NPI-licensing and dependent tense in Serbian

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1.   Introduction

In Serbian there are two types of NPI-s: n-words (morphologically negated in-definites) and i-words (indefinites resembling *any*-series in English), which are mutually exclusive in most non-affirmative contexts. This general pattern breaks down in the 'subjunctive-like' *da* clauses, where both types of indefinites can be licensed by the negated verb in the main clause. I will discuss the subject/object asymmetry regarding the licensing of n-words in this context, and offer a novel analysis of the phenomenon. On the current approach, 'subjunctive-like' clauses featuring n-indefinites and only higher negation can be full CPs, and not only VP complements, as previously proposed. The proposal here builds on Pesetsky & Torrego's (2001) minimalist approach to the subject/object asymmetry in the domain of wh-movement.

2.   About the two types of indefinites

There are two classes of pronouns that *cannot* occur in the affirmative declarative clauses in Serbian, as is shown in (1) and (2):

(1) *n-words*   *gloss*
    niko   **not**-**even**-who   'no one'
    ništa   **not**-**even**-what   'nothing'
    nikud   **not**-**even**-where   'nowhere (dir.)'
    nigde   **not**-**even**-where   'nowhere (loc.)'
    nikad   **not**-**even**-when   'never'

(2) *i-words*   *gloss*
    iko   **even**-who   'anyone'
    išta   **even**-what   'anything'
    ikud   **even**-where   'anywhere (dir.)'

igde	**even**-where	'anywhere (loc.)'
ikad	**even**-when	'ever'

(1) illustrates the class of strong NPIs that are licensed by the negative marker on the verb in the same clause. As has been noted for Polish and Russian (cf. Błaszczak 2003, Pereltsvaig 2004), their licensing cannot be attributed solely to the semantic properties of the context in which they occur. Although a negated clause is an antimorphic downward-entailing context, not all such contexts license n-indefinites. As shown by (3a), they are ungrammatical with the antimorphic preposition *bez* ('without'). Thus, there must be a syntactic restriction on the licensing relation between the n-words and clausal negation.

(3)   a.   *bez   nikoga
                without no one
       b.   bez   ikoga
                without anyone

Similarly, a purely semantic treatment of the distribution of i-indefinties does not seem to be adequate either. Although they occur in downward-entailing contexts, they are not licit with only one type of antimorphic contexts — clause-mate negation, while they are grammatical with the preposition *bez* (cf. 3b). The problem for treating the two types of pronouns as weak (i-words) vs. strong (n-words) NPIs is that the former are excluded in the contexts which are the subset of downward-entailing contexts. This is so, contrary to expectations on the purely semantic analysis of the NPI licensing contexts (cf. Van der Wouden 1997, Zwarts 1996). This indicates that there is an additional, syntactic, locality condition on the relation between both types of indefinites on one side and the sentential negation on the other, which needs to be included in the explanation of NPI distribution in Serbian.[1] Such a condition can be formulated in the following way:

(4)   In a proper semantic (downward-entailing) environment:
       a.   n-words must co-occur with the clause-mate sentential negation
       b.   i-words cannot co-occur with the clause-mate sentential negation

This generalisation in the context of embedded indicative declaratives gives us the following pattern:

(5)   a.   *Ne* kažem   da   vidim   ikoga/*nikoga*.
                not say-1.SG that see-1.SG anyone/no one
                'I don't say that I see anyone.'
       b.   Kažem   da   *ne* vidim   *ikoga*/nikoga.
                say-1SG   that not see-1.SG anyone/noone
                'I say that I don't see anyone.'

    c.   *Ne* mislim   da iko/   *niko dolazi.
          not think-1.sɢ that anyone no one comes
          'I don't think that anyone is coming'

    d.   Mislim   da *iko/   niko   *ne* dolazi.
          think-1.sɢ that anyone no one not comes
          'I think that no one is coming.'

Although Serbian does not have a morphological subjunctive, there is a class of verbs expressing volition, influence and command, whose clausal complements are exclusively in present tense. The fixed irrealis, or 'quasi-future' tense interpretation of the embedded verb with respect to the tense of the higher verb (to which we will return later on) is reminiscent of the tense interpretation of English embedded infinitive, as is indicated by the translation of (6).

    Also, the correctness of the generalisation in (4) is doubtful, in light of the fact that in (6) both n-words and i-words are acceptable.

(6)   *Ne* želim   da vidim *nikoga/*ikoga.*[2]
       not want.1sɢ that see.1sɢ no one/anyone.
       'I don't want to see anyone'

Given the generalisation in (4), it has been tacitly assumed that the acceptability of n-words in (6) indicates a mono-clausal structure at some level of syntactic representation. Thus, Progovac (1994) proposes that it obtains at LF due to functional deletion, which deletes the CP and TP layer of the clause, making licensing of the object n-word possible. Stjepanović (2005) treats the same structure as a restructuring configuration, in the spirit of Wurmbrand (2001). According to Stjepanović, the *da*+V+n-word sequence is a VP. In these approaches, the i-object is licensed within an independent clause. The different structures are given in (7).

(7)   a.   [TP *ne* želim [VP da vidim *nikoga*]]
       b.   [TP *ne* želim [CP da [TP vidim *ikoga*]]

However, this view of the observed transparency effects can be challenged on the basis of the following data:

(8)   a. * *Ne* želim   *da niko*   povredi *nikoga*.
          not want-1sɢ that no one hurts   no one
          'I don't want anyone/no one to hurt anyone.'

    b.   *Ne* želim   *niko da* povredi *nikoga*.
          not want-1sɢ no one that hurts   no one
          'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'

    c.   *Ne* želim   *niko da* povredi *ikoga*.
          not want-1sɢ no one that hurts   anyone
          'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'

As shown by the contrast between (8a) and (8b), the nominative n-subject can be licensed in the embedded structure by the higher negation only if it precedes *da*. Furthermore, the co-occurrence of the n-subject with the i-object in (8c) shows that the choice between the two types of indefinites in the object position of the *da*-clause is not determined on the basis of the size of the embedded structure, as proposed in (7). In what follows I will argue that the n-words can be licensed across a specific type of clausal boundary. In syntactic terms, this is the configuration in which the subject of the embedded clause checks off the uninterpretable tense feature of C^0.

3.   'Subjunctive-like' *da* clause as a CP

One piece of evidence for the presence of the extended functional projection of the embedded VP in (8b) comes from the blocking of clitic-climbing in these constructions. In Serbian, clitic pronouns obligatorily occur in the second position in the clause (9a). In the context of the volitional/influence verbs of the type discussed here, they can climb out of the embedded clause, to the second position of the matrix (9b).

(9) a. On mu ga je   dao.
         he   him him AUX-3.SG give.PRT
         'He gave it to him.'
     b. On mu ga želi   da da.
         he   him him wants that gives
         'He wants to give it to him.'

Aljović (2004) observes that the presence of various functional elements in the embedded construction (sentential negation in the *da* clause, interrogative elements or any interruption of the *da*+V sequence) blocks clitic-climbing. As (10a–c) show, clitic-climbing is possible in the presence of the n-object, but ungrammatical with the n-subject (despite the fact that the subject precedes *da*).

(10) a. On mu ne želi   da da   ništa.
          he   him not wants that gives nothing
          'He doesn't want to give anything to him.'
      b. *On ga ne želi   niko   da da   nikome.
          he   him not wants no one that gives noone.DAT
          'He doesn't want anyone/no one to give him to anyone.'
      c. On$_i$ ne želi   niko   da ga$_{i/k}$ da   nikome.
          he   not wants no one that him gives no one.DAT
          'He doesn't want anyone to give it to anyone.'

This shows that although *da*-clauses can be raising/restructuring environments (as proposed by Stjepanović) whose subject can only check its Nominative in the functional projection above the higher verb (as in (10a)), a *da*-clause with an independent subject is not such an environment (10c). This is further supported by (11). The disjoint subject reference (indicated by the different person/number features) of the higher and lower verb excludes clitic-climbing as well.

(11) *On mu ne želi   da   daš   ništa.
      he   him not wants that gives nothing
      'He doesn't want to give anything to him.'

Since the n-subject (or any other subject for that matter), even without the clause-mate sentential negation, prevents the occurrence of the clitics in the higher clause, we can conclude that the *da*-clause in this case is not a VP. In addition, as pointed out by the indexation in (10c), the clitic that remains in the second position of the lower clause may be bound by the higher subject. According to Binding Principle B, the two pronouns are indeed in two separate clausal domains.

    Adverbs display behaviour that is similar to what we find in (10c), where the clitic interrupts the *da*+V sequence. This shows that *da* is not prefixed to the verb, but has a position inside the functional layer of the VP.

(12) Ne želim   niko   da sada pomogne nikome.
     not want-1sg no one that now helps   no one
     'I don't want anyone to help anyone now.'

In the light of the above evidence, I propose that that the embedded structure with the n-subject is indeed a full-fledged clause, as shown in (13).

(13) a. [$_{CP}$ ne želim   [$_{CP}$ niko   C [$_{TP}$ da   povredi ikoga]]]
              not want-1.sg   no one   that hurts   anyone
            'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'
      b. [$_{CP}$ ne želim   [$_{CP}$ niko   C [$_{TP}$ da   povredi nikoga]]]
              not want-1.sg   no one   that hurts   no one
            'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'

4. The subject/object asymmetry revisited

We can now return to the issue illustrated with the contrast between (8a) and (8b), repeated in (14) below. While the n-object is acceptable in both subjectless clauses and in clauses where the n-subject precedes *da*, n-subjects never follow *da*:

(14)   a. * *Ne želim   da niko   povredi nikoga.*
             not want.1.sɢ that no one hurts   no one
             'I don't want anyone/no one to hurt anyone.'
       b.   *Ne želim   niko   da povredi nikoga.*
             not want.1.sɢ no one that hurts   no one
             'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'

In order to account for the type of movement that reverses the order of what seems to be a complementizer and the subject, I will first briefly outline a similar case of asymmetry in English — the 'that-trace' effect with the wh-subject moved out of the embedded declarative:

(15)   a.   What do you think (that) Bill bought?
       b. * Who do you think that bought the book?
       c.   Who do you think bought the book?

In a GB analysis of the difference in grammaticality between (15a) and (15b), the key to the problem lies in the ECP. The complementizer in (15b) blocks the licensing of the relevant trace after wh-movement operation, which is not the case with the wh-object movement, whose trace is properly governed by the verb (15a).

Pesetsky & Torrego (2001) offer a minimalist account of this phenomenon. They offer a feature-checking analysis of the contrast in (15), proposing that the features of syntactic elements can be uninterpretable in certain positions and interpretable in others. Thus, the special status of the nominative wh-word observed in (15) stems from the special nature of the Nominative case; it is the realisation of an uninterpretable Tense feature that is checked off by the T-head, and can thus serve as the goal of the interpretable T feature probed by C. On this account, the complementizer *that* is the overt reflex of T-to-C movement.

(15) involves the presence of a higher probe (wh-feature). Since both the nominative subject and T^0 can check the uninterpretable Tense feature in C, the principle of Economy will decide in favour of a closer goal (i.e. the subject). Thus, the movement of the wh-subject blocks the movement of T^0. In (15b) it is the movement of T-to-C that is illegitimate (and is identifiable via the occurrence of *that*). In (15a), however, the object, which cannot check the Tense feature on C, is free to check its wh-feature higher up and is compatible with T-to-C movement. Hence, the occurrence of *that* is possible in (15a).

I propose that the same special property of Nominative subjects is responsible for the subject-*da* order in (14b). Another important ingredient of this analysis is the syntactic role of *da*. The claim here is that although it is homophonous with the regular complementizer *da* (which introduces indicative embedded clauses), here *da* is a T-head that marks the lack of a specific temporal interpretation of the embedded clause (present vs. past or future tense). It therefore plays a role similar

to the infinitival marker in other languages.[3] In other words, *da* introduces an independent, underspecified temporal domain in the embedded structure. Both T^0 and the Nominative subject can check the uninterpretable T on C, and it is due to Economy considerations that the movement of the closer goal, i.e. the subject, is the only grammatical option (16) .

(16)   a. $[_{TP}$ $\mathbf{T^0}$ <iT, Neg,uφ>$[_{CP}$ niko <iT,,Neg,iφ>C^0<u̶T̶>$[_{TP}$ $\mathbf{t_{subj}}$ **da** <iT> [VP]]]]

With this in mind, we can address the ungrammaticality of (17). The question here is why the nominative i-word cannot occur preceding *da*.

(17) ** Ne* želim   *iko*   *da*   povredi *nikoga/ ikoga.*
      not want-1.SG anyone that hurts   no one anyone
      'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'

The answer lies in the generalisation in (4), which needs to be refined in order to account for (17). We can restate it in the following terms:

(18)   In a proper semantic (downward-entailing) environment:
       a.   n-words must share the same specific temporal domain with negation
       b.   i-words must occur within a temporal domain independent of negation
            regardless of its specificity

This reformulation captures the fact that the distribution of NPIs in Serbian does not depend only on its structural relation with the negation in the clause, but that it is sensitive to the type of the tense expressed by T in the scope of negation. Thus, of the two T-heads in a complex structure, it is not the closer but the more specific one in terms of interpretation that defines the relevant domain for the licensing of n-words. I-words, on the other hand, are subject to a weaker requirement in that negation has to be high enough regardless of how specific the Tense interpretation is.

    If we assume that the locality conditions for n-word and i-word licensing hold at LF, and that (18b) syntactically translates into c-command relation between T^0 and an i-word (where the i-word is in the scope of T^0), the ungrammaticality of (17) falls out. The moved subject is out of the scope of the embedded T-head and is in direct scope of the higher negation, which violates (18b). Furthermore, the current set of assumptions not only accounts for the acceptablity of (19a), but also for the absence of mutual exclusiveness that is typical of n-words and i-words, as is illustrated in (19c).

(19)   a.   *Ne* želim   *da*   *iko*   povredi *ikoga.*
            not want-1.SG that anyone hurts   anyone
            'I don't want anyone/no one to hurt anyone.'

    b.   *Ne* želim   *niko*   *da*   povredi *ikoga.*
        not want-1. SG no one that hurts   anyone
        'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'
    c.   *Ne* želim   *niko*   *da*   povredi *ikoga/ nikoga.*
        not want-1. SG no one that hurts   anyone no one
        'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'

In all the cases where the subject follows *da*, as in (19a), *da* is a regular comple-
mentizer that introduces a regular, temporally independent clausal domain. It has
a specific temporal interpretation (default present tense to which we will return
in Section 5). The licensing requirements of both subject and object i-words are
therefore satisfied in the scope of the complementizer. In (19b), where *da* is in T,
the i-object is still in the scope of T, and the negation is high enough with respect
to it. Example (19c) shows that this environment satisfies the conditions in (18a)
and (18b), since they make reference to different types of temporal domains, in-
stantiated by the higher and lower T. Therefore both the n-object and i-object in
the embedded clause are grammatical: the n-word shares the same specific tem-
poral domain as the expression of sentential negation (the higher one), while the
i-word is in the scope of a Tense that is syntactically independent of the higher
negation.

5.   Some consequences of the analysis

Let us now consider some of the welcome consequences of the current proposal,
as well as its benefits in comparison with some other approaches to the problem.
The analysis of the subject/object asymmetry in Serbian proposed here correctly
predicts that the movement of any subject (other than an i-subject) of the sub-
junctive-like *da* clause extends the domain of licensing of n-objects. This must
be so, because it is nominative case (or an interpretable T feature) that makes the
n-subject an appropriate goal for C. Any element that can occur as the TP subject
could, on this account, be an equally appropriate goal in the given configuration.
That this is borne out is illustrated in (20); only when the subject precedes the
complementizer is the n-object licit.

  (20) a. *Ne želim   da *Marko* kupi *ništa.*
        not want-1. SG that Marco buys nothing
        'I don't want Marco to buy anything.'
      b. Ne želim   *Marko* da   kupi ništa.
        not want-1. SG Marco that buys nothing
        'I don't want Marco to buy anything.'

This sheds new light on the subjectless embedded structures. In cases where the (overt or non-overt) subject of the matrix subject and the embedded subject have disjoint reference, the omitted lower subject must be in the SpecCP as well, if the object is an n-word. Thus, (19b) is the structure of (19a).

(21) a.   Ne želim   da povrediš nikoga.
           not want-1.SG that hurt-2.SG no one
           'I don't want you to hurt anyone.'
      b.   [ne želim [$_{CP}$ *e* [$_{TP}$ t_e da povrediš nikoga]

Note that this is a desirable result, since on the VP account of the *da*-clause in (21a), the co-occurrence of subjects with disjoint reference remains puzzling.[4]

Also, in the current analysis the n-words do not move to a designated projection (NegP or PolP) to check their uninterpretable neg-feature in order to be licensed, as has been proposed (cf. Progovac 2005, Bošković 2007). The scope analysis presented here allows for the licensing of n-words in-situ, which tackles the long-distance licensing more successfully. Furthermore, any theory which assumes that the licensing of n-words takes place under agreement with an appropriate neg-head (cf. Zeijlstra 2004) would have serious difficulties explaining the long-distance licensing of n-objects in the constructions above.

However, one remaining issue concerns the assumption of multiple syntactic roles for a single lexical unit (*da*). As a reviewer points out, this might be just a stipulation that can be avoided on a different analysis. Nevertheless, the peculiar syntactic behaviour of *da* has been noted before. According to both Stjepanović (2001) and Aljović (2004), *da* can be both a prefix to the verb and a complementizer. In the former case the *da*-verb sequence behaves as the complement of the restructuring verb despite the morphological (*phi*-feature) marking present on the verb-stem. It is not, therefore, implausible that this particle consistently displays overt marking of a kind of underspecification at different functional levels of the verb projection.

6.   More on the temporal properties of *da*-clauses

In the light of the discussion above, it seems appropriate to ask how adequate the term 'subjunctive-like' is for the Serbian construction in question.[5] I indicated in Section 3 that the temporal interpretation of the embedded clause resembles that of the infinitive, both in Serbian and cross-linguistically; that is, the tense interpretation of the embedded structure is dependent on the temporal interpretation of the higher verb. Let us first consider the type of verbs that select this kind of clause. The relevant class of verbs comprises the volitional/influence/command/necessity

verbs (will/want, request, plan, demand, expect, should). Quer (1997) characterizes these as verbs whose lexical semantics involve the notion of causation. We may try to make this notion more precise, and call it 'indirect causation'. This is suggested by sentences of the kind in (22), which contains the verb *plan*:

(22)   He didn't plan for anybody to hurt anybody.

Here the matrix subject appears to play an active role in bringing about the situation described in the embedded clause, although this role is not part of the event of *hurting* itself. This notion of 'indirect' active involvement is exactly what distinguishes the matrix subjects of control verbs from the event *causers/agents* on one hand, and from the subjects of volition or influence verbs on the other. Indirect causation is also what distinguishes the latter type of verbs from other kinds of subjunctive-taking epistemic verbs (such as *believe*). Thus, the type of verbs that select the *da*-clause with specific properties in Serbian is only a sub-category of the subjunctive-selecting verbs. This relates the *da*-clauses to the intensional subjunctive clauses (cf. Stowell 1993, Quer 1997) in Romance.

   The specific semantic relation between the higher verb in question and the embedded structure seems to be systematically correlated with the specific temporal organisation of the clause, i.e. the temporal relation between the tense of the matrix verb and the embedded verb. In Serbian, which does not encode subjunctive mood morphologically on the verb itself, tense marking in embedded clauses is restricted to indicative present tense. What constrains the choice of tense in the case of Serbian is not the *posteriority* relation between the matrix and the embedded verb (cf. Quer 1997 for the choice of embedded subjunctive in Catalan), since, as (24) shows, the future tense is excluded as well.

(24) *Ne želim   niko   da neće   povrediti nikoga.
      not want-1.sg no one that not.aux-3.sg hurt   no one
      'I don't want anyone to hurt anyone.'

Since Serbian does not have the choice of a morphological subjunctive, I conclude that it signals the temporal dependence relation between the higher and the lower verb through a stricter constraint on the choice of tense — a default present. The interpretation of the lower clause is not that of the 'actual present', but is rather determined by the temporal perspective/frame of the higher verb. The transparent 'subjunctive-like' clauses, however, are an instance of an even more underspecified temporal domain. I referred to the latter type as 'non-specific tense' in Section 4. In terms of the overall interpretation, the two types of structures do not differ in terms of their surface word order, but they do differ in structural terms:

(25) a. $[_{TP}\ T^0\ [_{CP}\ \text{subj}\ C^0\ [_{TP}\ \text{da}\ [_{VP}\ V\ ]]]]$ non-specific T
      b. $[_{TP}\ T^0\ [_{CP}\ \text{da}\ [_{TP}\ \text{subj}\ [_{VP}\ V\ ]]]]$ default present tense

7.   Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to offer a plausible syntactic interpretation of the set of data in (8). In the light of the evidence presented here for treating the *da*-clauses that feature n-subjects as full-fledged clauses, it is clear that the locality of n-word licensing in Serbian by sentential negation needs revision. I have proposed that the structure of so-called 'subjunctive-like' clauses can be restructuring environments, but also full CPs with special temporal properties. It is the movement of the subject to the specifier position of the embedded CP that checks off the uninterpretable T-feature on C^0 and creates the proper environment for the licensing of n-words in the lower clause.

Notes

1. In their discussion of the Polish *kolwiek*-pronouns and Russian *libo*-series Błaszczak (2003) and Pereltsvaig (2004) assume that their analysis of the mutual exclusiveness of these NPIs with the ni-series extends to the i-series in Serbian. This, however, is not the case since Serbian i-words do not allow for free-choice readings. The comparable pronominal class in Serbian would be *bilo*-words, which are not discussed in this paper.

2. The somewhat degraded status of the i-object in (5) becomes perfectly acceptable if the object precedes the verb. Though interesting, this effect is beyond the scope of the present discussion, and it will not be directly relevant to the line of argumentation here.

3. Interestingly, this type of *da*-clause is in free variation with the embedded infinitive in Serbian as well.

4. An anonymous reviewer points out that although the movement of the subject does not seem to be triggered by the neg-feature, it might still be the case that there is some other motivation for movement to the Spec of CP (e.g. topicalisation or focus), which incorporates the lower clause into the higher. However, this does not seem to be the case, since the observed transparency effects do not show up in the complements of regular, indicative-taking verbs, where such movement is possible.

5. The term 'subjunctive-like' is taken from Progovac (1994).

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