WORD ORDER IN ENGLISH AND SERBIAN

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Abstract

The paper deals with case and grammatical relations in English and Serbian. Serbian has a very rich case system involving the inflection for case of nouns, pronouns and adjectives. Since there are seven cases in Serbian, they bear the main burden of marking the syntactic function of a noun phrase and the word order is relatively free. However, in English nouns are not case marked and only the English pronominal system can be said to have the grammatical category of case and most of the grammarians would say that English word order is fixed. Due to their different nature, Serbian being a synthetic language and English an analytic one, word order seems to have different functional values in the two languages. In English it is the main syntactic means, while in Serbian it is mainly a pragmatic, textual and stylistic means.

Key words

word order, grammatical relations, case, English, Serbian

1   Introduction

According to Mathesius (1975), Firbas (1992) and Vachek (1994) the main principles determining word order in Indo-European languages are the linearity principle, i.e. ordering elements in accordance with linear modification (Bolinger 1952), and the grammatical principle, i.e. ordering elements in accordance with a grammaticalized word-order pattern. The linearity principle is stronger in languages with flexible word order, such as Serbian, where gradation of meaning is produced more easily than in languages with fixed word order, such as English, in which the linearity principle is subordinate to the grammatical principle. Linear modification operates not only at the syntactic level but also at the level of information structure of a sentence. According to the Brno theory of functional sentence perspective (Firbas 1992) the interpretation of the information structure of a sentence relies on specific syntactic, semantic, contextual and prosodic criteria (Firbas 1989, 1992; Dušková 1985, 2002; Svoboda 1981, 1989; Chamonikolasová 2005, 2007). Different degrees of communicative prominence, i.e. dynamism carried by communicative units, i.e.

sentence elements, correspond to different FSP functions. A simplified scale of sentence elements starts with the least dynamic, i.e. thematic elements, and ends with the most dynamic, i.e. rhematic elements. Sentences with objective word order starting with thematic elements and ending with rhematic elements comply with the principle of linear modification, while in sentences with subjective word order starting with rhematic elements and ending with thematic elements, linear modification is violated (Mathesius 1975: 83-4).

Thus, word order in English is fixed, or to be more precise, "the positions of subject, verb and object are relatively fixed" (Quirk et al. 1991: 51). Thus "English does indeed have strict limitations of the ordering of clause elements […] After V, S is the least movable element, followed by O and C" (ibid.: 51).

When considering the following example it is obvious that by changing the word order in the sentence we change the syntactic relationships between the elements.

(E1)   *The dog bit the fox.*
(E2)   *The fox bit the dog.*

In (1), the subject (S) is *the dog*, and the object (O) is *the fox*. In (2) the subject is *the fox*, and the object is *the dog*. In fact, there are two noun phrases – *the dog* and *the fox* and one verb – *bite* whose semantic features allow the collocation of both types: *the dog bit* and *the fox bit*. So, by changing the word order in the sentence we change its meaning.

In Serbian, by changing the word order (the position of S and O) the syntactic relations between the elements remain the same, so each of the previous sentences can have two syntactic forms.

(S1)   *Pas je ujeo lisicu.*
        Lisicu je ujeo pas.
(S2)   *Lisica je ujela psa.*
        Psa je ujela lisica.

Since all the elements of the sentence share the same semantic features in both languages, only the formally marked object in Serbian differentiates the possible syntactic structures, i.e. the direct object being the accusative – *lisicu* in (S1) and *psa* in (S2), the two possibilities of both structures are grammatically correct. However, in the examples below, due to the semantic features of the verb *šutnuti* (to kick), only one sentence with two possible structural forms is possible.

(E3) *The boy kicked the ball.*   (E4) * *The ball kicked the boy.*

(S3) *Dečak je šutnuo loptu.*

   Loptu je šutnuo dečak.

(S4) * *Lopta je šutnula dečaka.*

   * *Dečaka je šutnula lopta.*

This paper deals with some general aspects of word order in the two languages. The grammatical word order in a basic grammatical unit, a simple sentence in English as compared with the possible Serbian word order equivalents will be considered. Thus, it considers the factors affecting the distribution of thematic and rhematic elements within the sentence which are divided into two major groups. The first group consists of one factor and that is the grammatical factor (or principle) which asserts itself more in English than in Serbian. The difference between the two languages is that in Serbian the grammatical function of a word is as a rule indicated by its form, whereas in English it is not. This means that whereas Serbian inflects the sentence elements to determine their syntactic function, in English the syntactic function of a sentence element is determined by its position within a sentence. In other words, an English sentence first has to satisfy the requirements of ordering individual sentence elements in accordance with their syntactic functions (subject – verb – complement – object – adverbial). In Serbian the grammatical principle asserts itself to a much lesser extent.

The second major group is the group of functional sentence perspective (FSP) factors. These factors arrange the sentence elements in a communicative purpose of either presenting a phenomenon or ascribing a quality to a phenomenon (Firbas 1992: 5). There are three hierarchically ordered FSP factors: contextual factor, semantic factor and linear modification factor. The FSP factors determine the word order in both English and Serbian but since the assertion of the grammatical factor is different in these languages the FSP factors assert themselves to a different extent as well. The paper deals only with the linear modification factor which determines the word order in a way that it arranges the sentence elements from the least to the most communicatively dynamic (Firbas 1992: 7). This means that the element carrying the highest degree of communicative dynamism (CD) – rheme proper (RhPr) – which is "the element towards which the communication is perspectived" (Firbas 1996: 24) is by the linear modification factor perspectived towards the final position within the sentence, and the element carrying the lowest degree of CD – theme proper (ThPr) – is perspectived towards the initial position. The linear modification factor asserts itself strongly in Serbian whereas in English its assertion is limited by the grammatical factor. Because the grammatical factor is so strong in English "the occurrence of the most dynamic

element at the beginning of a sentence is not perceived as marked in English" (Chamonikolasová 2007: 25).

2 Simple sentence

The simple sentence, i.e. "the sentence consisting of a single independent clause", is considered "the most central part of grammar" (Quirk et al. 1991: 47). The traditional grammar definition of a (simple) sentence as "a full predication containing a subject plus a predicate with a finite verb" is the most appropriate one as it "includes both functional and formal characteristics of a sentence" (Frank 1972: 220). According to this definition, there are two obligatory functional constituents of a sentence: a subject (S) and a verb (V). Though the second element could either be named predicate or verb phrase just the term verb has been chosen, considering the verb itself "the most central element" (Quirk et al. 1991: 50)

(S5)   *Slavuj peva.*   (E5)   *The nightingale is singing.*
(S6)   *Vetar duva.*   (E6a) *The wind is blowing.*
                                (E6b) *It is blowing.*
(S7)   *Sneg pada.*   (E7)   *It's snowing.*
(S8)   *Sunce sija.*   (E8)   *The sun is shining.*

Both in Serbian and in English, sentences of this type mainly contain a noun phrase as the subject (*slavuj – the nightingale*, *vetar – the wind*, *sunce – the sun*). In English and in Serbian, all the sentences contain the progressive forms of the verbs, or the so-called durative verbs, although the question of aspect in Serbian is rather complex. While in Serbian the aspect of the verb is contained in the verb itself and is semantically determined, e.g. *čitati* vs *pročitati* (*to read* vs *to read up*), *leteti* vs *poleteti* or *odleteti* (*to fly* vs *to fly off*), *duvati* vs *zaduvati* (*to blow* vs *to start to blow*), *padati* vs *pasti* (*to rain* vs *to have rained)*, *sijati* vs *zasijati* (*to shine* vs *to have shined*), in English the aspect is expressed both on the morphological and the syntactic level (*is flying*, *is blowing*, *is raining*, *is shining*). Within the SV form, some differences between sentence elements of the two languages occur when we deal with the contextual or marked word order. The fixed word order in English does not allow the slightest movement even on the simplest structural level, while in Serbian all the above sentences can be transformed into the VS forms, which are contextually marked sentences.

(S5a) *Peva ptica.* (VS)
(S6a) *Duva vetar.* (VS)
(S7a) *Pada sneg.* (VS)
(S8a) *Sija sunce.* (VS)

Sentences of this type are considered more informative, and the information is marked by pre-position. We can say

(S5a) *Leti ptica.* (VS)   (E5a) **Is flying the bird.* (VS)

if the bird was wounded and unable to do it before. Existential sentences of the SV type are unmarked and they can mainly be found in the written language. In the spoken language, when we want to communicate something new, the unmarked VS form is always used.

And since the *wind* can only *blow*, the syncratic sentence of the V type is used.

(S6b) *Duva.* (V)   (E6b) ** Is blowing.* (V)

The sentence

(S9)   *On radi.* (SV)   (E9)   *He is working.* (SV)

has the unmarked SV order which corresponds to its English equivalent. But the sentence

(E8)   *The sun is shining.* (SV)

has two unmarked forms since the verb *sijati* is semantically marked by its original, recognizable collocative *sunce*:

(S8)   *Sunce sija.* (SV)
(S8a) *Sija sunce.* (VS)   (E8a) **Is shining the sun.* (VS)

However, the sentence

(S10) *On sija (blista).* (SV)   (E10) **He is shining.* (SV)

is considered as an unmarked SV form, while the syncratic sentence

(S10a) *Sija (on).* (V)

is considered as highly marked. The more precise sentence (with a verb complement, Cv) has no other unmarked form.

(S10b) *On sija od sreće.* (SVCv)   (E10b) *He is shining with absolute happiness.* (SVCv)

Even the simplest sentence of the SV type illustrates the complexity of the problem of word order in Serbian in comparison with word order in English. The term "the basic semantic-grammatical word order" seems to reflect the nature of word order in Serbian, since some of the differences between word order in the two languages can be explained only by the semantic features of the functional elements.

The basic semantic feature of the Serbian verb *sijati* is its duration (progressive aspect), which the verb *shine* does not share, so that this innate semantic feature has to be transposed onto the syntactic level of the English sentence with the present progressive tense. The perfective aspect of the verb *shine* can be transposed into Serbian by the perfective-aspect prefix *za – zasijati*.

(E10d) *The fog became thin and the sun shone through it.*
(S10d) *Magla se razredi i sunce kroz nju zasija.*

The basic syntactic feature of the Serbian verb *sijati* is its intransitiveness, while the English verb *shine* can be both transitive and intransitive.

(E11e) *I asked him to shine the headlight on the door.* (Sinclair, 1990)
(S11e) **Zamolila sam ga da zasija ulazno svetlo.*

The semantic field of the verb *shine* is much larger than the semantic field of the verb *sijati*.
Cf. *shine* – (Intr & Progressive) *sijati, sjati, svetleti, granjavati, grejati, grajati*;
shine – (Intr & Perfective) *granuti, ogranuti*; *zasvetleti*;
shine – (Tr & Progressive) *svetleti, ozarivati; ucakljivati, usjajivati, bacati svetlost na*;
shine – (Tr & Perfective) *ozariti, ucakliti, usjajiti, baciti svetlost na* (Ristic et al. 1955);
sijati – to shine, emit light (Benson 1974);

The sentence

(S9)   *On radi.* (SV)   (E9)   *He is working.(*SV)

is considered to be of the unmarked form, and it can be reduced to

(S9b) *Radi.* (V)   (E9b) **Is working.* (V)

The reduction is possible due to the inflective nature of the Serbian language. The suffix *-i* indicates the number (singular), the aspect (progressive), the tense (present) and the person (third person singular). This type of verb form can be called the 'subject including', or, as the pronoun seems to be redundant, it can also be called the 'subject-informative' verb form – the subject being defined by the verb form itself. It could be *on, ona, ono (he, she, it)*. The following example should be considered.

(S12) *Ja čitam.* (SV)   (E12) *I am reading.* (SV)

This sentence has a syncratic V form

(S12a) *Čitam.*   (E12a)**Am reading.*

The suffix *-m* here is highly subject-informative. It denotes the number (singular), aspect (progressive), tense (present) and the person (the first person singular).

(S13) *Oni čitaju.* (SV)   (E13) *They are reading*. (SV)

The verb form here, i.e. the suffix *-ju*, indicates the number (plural), aspect (progressive), tense (present) and the person (third person plural). So all of the present tense suffixes in Serbian are highly subject-informative: *-m* indicates the first person singular, *-š* the second person singular, *-a* - the third person singular, *-mo* the first person plural, *-te* the second person plural and *-ju* the third person plural. The explanation that the Serbian language is inflective while the English language is not seems to be neither sufficient nor precise enough to account for the difference between the word order in English and Serbian. The inflective nature of Serbian seems not to play any important role as far as grammatical word order is concerned, but it is of great importance to contextual word order, the syncratic sentences being the best illustrations of this. The English language has only one means of indicating syntactic relations between the (main) elements

of the sentence. The Serbian language has two ways of expressing syntactic relations between the elements of the sentence – morphological and syntactic – word order being only of secondary importance. Word order in Serbian has only partly the function of expressing the syntactic relations.

3   Word order in the light of FSP

The functional analysis of a sentence introduced by Mathesius (1939, 1941) considers the 'theme' of the sentence, which is the point of departure, and what is being said about it, i.e. the 'rheme' (the core of the message). The point of departure (theme) is often something known or easily gathered from the context or situation. The core of the message (rheme) is often something new or not known at the moment of communication. The natural way is to proceed from the known to the unknown information, so the linear sequence theme-rheme is a natural way of developing the discourse.

(S15)   *Dala sam za njega 50 dinara*. (*theme→rheme*)
(S15a) *50 dinara sam dala za njega*. (*rheme→theme*)

Mathesius regarded the sequence *theme→rheme* as objective (normal, unmarked) word order and the sequence *rheme→theme* as subjective (emotive, marked) word order. In the 1950s, Firbas started examining Mathesius's idea of English being less susceptible to the theme-rheme articulation than Czech, and developed his theory – the Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP). According to FSP the main principles of determining word order in Indo-European languages are the linearity principle i.e. ordering elements in accordance with linear modification (Bolinger 1952), and the grammatical principle, i.e. ordering elements in accordance with a grammaticalized word-order pattern. The linearity principle is stronger in languages with flexible word order, such as Serbian, when gradation of meaning is produced more easily than in languages with fixed word order, such as English, in which the linearity principle is subordinate to the grammatical principle. Linear modification operates not only at the syntactic level but also at the level of information structure of a sentence.

Modern English as an analytical language with limited morphological variation and a relatively fixed word order is governed by a grammatical principle (Chamonikolasová 2009). Due to the grammatical principle, variation within word-order patterning in English is rather limited. Unmarked sentence patterns contain a subject immediately followed by the verb. The remaining sentence elements occur in post verbal position. Non-obligatory adverbials are alternatively placed before the subject in initial position. Unmarked sentence

patterns observe the leading grammatical principle as illustrated by the examples below.

(E14) *The boy is playing.* (SV)
(E15) *The boy plays football.* (SVO)
(E16) *He's getting tired.* (SVC)
(E17) *He got through the window.* (SVA)
(E18) *He bought her a new house.* (SVOO)
(E19) *Most people found him reasonably helpful.* (SVOC)
(E20) *He got himself into trouble.* (SVOA)

With the exception of sentence (E14), the basic sentence patterns of the English simple sentence also observe the linearity principle: they start with thematic context-dependent or easily accessible elements carrying low degrees of communicative dynamism and end with context-independent rhematic elements. The term 'linear modification' was introduced in linguistic theory by Bolinger (1952), who claims that within a sentence, "gradation of position creates gradation of meaning when there are no interfering factors" (ibid.: 1125).

When occurring in the most natural context, sentence (E14) is interpreted as a sentence presenting the rhematic phenomenon *the boy* on the scene. The subject carries the highest degree of communicative dynamism and the highest degree of prosodic prominence which is indicated by capitalization:

(E14Pr) *What is the boy doing today? – The BOY is playing.*

Under very special contextual conditions, the subject of example (E14) can perform the function of a thematic quality bearer; the highest degree of communicative dynamism is then carried by its quality *playing*.

(E14Q) *The boy is probably sleeping in his bedroom, isn't he? – No, he is PLAYING.*

Example (E14Q) is in harmony with both the grammatical and the linearity principles. Example (E14Pr) complies with the grammatical principle but violates the linearity principle – its word order is subjective. *The boy* is rhematic but has to be placed in the initial position because it fulfills the syntactic function of the subject. The grammatical principle in this case acts as a factor interfering with a gradual rise in communicative value. In the Serbian language with flexible word order, such an element naturally occurs in final position

(S14) *Igra dečak.*   (E14) * *Is playing the boy.*

However, the deviation from the linearity principle, which is subordinate to the grammatical principle in English, does not render the sentence marked. (E14Pr) is in reality more natural than (E14Q), which only functions in a rather constructed context.

When it comes to linearity, in Serbian markedness is caused by the deviation from the *theme→rheme* sequence, while in English, markedness is caused by the deviation from the grammatical word order.

(S21) *Taj film sam gledala.* (T,T-R)
       the *theme→rheme* sequence = unmarked
(S21a) *Gledala sam taj film.* (R-T,T)
        the deviation from the *theme→rheme* sequence = marked
(E21) *I've seen the film.* (subject, verb, object)
       the S → V → O sequence = unmarked
(E21a) *The film, I've seen.* (object, subject, verb)
        the deviation from the S → V → O sequence = marked

Thus, word order in Serbian carries informative, pragmatic and stylistic values. The following examples illustrate this point. The word order in the sentence

(S22) *Devojka svira klavir.*   (E22)   *The girl is playing the piano.*
       DTh   Tr   Rh   DTh   Tr   Rh

represents an unmarked SVO structure. While the English language does not allow any change of the elements (SVO) at all, the Serbian language allows six combinations of the elements.

(E22) *Devojka svira klavir.* – neutral
       DTh   Tr   Rh
(E22a) *Devojka klavir svira.* – O marked (pre-position of V and O)
        DTh   Rh   Tr
(E22b) *Svira devojka klavir.* – V marked (pre-position of S i V)
        Tr   DTh   Rh
(E22c) *Svira klavir devojka.* – O marked (pre-positions of S and V and O and S)
        Tr   Rh   DTh
(E22d) *Klavir devojka svira.* – O marked (pre-position of S and O)
        Rh   DTh   Tr

(E22e)   *Klavir svira devojka.* – O marked (pre-positions of S and V and V and O)
            Rh   Tr   DTh

This is also true of similar sentences of the SVOiOdA type

(E23)   *He   gave me a red rose for my birthday. (SVOiOdA)*
            DTh Tr Th_p Th_p Rh_p
(S23)   *Za rođendan mi   je dao   crvenu ružu. (AVOiOd)*
             Rh_p Th_p DTh Tr Th_p

There are many possible combinations of the sentence elements. The combinations are limited only by the enclitic form *sam* which cannot take either the initial or the final position in the sentence. In all the possible combinations the pre-position is used as a means of marking, and the word order is a) a pragmatic means by which we transfer information and economize in language performance or b) a means by which we express our (language) individuality. The choice from the possibilities is made either by the frequency of use (neutral), by the message (i.e. information), or by the style of the addresser. However, this is not true of the following examples:

(S24)   *Ja sam mu je dala. (SOiOdV)*   (E24) *I   gave it to him. (SVOdOi)*
            DTh Th_p Tr   DTh   Tr Th_p

Due to the inflective ending *-m*, by which the subject is defined, and the enclitic forms *mu,* and *je*, the given sentence is the only possible Serbian unmarked equivalent which corresponds to the given English sentence. The number of the marked forms of this sentence is reduced to one

(S24a)   *Dala sam mu je.*   (E24a) * *Gave him it.*

since the enclitic forms *mu* and *sam* cannot take initial or final position, and the enclitic form *je* cannot occupy the initial position. While the English language allows only the peripheral elements to change their positions, in the Serbian language both main and peripheral elements can occupy almost any position in a sentence. The following examples should be considered.

(E25)   *My brother usually enjoys races very much.* (SAVOA)
               DTh   Tr Rh_p

(E25a)   *Usually my brother enjoys races very much.* (ASVOA)
             DTh   Tr   Rh$_p$

(E25b)   *My brother enjoys races very much, usually.* (SVOAA)
          DTh   *Tr* *Rh$_p$*

The above sentences can have many Serbian equivalents and here are some of the possibilities:

(S25)   *Moj brat obično mnogo uživa u trkama.* (SAAVO)
            DTh   Tr   Rh$_p$

(S25a)   *Moj brat mnogo uživa u trkama, obično.* (SAVOA)
           DTh   Tr   Rh$_p$

(S25b)   *Moj brat u trkama obično mnogo uživa.* (SOAAV)
           DTh   Rh$_p$ Tr

(S25c)   *Obično moj brat mnogo uziva u trkama.* (ASAVO)
               DTh   Tr   Rh$_p$

(S25d)   *Obično u trkama mnogo uživa moj brat.* (AOAVS)
            Rh$_p$ Tr   DTh

(S25e)   *Obično mnogo uživa u trkama moj brat.* (AAVOS)
                Tr   Rh$_p$ DTh

(S25f)   *U trkama obično mnogo uživa moj brat.* (OAAVS)
          Rh$_p$ Tr   DTh

(S25g)   *U trkama obično moj brat mnogo uživa.* (OASAV)
          Rh$_p$ DTh   Tr

(S25h)   *U trkama moj brat obično mnogo uživa.* (OSAAV)
          Rh$_p$ DTh   Tr

(S25i)   *Mnogo uživa, obično, u trkama moj brat.* (AVAOS)
             Tr   Rh$_p$ DTh

(S25j)   *Mnogo uživa moj brat u trkama obično.* (AVSOA)
             Tr   *DTh*   *Rh$_p$*

It is not true of the English sentence equivalents, and that is where the main difference is:

(E25c)   **Usually enjoys races my brother very much.* (AVSOA)
               Tr   Rh$_p$ DTh

(E25d)   **Enjoys usually my brother races very much.* (VASOA)
         Tr   DTh   Rh$_p$

(E25e)   *My brother races usually enjoys very much. (SOAVA)
           DTh Rh_p Tr

According to FSP theory every element of the sentence that conveys meaning pushes the communication forward and is a carrier of communicative dynamism. The degrees of communicative dynamism are relative degrees of communicative importance by which the elements contribute to the development of communication. The degrees of communicative dynamism are determined by the interplay (interaction) of the factors of FSP in the very moment of communication. Thus, Firbas (1992) introduced a systematic examination of the following four factors of FSP: a) linearity (word order); b) semantics (dynamic semantic scales); c) context (verbal, situational, experiential); d) intonation (prosodic features). It is the interplay of these four factors that determines the relative degrees of communicative dynamism carried by separate elements, and determines their thematic, transitional, or rhematic character.

4   The role of case

An implicit assumption of traditional grammar is that the case distinctions required by the morphology are in one-to-one correspondence with those required by the syntax. Thus, typically, a subject occurs in the nominative case, a direct object in the accusative and an indirect object in the dative. The confusion of grammatical relations with surface cases is caused by the fact that there is a high degree of correspondence between them. Due to this, grammarians tend to identify the grammatical relation of a noun phrase on the basis of the case of that noun phrase. Thus, the case is only one of the markers of syntactic function and therefore the inflectional category of case and syntactic functions (grammatical relations) should be clearly distinguished. According to Brecht and Levine (1986), almost all studies of case investigate the relationship among the grammatical exponents of case, e.g. case affixes, the syntactic structures in which they occur, and the meaning associated with the use of particular cases in particular contexts. Most of them focus on the line between the syntactic and semantic functions of case.

The role of case as a system of inflectional forms of a noun is to "mark the function of an NP relative to the construction containing it" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 455). Thus marking subject-predicate-object relations is the quintessence of a case-system. Cross-linguistically, one and the same case can mark a huge variety of grammatical relations:
   − nominative can mark the role of the grammatical subject as in Latin, Russian, Serbian, English, Turkish, etc.

- genitive marks the adnominal attribute; the direct object after a negated transitive verb; the main object of some verbs; an object of a preposition and the grammatical subject in an ergative construction
- dative marks the indirect object of a verb (destination, addressee, experiencer), especially of verbs of 'giving'; an object of a preposition; the grammatical subject in the so-called affective construction
- accusative marks the direct object, i.e. the 'patient' main object of a transitive verb; the object of a preposition, etc.
- instrumental marks the agent with the passive; the grammatical subject in the ergative construction; the object of a preposition

5 Case and grammatical relations in English

Unlike Serbian, whose inflectional case system consists of seven cases, Present-day English is a language whose nouns are not case-marked (the status of what is known as Saxon genitive being very debated and debatable). Only the English pronominal system can be said to have the grammatical category of case. According to the most current view, the English noun has a two-case system: the unmarked common case (*man*) and the marked genitive case *(woman's)*. Such a view dates back as far as Jespersen: "There is a common case corresponding to nominative and objective in pronouns and a genitive case" (Jespersen 1987: 138). It is accepted by the contemporary grammarians (Quirk et al. 1985, Huddleston & Pullum 2002) who only shyly remark without any discussion that this distinction "is not really a case distinction in Present-day English, although it is a relic of a former case system" (Quirk et al. 1985: 335).

Serbian traditional grammarians following the reverse direction claim that if a noun is in the nominative, it is a grammatical subject, if it is in the accusative, it is a direct object, and if in the dative, it is an indirect object. Finally, both directions of the analysis boil down to one and the same deceptive notion of one-to-one correspondence between a case and a grammatical relation. Unlike the nominal, the English pronominal system is inflected for case. The grammatical category of case consists of: the genitive (*my, mine, etc*.), nominative (*I, we, he, she, they, who*) and accusative (*me, him, her, us, them, whom*). Only the five personal pronouns *I, we, he, she, they* and the *wh*-pronoun *who* make the distinction between the latter two cases.

Again, even some modern scholars, according to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), mix the case with the corresponding grammatical relation (indirect object) or even with the semantic role – the recipient, when using the term dative in analyzing English nouns or pronouns. Generally, in English, the nominative

case is a case whose primary function is to mark the subject of transitive and intransitive clauses, while the accusative is a case whose primary function is to mark the direct object of a transitive clause. But, it should be emphasized that the nominative is not exclusively restricted to subject function, just as the accusative is not exclusively restricted to object function and not excluded from marking the subject (Quirk et al. 1985, Huddleston & Pullum 2002).

The subject of a finite clause is the function where pronouns appear in the nominative, as in:

(E27)   *I wrote a story.*
(E27a)   **Me wrote a story.*

However, when a subject of a finite clause is a coordinated NP, the pronoun forming the part of that NP can be in the accusative case in informal style. As Quirk et al. (1985: 338) suggest, the reason for it may be the idea of 'object territory': the pronoun does not immediately precede the verb, or if it does, it does not trigger verb agreement. These accusatives are, however, strongly stigmatised.

(E28)   *Him and Mary are going abroad for a holiday.*
(E28a)   *Mary and him are going abroad for a holiday.*

The subject can be either nominative or accusative. Which case is used depends both on:
−   the position of a pronoun in the sentence. As Quirk et al. (1985: 337) suggest "there is a broad division of a finite clause into 'SUBJECT TERRITORY' (the preverbal subject position) and 'OBJECT TERRITORY' (which includes all noun-phrase positions apart from that immediately preceding the verb)" and on
−   the style: nominative subjects are preferred in formal style, while accusative subjects are regarded as natural in informal style.

Thus, for instance, subjects of a gerund-participial in adjunct function are nominative in a formal variant and accusative in the informal:

(E29a) *We were in Greville's office, I sitting in his swivel chair… (Ibid)*
(E29b) *Him having no coat, we gave him one.*

Subjects of verbless clauses show a similar behaviour:

(E30a)   *He was morose, <u>she/her</u> full of life.*
(E30b) *What, <u>he/him</u> an assistant?*

The same is true of the following clauses that, although verbless, contain a predicative element. Here, the subject in the nominative is less likely:

(E31a)   *He hit her, not <u>me</u>.*
(E31b)   *X: Who did it? Y: <u>Me</u>.*
(E31c)   *X: We are singing. Y: <u>Me</u> too.*

As Huddleston and Pullum (2002) remark, only a few people would use a nominative in (31a), fewer still in (31b) and in (31c) it can be regarded as completely unacceptable.

Accusative marking of the subject is obligatory when the subject of the clausal complement of *with/without* is at stake (*With <u>him</u> running around, she will not be able to work*) or in the case of a subject of an infinitival clause introduced by the preposition *for* (*For <u>her</u> to see it would be unbearable).* All these examples show that the only unambiguous place of the nominative marking the subject pronoun in Present-day English is with pronouns appearing as whole subjects in a finite clause. As Jespersen (1993: 213) remarks: "generally, the nominative has the worst of it: while it is only the position immediately before the verb that supports nominative, the accusative is always the most natural case in any other position." It is important to highlight that in Serbian, unlike English, whether the case of the subject will be nominative or not, does not depend on the position of the subject with respect to the finite verb and is not the matter of the formal/informal style distinction, but is rather dependant on idiosyncratic properties of the verb.

6   Case and grammatical relations in Serbian

Unlike English, Serbian is a language which has a very rich case system and whose nouns, pronouns and adjectives are inflected for case. There are seven cases in Serbian: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, instrumental and locative. It is due to this variety that cases bear the main burden of marking the syntactic function of a noun phrase and that word order is relatively free.

In Serbian, the nominative typically marks a subject NP, the accusative a direct object NP, similarly to English, and the dative marks an indirect object NP. However, while direct and indirect objects can be marked by several other cases,

grammatical subjects can only be in the nominative according to traditional grammarians (Stevanović 1986, Milinović 1987).

Direct object can be marked by:

1) accusative:
(S32)   *Kupila   sam   knjigu.*
         Buy.PAST.1.SG.FEM. AUX.1.SG. book.ACC.SG.
         'I bought a book.'
2) genitive, which can be freely substituted with accusative.
(S33)   *Kupio   je   hleba.*
         Buy.PAST.3.SG.MASC. AUX.3.SG. bread.PART.GEN.SG.
         'He bought some bread.'

Indirect object can be marked by:

1) dative (typically):
(S34)   *Napisao   je   majci   pismo.*
         Write.PAST.3.SG.MASC. AUX.3.SG. mother.DAT.SG. letter.ACC.SG.
         'He wrote a letter to his mother.'
2) partitive genitive with reflexive verbs:
(S35)   *Napio   se   vina.*
         Drink.PAST.3.SG.MASC. REFL. wine.PART.GEN.
         '*He drank wine to his full.'*
3) instrumental:
(S36)   *Vladao   je   zemljom   trideset godina.*
         Rule.PAST.3.SG.MASC. AUX.3.SG. country.INSTR.SG. thirty years.
         '*He ruled the country for thirty years.'*

Traditional Serbian grammarians (Stevanović 1986, Stanojčić & Popović 1992) have considered certain dative nominals to be logical subjects, and all nominative nominals to be grammatical subjects. According to their definition, logical (or semantic, psychological) subject is "a nominal in an oblique case (dative, accusative and genitive) that bears the semantic role of an experiencer in the sentence" (Stanojčić & Popović 1992: 242; Stevanović 1986: 92). Their syntactic function is considered to be that of indirect objects (Stevanović 1986: 92). However, a nominal is a grammatical subject if it satisfies three criteria of subjecthood: a) if it is in the nominative case, b) if it triggers subject-verb agreement (in person, number and/or gender where possible) and c) if it antecedes

reflexive pronominal *sebe (self)* and reflexive possessive adjective *svoj (self's)* (Stanojčić et al. 1992: 213). It is interesting that, in their discussion, Stanojčić et al. (1992) completely ignore the last criterion and give no explanation for relying solely on the first two criteria in the process of labelling nominals as logical or grammatical subjects. In our opinion, this kind of approach is far from providing a full and adequate characterization of a syntactic function. It is precisely what Givón (1997: 2) criticizes for the same reason: discreteness can only be achieved by selecting a few, usually one, necessary-and-sufficient features out of all properties of subjecthood or objecthood and then marking binary either/or decisions on subjecthood and objecthood based on such feature(s). The resulting description invariably ignores the evidence that points towards gradation of subjecthood and objecthood and degree of grammaticalization, both within the same language and crosslinguistically. Likewise, Keenan's work (1975, 1976) suggests that subjecthood and objecthood can only be characterized adequately by a "basket of properties" (Givon 1997: 92). Consequently, the terms subject and object are "cluster concepts" or "multi-factor concepts" (Keenan 1976: 312).

In trying to determine whether some nominals in the oblique case can be regarded as grammatical subjects, linguists doing research in Russian, Polish and Icelandic have applied a larger number of subjecthood criteria. In the light of various subjecthood criteria, the subject status of some Russian dative nominals is very much debated. The essence of the debate is important because Russian and Serbian are cognate languages and because the debate includes the status of the Serbian dative nominals, as well. Therefore, it will be summarized briefly. Some authors (Franks 1995, Moore & Perlmutter 2000, Perlmutter & Moore 2002) consider only dative nominals in infinitival clauses in Russian to be grammatical (=surface) subjects, whereas those in category-of-state constructions are regarded as I(nversion) nominals, i.e. initial subjects and surface indirect objects (Moore & Perlmutter 2000: 381). The reason for that is that the former behave like subjects in every respect whereas the latter behave like subjects in only two respects: they are able to antecede reflexives and to control certain gerundial clauses. Besides, these criteria are not considered to be strongly characteristic of Russian subjects as they can be satisfied by some canonical objects, as well (Moore & Perlmutter, 2000, Franks 1995). The crucial point for the Serbian dative subjects is the following: Greenberg and Franks (1991) and Franks (1991) argue that dative subjects are found only in Russian and Polish infinitival clauses, whereas other Slavic languages like Slovenian, Slovak and Serbo-Croatian have only *I*-nominals because they lack constructions with dative nominals in infinitival clauses. Besides, at first sight, Serbian category-of-state constructions with dative nominals resemble 'physically' Russian constructions with

I-nominals very closely although they behave differently. All this may have misled those authors to say that Serbian has no dative subjects, but *I*-nominals instead. Serbian dative nominals are called logical subjects by Serbian grammarians and *I*-nominals by Greenberg and Franks (1991) and Franks (1995). Their syntactic function is claimed to be that of an indirect object.

7 Conclusion

In English the verb has a tendency to follow the subject and precede the object or adverbial and complement, but not necessarily as the second element in a sentence. Even if the sentence starts with an adverbial, the verb is not inserted between the adverbial and the subject but occurs in medial position, i.e. after the adverbial and the subject. English is an analytical non-inflectional language with a grammaticalized word order while Serbian is a synthetic inflectional language with a relatively free word order. The majority of English sentences have a SV pattern (SVA, SVO, SVC) but Serbian sentences contain a greater variety of sentence patterns (SOV, SOV, VOS, OVS, VOS, OVS) and sometimes the subject is preceded by the verb.

In the light of FSP analysis the main factor affecting the distribution of thematic and rhematic elements within the sentence is the grammatical factor (or principle) and it asserts itself more in English than in Serbian. The difference between the two languages is that in Serbian the grammatical function of a word is as a rule indicated by its form, whereas in English it is not. This means that whereas Serbian inflects the sentence elements to determine their syntactic function in English the syntactic function of a sentence element is determined by its position within a sentence. Thus, an English sentence first has to satisfy the requirements of ordering individual sentence elements in accordance with their syntactic functions (subject – verb – complement – object – adverbial). In Serbian the grammatical principle asserts itself to a much lesser extent.

When dealing with Functional Sentence Perspective factors, it can be concluded that these factors arrange the sentence elements in accordance with a communicative purpose, which is either presenting a phenomenon or ascribing a quality to a phenomenon. There are three hierarchically ordered FSP factors: contextual factor, semantic factor and linear modification factor. FSP factors determine the word order in both English and Serbian but since the assertion of the grammatical factor is different in these languages the FSP factors assert themselves to a different extent as well. Linear modification determines the word order in a way that it arranges the sentence elements from the least to the most communicatively dynamic. This means that the element carrying the highest degree of communicative dynamism – rheme proper, which is the element towards

which the communication is perspectived, is by the linear modification factor perspectived towards the final position within the sentence, while the element carrying the lowest degree of CD – theme proper – is perspectived towards the initial position. The linear modification factor asserts itself strongly in Serbian whereas in English its assertion is limited by the grammatical factor. Because the grammatical factor is so strong in English, the occurrence of the most dynamic element at the beginning of a sentence is not perceived as marked in English.

In English, as well as in Serbian, the subject is typically marked with the nominative, and the objects with the oblique case (for English, this statement exclusively applies to the system of personal pronouns). However, even if English has retained only two cases to mark major grammatical relations (subject, direct object, indirect object), it is obvious that it does not support the notion of one-to-one mapping between case and grammatical function. Some subjects can be marked not only by the nominative, but by accusative as well. While in English this oblique case marking of a subject is due to the position of the subject with respect to the verb in informal style, in Serbian it is due to the lexical requirements of a verb or copular construction.

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