forbids dogs.  
b. *U ovaj hotel* psima je zabranjen ulaz.
- (28) a. *Moscow* did not receive the news well.  
b. *U Moskvi* vijest nije dobro primljena.

This does not exclude the possibility that these prepositional phrases are used metonymically. Brdar–Szabó and Brdar (2003a) argue that these preposi-

11 It should be noted that (27a) and (28a) exemplify two different types of metonymic mapping, viz. PLACE FOR HUMAN AGENT and PLACE FOR INSTITUTION.

tional locative phrases are two-tiered metonymies; in CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymies it is not the locality as a whole that is meant; the name of the capital stands for that part in which the government offices are situated, not for the whole geographical area of the city, that is, when we say something like *U Zagrebu ova vijest nije dobro primljena* ‘In Zagreb this news was not received well’ we do not use *Zagreb* to refer to the whole city and its inhabitants but to a specific part of the city, i. e. this is a subtype of the WHOLE FOR PART metonymy.

Instead of generalizing the reluctance of some languages to subjectivize semantic Locatives as an absolute restriction on Locatives, we might say that this restriction holds of certain types of metonymic mappings only. Although fairly widespread, the CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy does not seem to be unconstrained: “But when examining the PLACE FOR INSTITUTION metonymy cross-linguistically one should be careful to note that the phenomenon is practically limited to a certain type of discourse, viz. to journales. [...] it can be easily observed that names of capitals are used in this way only in certain types of articles, most of the time in news on international affairs [...] What we presume to be playing an important role here are pragmatic factors such as perspective and the degree of empathy [...] What makes them possible is in our opinion a variant of the conceptual metaphor EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS DISTANCE IN PHYSICAL SPACE” (Brdar–Szabó and Brdar 2003b: 48–49).

It seems to us that the subject assignment to semantic locatives in PLACE FOR INSTITUTION metonymies is not an isolated example of mapping between a grammatical relation and a semantic role low on the Semantic Function Hierarchy as proposed by Dik (1978; 1989). Another instance of mapping the subject function onto a semantic locative is the CONTAINER FOR CONTENTS metonymy like *The kettle is boiling*. In Croatian, the most likely translation equivalent would be a prepositional phrase headed by a typical locative preposition *u* ‘in’ (*Kipi voda u čajniku* ‘Water is boiling in the kettle’) but this does not mean that speakers of Croatian never avail themselves of this type of metonymy. For example, in a sentence like *Gori ti pećnica* ‘The oven is burning’ the speaker uses the container to refer to the contents, i. e. the meaning could roughly be paraphrased as ‘Whatever you are baking in the oven is burning’. The use of the locative preposition *in* in the paraphrase clearly indicates that the container has the semantic role Locative. The PLACE FOR INSTITUTION and CONTAINER FOR CONTENTS metonymies show that the constraint on the assignment of the grammatical relation subject to the semantic role Locative is too general.

We believe that the observations made above could be extended to other types of semantic roles low on the SFH. Although the literal translation of *The fifth day saw our departure* would result in an ungrammatical sentence in Croatian (\**Peti dan vidio je naš odlazak*) such isolated examples should not be taken as evidence that the semantic role Temporal cannot be subjectivized. A thorough corpus-based research would certainly reveal many metonymic mappings of subjects onto semantic roles low on the SFH. Given space limitations we leave this question open pending further research.

To sum up, even the few examples we have adduced above show that any general constraint on the type of semantic roles that allow the assignment of grammatical relations should be abandoned in favour of an analysis which takes into account the metonymic interpretation of some apparently anomalous mappings of grammatical relations onto semantic roles.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has argued against the view that semantic roles low on the Semantic Function Hierarchy impose absolute constraints on the mapping between the grammatical relation subject and semantic roles. Prototypically, subjects encode the semantic role Agent and the pragmatic role Topic. NPs which are not Agents may show a varying degree of subject-like properties but they are not syntactic subjects to the same degree as canonically marked subjects, except in Modern Icelandic, Faroese and some Tibeto-Burman languages in which non-canonically marked subjects share a large number of syntactic processes with canonical subjects. In a framework in which grammatical relations are not defined in terms of necessary and sufficient properties subjecthood is a matter of degree and subjects are not characterised exclusively in morphosyntactic, semantic or pragmatic terms. It has also been argued that languages differ with respect to metonymic mappings between grammatical relations and semantic roles, i. e. statements of the form 'semantic role X cannot be mapped onto the grammatical relation Y in language Z' are both too general and inaccurate. Within the locative schema, for example, some languages may be more reluctant to accept CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymies than other languages but this should not be taken to mean that such languages exclude the mapping between semantic locatives and subjects in general.

We have not aimed at providing a detailed contrastive analysis of any two languages but we believe that such detailed contrastive analyses are necessary before any typological generalizations can be made. We have merely pointed out some neglected aspects of contrasting two languages. Before making the generalization that a particular semantic role cannot be mapped onto the grammatical relation subject, one should look at various metonymic mappings and investigate which mappings are not allowed in a language and why.

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*Kontrastivni pogled na nekanoničke subjekte: efekt prototipa, semantičke uloge i metonimija*

U radu se govori o preslikavanju između gramatičkih relacija i semantičkih uloga. Tradicionalno se smatralo da semantičke uloge nameću ograničenja glede mogućnosti pridruživanja gramatičkih relacija u skladu s hijerarhijom semantičkih uloga. Autori upozoravaju na različite stupnjeve odstupanja semantički atipičnog subjekta od prototipa subjekta. Na morfosintaktičkom planu odstupanje od semantičkog prototipa subjekta ima za posljedicu nekanoničko padežno kodiranje, odsutnost kongruencije i sintaktičkog ponašanja karakterističnog za subjekt. Različiti tipovi metonimije pokazuju da je tvrdnja kako se neka semantička uloga lokativ ili instrument ne mogu preslikati na gramatičku relaciju subjekt preopćenita jer metonimije kao što su, npr., GLAVNI GRAD UMJESTO INSTITUCIJE upućuju na to da semantička uloga lokativ ne nameće apsolutno ograničenje na mogućnost pridruživanja gramatičke relacije subjekt, tj., jezici se ne razlikuju toliko po tome što ne dozvoljavaju subjektivizaciju neke semantičke uloge koliko po tome koje se semantičke uloge mogu upotrijebiti kao referencijalne metonimije i s kojim značenjima.

Svrha ovog rada nije bila dati detaljnu kontrastivnu analizu bilo kojih dvaju jezika; cilj nam je bio upozoriti na neke zanemarene aspekte kontrastivne analize. Iscrpna kontrastivna analiza pojedinih aspekata dvaju jezika nuždan je preduvjet za izvođenje tipoloških generalizacija.

Ključne riječi: kontrastivna analiza, gramatičke relacije, subjekt, prototipovi, semantičke uloge, metonimijsko preslikavanje.

Key words: contrastive analysis, grammatical relations, subject, prototypes, semantic roles, metonymic mapping.