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## DOES SERBIAN HAVE THREE DEMONSTRATIVES?\*

In this paper we investigate three words in Serbian: *ovaj*, *onaj*, *taj*, commonly distinguished as demonstratives. The main thesis of the paper is that this view should be questioned in terms both of empirical data and as a matter of theory. Through our analysis we show that the form *taj* has some semantic characteristics of the definite article. Our hypothesis is tested with specific tasks designated for the native speakers of Serbian.

*Key words*: demonstratives, definite article, semantics, pragmatics, Serbian.

У овом раду проучавамо три речи у српском језику: *овај*, *онај*, *тај*, које се традиционално у граматицима сматрају показним придевима. Главна теза овог истраживања је да овај став треба теоријски и емпиријски испитати и проверити. Захваљујући нашим анализама указујемо на то да облик *тај* има семантичке одлике одређеног члана. Нашу хипотезу тестирамо специјалним упитницима намењеним изворним говорницима српског језика.

*Кључне речи*: показни придеви, одређени члан, семантика, прагматика, српски.

**1. INTRODUCTION.** A common view of the triplet *ovaj*, *taj*, *onaj* in Serbian is that these forms are demonstratives and are distinguished as follows: “The three demonstratives *ovaj*, *taj*, *onaj* refer respectively to things near the speaker (‘this’), near the hearer (‘this’, ‘that’) and further from both (‘that over there’)” (BROWN – ALT 2004: 80).

In addition scholars assert that each form has specific uses. *Onaj* is also for recalling something from a previous situation. *Taj* is for things already under discussion, *ovaj* for things about to be mentioned, and *onaj* for items to be made precise by a relative clause or for items already mentioned (BROWN – ALT 2004: 81). But most discussions take for granted that the three forms are demonstratives respectively reflecting the three grammatical persons.

The main thesis of the paper is that this view should be questioned in terms both of empirical data and as a matter of theory. First, the claim that these three forms are demonstratives should not be taken for granted. There is no morphological basis supporting their classification as demonstratives, even if Serbian linguists can support their claim that each form is morphologically associated with a grammatical person: *ov-*, *t-* and *on-* do indicate in Serbian morphology, respectively first, second and third person. This is also illustrated by the spatial deictic adverbial expressions in Serbian: *ovde* means *here* (the space related to *I*), *tu* means *there* (should refer to *you* but as we will show later, it functions more as a definite expression) and *onde* means *over there* (and is related to *he/she*).

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But morphology is not a strong guide for predicting the semantico-pragmatic properties of expressions,<sup>1</sup> and it is preferable to examine in what respect the three forms deserve the label “demonstratives”, and in what respect associating them with each grammatical person can predict, or not, the way they are used in contemporary Serbian.

The study has to be grounded on a careful survey of empirical data and by adopting a well-defined theory of what counts precisely for taking an NP as a demonstrative. Therefore, we will first provide a working semantico-pragmatic theory of demonstrativeness based on well-defined criteria and then test this theory against each of the Serbian forms under consideration.

Our major challenge, then, will concern *taj* – the genuine demonstrative nature of which can be seriously questioned. Our main hypothesis is that *taj* does not have all the characteristic properties of demonstrative NPs, but shares some crucial properties with definite NPs.

We give substance to this claim by providing a set of criteria sufficiently precise enough to distinguish definite NPs from demonstrative NPs. Since *taj* is morphologically related to the second person, a hypothesis that we explore is whether *taj* might be analyzed as some form of possessive NP (roughly speaking, *taj N* = “the N of you”). We will test this assumption and conclude that there are so few contexts which allow a possessive reading for *taj*, that such an analysis should be abandoned.

Our last word about *taj* is that it is best analyzed as a special variety of definiteness. Definiteness “tout court”, realized in Serbian by the bare form of the noun, is completely open as to the domain of objects within which the associated noun isolates a single entity: it might be a visible situation, a universe set up by the ongoing discourse, etc. *Taj*, in contrast, imposes that the relevant domain be found by association with the second person of the discourse. It might be characterized, so to speak, as a definite “orienting” the selection of the relevant set for picking up one and only one entity from a set of entities anchored on the interlocutor. We will try to show that this assumption accounts for the restrictions governing the distribution of *taj*.

**2. OVAJ, TAJ, ONAJ IN SERBIAN GRAMMARS.** The dominant picture takes for granted that these forms are demonstrative without discussing the point *per se*, and what this picture lies on is a deictic view of different subspecies of demonstratives. Roughly speaking, different kinds of demonstratives contrast on the basis of the relative position of the speaker and hearer w.r.t. the spatial situation of their referent.

Stevanović (1986: 289) claims that *ovaj* refers to the position of the speaker, *taj* to the vicinity of the hearer (the space of the second person) and *onaj* is used for absent persons or objects or for those who are far from both the speaker and the hearer.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, it has been shown (CORBLIN – AŠIĆ 2016) that the Serbian spatial adverb *tu*, morphologically related to the second person, behaves like a definite NP. We will develop in the present paper an approach to *taj* based on empirical data confirming the view that when one takes the morpheme *-* as a marker of definiteness, one predicts its usage more correctly than when one takes it as an expression related to the second person.

Belić (2000: 157) says that demonstrative pronouns define objects and persons according to their positions or refer to known objects. *Ovaj* is used for the nearest objects or for what will take place in the immediate future. *Taj* is used for the persons and objects more distant or for absent entities we are talking about: *To su bili valjani ljudi!* ('Those were honest people'). Finally, *onaj* is used for the most distant entity. Belić also notes that when we refer to an unknown person (in a sense the most distant one) we use *onaj*, which can be omitted: (*Onaj*) *ko drugome jamu kopa sam u nju pada.* ('The one who digs a hole for someone else falls into it').

In their *Grammar of Serbian for Foreigners*, Mrazović and Vukadinović (2009: 290–291) state that demonstrative determiners are grouped on the basis that they refer to somebody or something: a) in space: *ovaj* close to the 1<sup>st</sup> person, *taj* further from the 1<sup>st</sup> person, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person's space, *onaj* is more distant to the 1<sup>st</sup> person; b) in time: *ovaj* denotes the present moment or the close past or future: *Ove nedelje radim pre podne.* ('This week I work in the morning'). *Ovaj slobodan vikend provešću kod kuće.* ('This free weekend I'll spend at home'). *Ovo neću moći nikada zaboraviti.* ('I could never forget this'). As for *onaj*, it denotes the moment which is distant from the present, the remote past: *Sećaš li se onog dana kad smo se sreli* ('Do you remember that day when we met?'). For all the other cases we use *taj*: *Taj dan neću nikada zaboraviti* ('I will never forget that day'). *Ne mogu da dočekam taj dan* ('I cannot wait for that day to come').

Silić and Pranjković in their grammar of Croatian<sup>2</sup> (2000: 126) say that demonstrative pronouns denote persons, objects, qualities and phenomena: *Ovaj* denotes what is near I. *Taj* denotes what is near you. *Onaj* denotes what is near him (her).

Finally, Klajn (1985) in his seminal work on pronouns in different languages explains that Serbian belongs to the class of languages that have a tripartite system of demonstrative pronouns (Celtic, Ancient Greek, Latin, Old Church Slavonic, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and many non-Indo-European languages). He claims that in contrast to Spanish, in which this system is based on the category of distance,<sup>3</sup> the Serbian system of pronouns is based on the three persons. As a proof, he describes the following situation: the hearer is seated behind the speaker, who is a bus driver. The bus is situated in front of the red light which is ten meters away. The driver wants to say that the red light is often out of service. A Spanish speaker would use the demonstrative *ese* (equivalent to Serbian *taj*) for, the chosen criterion would be the distance of the red light and not the position of his listener. In Serbian the driver would use the form *ovaj* because the zone of *taj* belongs to the listener. The situation in which he would use *taj* would be when he is talking to a man who is fixing the red light; he would then say: *Majstore, šta se dešava s TIM semaforom?* ('Hey man, what's happening with that red light?').

<sup>2</sup> The reason for which we are quoting a grammar of Croatian is the following: we consider that linguistically, there is no significant difference between Serbian and Croatian, that, in fact we are talking about one single language (*Serbo-Croatian*). The reasons of the existence of four different languages are purely political and have already been discussed in many sociolinguistic papers.

<sup>3</sup> *Este* is the closest to the speaker and *ese* a little further away from him, *aqueel* is the most remote.

### 3. ARE *OVAJ*, *TAJ* AND *ONAJ* DEMONSTRATIVES?

3.1. WHAT IS A DEMONSTRATIVE NP? Demonstratives share with definites that the referent is supposed to be identifiable by the hearer (LYONS 1999). A definite NP + *def N* is used when you can identify a particular N from the context of the discourse because the context provides a set of entities recognized as the most relevant for the ongoing discourse, within which there is one and only one N.

A demonstrative NP + *def N* is used when you must identify a particular entity by relying on the specific action of the speaker pointing towards an entity, what Kaplan (1989a) calls a *demonstration*. The description N will help you (if present) to find the intended entity.

Demonstratives are often grouped with deictic expressions, i.e. expressions whose function is to denote entities by relation to the context (like tense and grammatical persons). Grammatical persons and tense markers are clear cases of deictic expressions because they cannot be used to refer to anything other than entities which are uniquely (without any ambiguity, or choice) selected by their utterance of these expressions. It is impossible to consider demonstratives as expressions falling straight forwardly within the concept of “deictic expressions” so-defined, because to know by who, when and where it was used does not uniquely select the intended referent of a demonstrative expression. The common and intuitive core property of demonstratives is that they need to be accompanied by a specific action, playing a crucial role for finding/choosing their intended referent. Thus, grouping demonstratives with deictic expressions is not very convincing, in particular because of the basic fact that the referent of a demonstrative is targeted by the accompanying demonstration, and not by the mere utterance itself.

But, the existence of more than one demonstrative in a given language is the main reason for readopting a deictic theory of demonstratives. Of course, if an expression is a demonstrative, there is no way for it to refuse to denote what is properly the target of the demonstration, but a given language may provide different forms of demonstratives for different spatial areas accessible for both speakers. For instance, a given form of demonstrative may be *proximal*, i.e. preferred for what is close to me (or to us), and another one *distal*, i.e. preferred for what is not close to me. As pointed out by Lyons (1999: 18), it is possible to relate this distinction to the category of person.

In languages with two demonstratives, the basic deictic theory (proximal/distal) and the personal deictic theory (close to me/close to you) can be easily superposed: what is not close to me, but nevertheless close enough to us to be accessible is likely to be close to you, or closer to you than to me. It is difficult to reject any relevance of relative proximity in the way speakers use one or the other demonstrative, when there are two demonstratives, but it is notoriously difficult to establish that their respective use is governed by strong rules based on the relative proximity of referents. The speaker is often free to choose either of them for a given referent (cf. French *celui-ci/celui-là*), which means, at least, that the contrast close/not close cannot make definite predictions of use in many simple cases.

If a language has three demonstratives, the seduction of a person-based deictic system is even stronger, because it is tempting to think that the three grammatical persons form the basis of the distinction of three demonstratives, and *a fortiori*

when morphology, as in Serbian, supports this view. Most grammatical descriptions of Serbian, of which we are aware, take for granted:<sup>4</sup>

1. that Serbian has three demonstratives; and
2. that the distribution of Serbian demonstratives is best described by connecting each of the three demonstratives to grammatical persons (see above §1).

In this paper we would like to discuss both assumptions, from both an empirical and a theoretical point of view. Our questions for starting this discussion are:

1. Are *ovaj*, *taj* and *onaj* demonstratives?
2. Are the respective distributions of *ovaj*, *taj* and *onaj* best explained by relating each of them to a grammatical person, or by some other theory?

First, it is important to have a precise definition of demonstratives, and then decide whether these three forms fall under this category. Of course, no definition of what is a genuine demonstrative is uncontroversial; what we try to do is to list some properties of what are called demonstratives in the languages we are aware of, and especially the characteristic properties which lead one to classify an NP as a demonstrative, as opposed to a definite NP. Our main ambition is to be precise enough to provide operational criteria, and to offer the means for discussing our own choices.

3.2. SPECIFIC PROPERTIES OF DEMONSTRATIVES (AS OPPOSED TO DEFINITES). What makes a NP demonstrative is the fact that its referent must be provided by an accompanying demonstration (KAPLAN 1989a) i.e. a dedicated concomitant action of the speaker targeting the referent in a context accessible to both speakers. We would like to emphasize here that, in this paper we are talking exclusively about *adnominal demonstratives*,<sup>5</sup> in other words, about the demonstratives that accompany coreferential nouns (DIESEL 1999).

This criterion must be used cautiously because in addition to clear cases in which the speaker points with her/his finger to an entity, there are many cases, even for visible entities, in which some event or some peculiarity of the visual scene may dispense with the need for an actual demonstration, because the event or scene already puts the focus on a given entity. Note that such situations concern only visible referents for which a real demonstration could have been used as well and might have been used, if there were any doubt that the hearer might misinterpret the speaker's intention.

This is the main property that clearly distinguishes a demonstrative from a definite NP. Definite NPs can be used for referring to a specific entity which is not, and possibly cannot be, targeted by means of a demonstration. Let us consider a scene with two burglars talking about the possible danger represented by the presence of a dog in the house:

- 1) – Did you manage to be unnoticed by the dog. (#this dog)
- But there is no dog, I am sure.

Since the dog belongs here to the realm of virtual it is not possible to use a demonstrative.

<sup>4</sup> We are intentionally repeating here our position.

<sup>5</sup> Note that there are also pronominal pronouns such as *celui* in French, *pronominal demonstratives*, which substitute for a noun (phrase).

The criterion must also be adapted in order to deal with referents, which are not visible and present, but which are introduced into the conversation by means of a previous mention, and to deal with written texts. If one sticks to the basic notion of demonstration as an accompanying *action*, supplementing the utterance and pointing to the referent, there is no possible demonstration in such discourse situations. But it can be observed, nevertheless, that demonstratives can be used for referents in such situations. We have thus either to speak of non-demonstrative uses of demonstrative, or to consider that mention of entities can count as a demonstration, putting the referents in focus, and making them accessible for demonstrative reference. We think that the second option is worth exploring. It comes with interesting restrictions. If we consider a mention as a potential demonstration, we may recall that a demonstration should be *concomitant* with the utterance of a demonstrative NP, or at least be very close. This predicts that a mere mention can count as a demonstration within its immediate vicinity, and no more, and that a demonstrative NP can only refer to the referent of a very close previous mention.

There is a third case to take into consideration. There are some uses of demonstrative NPs, sometimes called “*démonstratifs de notoriété*” in the French grammatical tradition (WILMET 1979). Their common property is that no explicit mention of the referent is made in the immediate previous context; nevertheless, the referent must be famous, at least well-known to both speakers, and with a high probability that it will be a discourse topic. For instance, suppose I know you have just taken a holiday in Greece last week. I can ask you:

2) And that holiday in Greece, how was it?

Or, if X is a great football player who performed extremely well in his previous match, then provided we are both football fans, I can say to you out of the blue, at our next meeting:

3) This X is really the best.

Again, one can think of this as a special use, not a demonstrative one, but we choose to see it just as a special discourse situation generating a focus on a well-known referent and proposing it as a discourse topic; in a comparable way, a concrete demonstration picks up an object and proposes it as the next target for a referential expression. Very often, notoriety demonstratives are accompanied by a description conveyed by a relative clause, which helps to secure the identity of the intended referent:

4) Do you remember that guy we met yesterday in the bar, with a very strange hat?

Another property distinguishing demonstrative NPs headed by a noun from corresponding definite NPs, is that demonstratives can be used for contrasting the particular N referred to, with another (or other) existing Ns, what is called “*contraste interne*” in CORBLIN 1987. For instance, we can say:

5a) This dog is stronger than the others.

6a) I don't like dogs, in general, but this dog is super.

In such contexts, we refer to a particular dog, and contrast it with other dogs, and to use a demonstrative for the particular dog is standard. This is something which is not natural for definite NPs:



- 5b) ? The dog is stronger than the other dogs.  
6b) ? I don't like dogs, in general, but the dog is super.

A rough justification is that one can use a + *definite N*, only in discourse contexts in which one and only one N is under discussion, and that demonstrative NPs are immune to this constraint.

An important contrast between a demonstrative NP and a definite NP, as mentioned above, is that a definite NP has associative or bridging interpretations, which do not exist for a demonstrative NP. For instance, definite NPs can be natural in contexts where there is no previous mention or identification of their referent. They can even be used for asserting that a given description has no referent:

- 7) The head (of the statue) is missing.  
8) The king of France does not exist.

On the contrary, for a demonstrative NP to be accepted, its referent must have been previously identified, by an explicit mention, or by pointing, which implies that the referent has to be an existing entity.

Definite NPs also have weak interpretations (POESIO 1994; CORBLIN 2013; AGUILAR-GUEVARA et al. 2014; AŠIĆ – CORBLIN 2014), which are not allowed for demonstrative NPs:

- 9) When I take the train, I am happy.  
10) I went to the bank before coming.

In the weak interpretation, the speaker has no specific object in mind, but refers to taking trains in general, or using the bank as a general concept without identifying any particular bank. This is not possible for demonstrative NPs, which, in the same contexts, would denote specific entities to which the speaker is pointing:

- 11) When I take this train, I am happy.  
12) I went to this bank before coming

3.3. ARE *OVAJ*, *TAJ* AND *ONAJ* DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVES? Although they are often so classified, there is no morphological argument supporting the view that these forms are demonstratives.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the reason why they are so classified should be based on their semantics, and we need to examine whether they fully share the properties we take as necessary conditions for being properly called “demonstratives”.

3.3.1. CONTRASTING ITS REFERENT N TO OTHER NS. A typical use of demonstratives is to denote an entity isolated by an explicit pointing, especially when the speaker wants to denote a particular entity, as opposed to other entities of the same kind.

What is the choice of speakers in Serbian when facing such a discourse situation? As a rule, it seems that once an explicit demonstration has been made isolating an entity they would use *ovaj* or *onaj*, and the closer the object is to the speaker, the more *ovaj* is preferred to *onaj*. Using *taj* does not seem to be natural,

<sup>6</sup> As one of the reviewers of our paper notes, this position has to be explained and justified in a more detailed way and from a diachronic perspective. However, since we cannot infinitesimally prolong this work, we are obliged to leave this very relevant, important and interesting issue to our future papers on demonstratives.

whatever the proximity of the referent to the hearer, just because *taj* is not a good choice when the referent has to be picked among other referents of the same sort.

Let us consider a test for confirmation. We have given this test to a group of native speakers of Serbian, the students of the Philological Faculty in Belgrade and students of the Faculty of Philology and Arts in Kragujevac.<sup>7</sup>

Suppose photographs of men are displayed on the wall in front of a victim of an aggression and she/he has to say if she/he recognizes any of them. If the speaker (the victim) points to a picture close in front of him/her, the standard choice is *ovaj*, and if the picture is further away, the preferred form is *onaj*. Our findings show that in this context of discourse, following a demonstration, *taj* cannot be used, and would be considered a mistake.

This is so, in our view, because *taj* is improper when it comes to choosing its referent between several entities of the same sort.

In order to check our intuition we have constructed a test for students (all native speakers of Serbian) in which they had to point to an object among several and name it. If the object was close to them they used *ovaj*, and if the object was further away they used *onaj*. None of them used the form *taj*.

In order to confirm this intuition, we surveyed the translation database *Glosbe*,<sup>8</sup> looking at the Serbian translations of English demonstrative NPs in discourse contexts in which two Ns are contrasted, the Demonstrative NP referent, and another N, as exemplified in (13):

13) And then this guy came out and chased him away... and this other guy started shooting at him.

Our observation is that *ovaj* is massively used, and that *taj* is almost absent in such discourse contexts:

‘A onda je naišao ovaj momak i oterao ga... a onda je ovaj drugi momak počeo da puca na njega.’ (Translation found in *Glosbe* for (13)).

14) Have you seen this guy with this guy? ‘Jeste li vidjeli ovog momka s ovim tipom?’ (Translation found in *Glosbe* for (14)).

15) Sheppard, I wouldn’t leave this guy with that guy right now, not unless you wanted this guy dead.

‘Šeparde, ne bih baš ostavio ovog tipa sa tim tipom sada, osim ako želiš ovog tipa mrtvog.’ (Translation found in *Glosbe* for (15)).

16) And then this guy came out and chased him away... and this other guy started shooting at him, see.

‘A onda je naišao ovaj momak i oterao ga... a onda je ovaj drugi momak počeo da puca na njega.’ (Translation found in *Glosbe* for (16)).

This leads one to think that if *ovaj/onaj* behave respectively as a proximal and a distal demonstrative, one may come to question the genuine demonstrative

<sup>7</sup> This footnote is extremely important: our reviewers told us that the number of students who participated in the test should be enlarged. However, since both Faculties in which one of the authors of this paper works are not actually working with students, we are unable to do this (this is due to the Faculty Dean’s decision related to corona confinement and dangers).

<sup>8</sup> *Glosbe* is a multilanguage on-line parallel corpora <<https://fr.glosbe.com/>>. One of our reviewers said that *Glosbe* is not a reliable source of information, since anyone can put any kind of translation into it, but we are using it, because one of the authors of this paper is a native speaker of Serbian and can judge whether a sentence is natural/acceptable or not.



status of *taj*, since its use is not natural in the typical context in which a demonstrative is used, i.e. accompanied by a demonstration, or for isolating one entity from other entities of the same kind as a new discourse topic.

3.3.2. ANAPHORIC USES. As already said, demonstratives can be interpreted as referring back to a referent previously mentioned in the discourse, although the referent is not present in the visible context, and although no genuine demonstration has been made towards this referent.

The three Serbian forms under consideration can be anaphoric although there are clear differences between them.

*Taj* is the preferred form for anaphoric reference to a previous close mention, except in contexts in which the discourse has to select an N from a set of recently introduced Ns (see above).

Let's take an example: if we are introducing a new referent and if our hearer asks a question about it, the typical form he/she would use is *taj*:

17) Bio jednom jedan kralj. 'Once upon a time there was a king.'  
Da li je *taj* kralj imao dece? 'Did that king have children?'

*Onaj* cannot be used for a recently introduced entity, a context typical for demonstratives in other languages.

18) Bio jednom jedan kralj. 'Once upon a time there was a king.'  
Da li je *onaj* kralj imao dece? 'Did that king have children?'

This confirms that *onaj* is a distal demonstrative (in a strong sense), i.e. a demonstrative not looking for its referent in the close context (spatial proximity for visible objects, and close previous mentions in its anaphoric use).

*Ovaj* can be used as an anaphor to a close previous mention, although some special reason is required to prefer it to *taj*. Most often, *ovaj* is used in order to insist on the singularity of the particular referent N as opposed to other Ns.

Consider for illustration (19):

19) Bio jednom jedan kralj. 'Ovaj kralj je bio mnogo strašniji od drugih kraljeva.'  
Once upon a time there was a king. 'This king was much more horrible than other kings.'

In (19), it is impossible to use the bare noun instead of *ovaj kralj* (this king), and less natural to use *taj kralj*. This context is also one in which a definite article is not the preferred form in languages having a lexical marking of definiteness (e.g. French and English). In other words, *taj* patterns with *definites*: although typical for a recently established discourse entity, it is not preferred if the host sentence is used for contrasting an entity N to other entities of the same category N.

Some other examples confirm this observation. When Serbian speakers refer to something out of the blue, *ovaj* is the required form<sup>9</sup> in (20) and *taj* is less natural.

20) Da li ste upoznali Jovana? Ovaj pastir je mnogo pametniji od drugih pastira u selu. 'Did you meet John? This shepherd is much cleverer than the other shepherds in the village.'

<sup>9</sup> One of our reviewers thinks, as a native speaker of Serbian, that in this example it would be more appropriate to use *taj*.

21) U bašti je bila jedna mačka. Ja generalno ne volim mačke ali ova mačka je bila zaista neverovatna. 'There was a cat in the garden. In general, I do not like cats, but this cat was really extraordinary.'

As a conclusion, we can state that *ovaj* and *onaj* behave in anaphoric chains of reference as genuine demonstratives: they can be used at certain specific points of these chains (for instance for introducing a new chain), and for contrasting their referent to other entities of the same kind.

The opposition between a proximal form (*ovaj*) and a distal form (*onaj*) operates as well for anaphora: *ovaj* is typical for close previous mentions, and *ovaj* is not preferred for such mentions.

A distinctive property of definite NPs is that they can be freely repeated, in place of pronouns, in long chains, for entities with no proper name. In this respect, our observation is that *taj* is in-between bare nouns (the basic form of definiteness in Serbian) which are the unmarked form for repeated references to a well-established entity, and a demonstrative like *ovaj* which is unusual for such purposes.

Actually, in Serbian it is typical to repeat the introduced (known) entity by means of a bare noun, as in fairy tales (see 22) but it is also possible to have the so-called demonstrative *taj* (23), especially in familiar conversation:

22) Bio jednom jedan car i imao jednu kćer. Jednoga dana kćer otide kod oca i reče mu da želi da se uda. Otac odgovori kćeri da sačeka još koju godinu.

'Once upon a time there was an emperor who had a daughter. One day the daughter went to her father and told him that she wanted to get married. The father replied to the daughter that she should wait for a couple of years.'

23) Na terenu se pojavio jedan novi igrač. Taj igrač se čudno ponašao. Sudija je pokušao da izbací tog igrača.

'A new player appeared on the field. That player was behaving in a strange way. The referee tried to get him away.'

In 23) the speaker put an emphasis on the player in question.

3.3.3. NOTORIETY DEMONSTRATIVES. The typical Serbian form which can be used as a notoriety demonstrative (see above §3.2) is *onaj*. It is possible to say to a good friend or a colleague, out of the blue:

24) Da li se sećaš one studentkinje koja je imala psa? 'Do you remember that student who had a dog?'

25) Da li si video onu ženu sa velikim šeširom? 'Did you see that woman with a big hat?'

*Onaj* will be easily accepted if the considered entity belongs to our shared knowledge as a very well-known and salient entity, and if it is likely that we will refer to this entity in the on-going conversation: for instance, we discussed many times before this particular student, who looked mysterious to us, or the woman with a big hat was a prominent figure in the market place for years.

If there is no mention of the entity in the previous discourse, *ovaj* cannot be used. This is a confirmation of our view of *ovaj* as a genuine proximal demonstrative. In the same situation, *taj* would be odd, in our view, because the entity is not an already established topic of the discourse.

The standard Serbian zero definite can be used any time the following description is precise enough to pick out a single entity, but it will lose the notoriety effect created by the demonstrative *onaj*.

28) Juče sam video studentkinju koja se bavi demonstrativima. ‘Yesterday I saw the student who is working on demonstratives.’

From this quick survey of the typical uses of each form of the triplet *ovaj*, *taj*, *onaj*, we are inclined to suggest that *ovaj* and *onaj* are without doubt demonstratives, respectively proximal and distal.

In contrast, it is more difficult to claim that *taj* is a genuine demonstrative. In particular, it lacks the capacity to contrast its referent N to other Ns, typical of demonstrative NPs. This incapacity perhaps enlightens some other properties which makes *taj* close to definite NPs, for instance its typical use for already established topics of conversation.

4. IS *TAJ* A DEFINITE? It might be true that when compared to typical uses of demonstratives (reference to a recently identified entity by means of a demonstration), *taj* seems to share more features with definites than with genuine demonstratives, but there are a number of obstacles to it being considered as a full definite.

First of all, there is a standard form of definiteness in Serbian, realized by a bare noun, which has the full set of properties that distinguish definites from demonstratives, namely associative or bridging references, the so-called “weak” uses, and “cataphoric” definites.

Here are some basic examples:

a) Bridging: Stigli su u selo. Crkva je bila u centru. ‘They arrived in the village. The church was in the centre.’

b) Weak definites: Moj sin ide autobusom u školu. ‘My son takes the bus to school.’

c) Cataphoric definites: Najbolji košarkaški igrač na svetu. ‘The best basketball player in the world.’

4.1. IS *TAJ* USED FOR ASSOCIATIVE OR BRIDGING REFERENCES? Associative, or “bridging” references, are cases in which a specific entity is referred to, although it is neither known nor previously mentioned, because its existence and unicity is predictable on the basis of frames, or scripts. For instance, if a discourse mentions a violinist, the NP *the violin* can be used for referring to the violin of this violinist. It is often used for typical parts of an object: e.g. for a circle, the centre, the diameter, etc.

Associative or bridging references are realized in Serbian by bare definites.

27) Posetili su selo. Crkva se nalazila u centru. ‘They visited the village. The church was situated in the centre.’

28) To je lepa statua samo joj nedostaje glava. ‘It is a beautiful statue but its head is missing.’

29) Ušli su u zgradu. Lift je bio u kvaru. ‘They entered the building. The lift was out of service.’

In general *taj* cannot be used in these cases:

30?) Posetili su selo. \*Ta crkva se nalazila u centru.

31?) To je lepa statua samo toj statui nedostaje glava.<sup>10</sup>

32?) Ušli su u zgradu. \*Taj lift je bio u kvaru.

<sup>10</sup> Note that *Toj statui nedostaje glava* is a possible sentence in Serbian when we are talking about an already introduced statue. However if we are standing a front of the statue it is not convenient to use *taj*.

But a closer inspection reveals that *taj* has some uses for which a genuine demonstrative is not licensed, and which look like a special case of bridging reference. Consider the following English sentence:

33) Each time I play tennis with him, I lose the match. ‘Svaki put kad igram tenis sa njim, izgubim taj meč.’

It is impossible in English to replace *the match* by *this match*, and it may seem rather uncontroversial to take this use as a case of bridging.

In Serbian, *taj* patterns in this context with bare definites (referring to each particular occasion a match is played), and no form of genuine demonstrative (*ovaj, onaj*) is licensed. Here are some other examples by way of confirmation:

34) Kad se Marija naljuti na Petra, onda ta diskusija bude žešća. ‘When Mary gets angry with Peter, then the discussion becomes heated.’

35) Kad god Petar ugleda Mariju taj susret uvek bude eksplozivan. ‘Whenever Peter sees Mary the encounter is always explosive.’

36) Kad odemo u Pariz, taj boravak će biti nezaboravan. ‘When we go to Paris, the journey will be unforgettable.’

But *taj* has only few bridging uses in Serbian, as illustrated in the following table, which provides a quick survey of bridging references in Serbian.

Table 1. *Taj* and bridging references

		<i>taj</i>	Bare definite
A car	the steering wheel	*	+
I get nervous	the result	+	+
They stop	the place	+?	+
A project	the objective	*	+
A book	the conclusion	*	+
An episode	the next one	*	+
A law	the advantages	*	+

To conclude, we claim that *taj* does have at least *some* associative or bridging references, which makes it difficult to classify it as a demonstrative since demonstratives are typically unable to be so used. But we have to concede that these uses are rather rare.

Our suggestion, derived from the data, is that for core associative uses, namely for strong lexical relations (part/whole for instance), only the zero definite of Serbian can be used, but for weaker relations (e.g. we play/the match), and especially in quantificational sentences, *taj* can have access to associative uses, which implies, on our view that *taj* cannot be analyzed as a genuine demonstrative.

4.2. DOES *TAJ* HAVE WEAK INTERPRETATIONS? Generally, Serbian linguists claim that the three static spatial adverbs of Serbian (*ovde, tu, tamo*) are all deictic particles, each of them being linked to the three grammatical persons (PIPER 1988).

However, in a previous paper (CORBLIN – AŠIĆ 2016) we have shown that the essential semantic nature of *ovde* and *tu* is totally different.

Our hypothesis is that *ovde* is a deictic expression; it forms, together with *ja* ('I') and *sada* ('now') a triplet corresponding to *I, here and now*. Deictic expressions, especially expressions denoting space, can also have demonstrative uses, which means that they can be used with a concomitant ostension towards some entity of the discourse space. Without an associated demonstration *ovde* denotes the space of the conversation, without precise delimitation. With a demonstration, *ovde* denotes a sub-region of the discourse space identified by the demonstration.

On the other hand, we provide arguments establishing that *tu* behaves not like a deictic having demonstrative uses, like *ovde*, but more like a definite expression.

First, *tu* is the natural form in Serbian for anaphoric uses, referring back to the place mentioned in the previous linguistic context:

37) Pol je u Parizu i tu će potražiti tvoju knjigu. 'Paul is in Paris and he will look for your book right there.'

Here *ovde* would not be possible, for *ovde* always denotes the speaker's position. Second, *tu* can denote a place defined by relation to some participant to the conversation:

38) Hoćeš tu da spavaš? 'Are you going to sleep here/there tonight?'

In 38) *tu* needs a contextual anchor. In other words, it denotes a place that has been cognitively activated in a particular conversational context. *Tu* can refer either to the speaker's or hearer's place. If the activated space is the speaker's space, then we can replace *tu* with *ovde*.

Third, *tu* can be used in quantificational sentences, for denoting places identified within the scope of a quantifier.

39) Kada se Dušan igrao negde, Tijana je uvek gledala da bude tu. 'Whenever Dušan was playing somewhere, Tijana did her best to be there.'

It is important to emphasize that in this kind of example *tu* can be replaced by *na tom mestu* ('in that place'). In this kind of example, *tu* and *na tom mestu* (a form of *taj*) are interpreted as bound variables, something which is impossible for any other form of demonstratives under discussion in this paper.

40) Kad jedan čovek voli neki predmet on ne voli da mu uzmu \*ovaj predmet. 'When a man likes an object he doesn't like this object to be taken from him.'

We have also established that there are *weak uses* of *tu*, which in most approaches would imply that it is a definite. Consider the following case, in which the speaker utters the sentence (41) without being located in the same place as the director (the sentence subject):

41) Direktor je danas tu; možete da dođete. 'The director is there today, you may come to see him.'

Obviously, the adverb *tu* in this example does not refer to the hearer's place. In addition, there is no contextual clue from which it could obtain its reference. The most natural interpretation of the sentence is that the director is present in his working place. Therefore, the meaning of *tu* is a result of a very particular inferential process based on the activation of some properties of the noun that

serves as a sentence subject: there is a typical place in which the director executes his function.

The particularity of this kind of sentence is that no contextual factor plays any role in the interpretation of the adverb *tu*. It is a result of the interaction between the meanings of the sentential elements: the lexical structure of the subject and the semantic neutrality of the verb *to be*<sup>11</sup>. The structure is almost idiomatic for it works only with certain types of nouns and with the verb *to be*. To sum up, the meaning of *biti tu* can be glossed as *to be present*.

Given its non-deictic nature it is not surprising that this construction with *tu* can be used in iterative and modal contexts as shown in the following examples:

42) Kad učitelj nije tu, deca su nemirna. ‘When the teacher’s not around, the children are naughty.’

43) Ako se desi da dođe inspekcija, bilo bi dobro da i ti budeš tu. ‘If by chance there’s an inspection, it would be good if you could be there.’

Interestingly in 43) we could also have *na tom mestu*: *tom* refers to the place where the inspection will take place.

Finally, the maximally weak *tu* can be found in the specific constructions with final interpretation, in which it designates the mere existence of the subject:

44) Direktor je tu da rešava problem. To mu je posao. ‘The manager is there to solve problems. That’s his job.’

What are the implications of this previous work on *tu* for the present discussion of *taj*. First, if we are right to consider that *tu* behaves like a definite expression, it looks less surprising that the morphologically related *taj* shares some properties with definites.

But there is an even stronger argument based on *tu*. Many of the distributions of *tu*, used in our previous work as arguments establishing that *tu* is a definite, accept *taj + mesto* (*taj* + ‘place’). This confirms that *taj*, and not only *tu*, conveys interpretations that a genuine demonstrative *cannot* convey, but which are the hallmark of definite NPs. For instance, it is possible to say, instead in (41) *direktor je na tom mestu*, with the same meaning: ‘the director is at his work place doing the director’s job’.

In all these cases *na tom mestu* (‘in that place’) does not denote the previously mentioned place but functions as a weak definite: it is a place where something should happen or take place.

4.3. DOES *TAJ* HAVE CATAPHORIC USES? By cataphoric uses, we mean cases in which it is the lexical content of the nominal which establishes that only a single entity is referred to, like: *the centre of the circle*, *the actual king of France*, *the best basketball player in the world*. When a language has a definite marking, it is used in such nominals. In all these cases, the only form in Serbian is the bare definite, and *taj* cannot be used.

4.4. INTERIM CONCLUSION. What is established by this survey is that *taj* does have some typical uses specific to definite nominals (especially some associative uses), but only a small subset of them.

<sup>11</sup> Readers who are interested will find more details in Corblin – Ašić (2016).



This is enough to confirm that it is not a demonstrative, but not enough to claim that it is a genuine definite. It looks fair to say that the main part of the interpretation reserved for definite NPs is conveyed by bare definites in Serbian, and that *taj* is rare in these contexts.

4.5 CONFIRMATION BASED ON THE CONTRAST *OVDE/TU*. A previous work on *tu* (CORBLIN – AŠIĆ 2016) claims that the morphologically related spatial adverbial *tu* behaves like a definite, as regards weak interpretations.

Corblin and Ašić (2016) also claim that *tu*, and not *ovde*, the space adverbial morphologically related to the demonstrative *ovaj* can be used as the antecedent of a determinative relative clause:

45) Tu (\*ovde) gde živim nema lifta. ‘There (\*here) where I live, there is no lift.’

This kind of example can be analysed as a clear case of “cataphoric use”: it is the content of the relative clause which picks up a single entity. In our view, this is a distinctive property of definite antecedents, which would confirm that *tu* is definite.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, we can find data which shows that the form *tu*, morphologically related to *taj* behaves like a definite expression, in more contexts than *taj* since it extends to cataphoric and weak interpretations. This is, at least, a clue showing that our analysis of *taj* as a definite is on the right track.

Second, we might correlate the fact that *tu* has the full range of definite interpretation with the fact that it is not in concurrence with a zero definite. In contrast, *taj* + *N* is in competition with *zero* + *N*, which might explain a repartition of the interpretation between the two forms.

Table 2. Usages of *taj*

	Taj + N	Ø + N	Tu
Associative	rare	+	+
Cataphoric	rare	+	+
Weak	rare	+	+

5. TESTING THE THEORY AGAINST A SURVEY OF USES: *OVDE*, *TAJ*, *ONAJ*. In the last part of this paper, we will test the theory previously introduced against a survey of the typical distributions of the three forms exemplified in the literature.

Our main claim is that *ovaj/onaj* are two genuine demonstratives, representing respectively the contrast between the proximal and the distal, but that *taj* is a definite prefix for nominals exemplifying some typical uses of definites.

We will now try to confirm that this view offers a better way of understanding how the forms are used than the usual approach, which takes the three forms as demonstratives associated with three grammatical persons.

5.1. *OVAJ*, A PROXIMAL DEMONSTRATIVE. *Ovaj* is a genuine proximal demonstrative. It is typically used in conversation with a concomitant demonstration in order

<sup>12</sup> In the judgment of the one of the authors who is a native speaker, replacing *tu* by *na tom mestu* in (36) is neither impossible nor fully natural (? *Na tom mestu gde živim nema lifta*).

to pick up as a new object of discourse an entity which both speakers can see, and that the speaker considers as close to her/him. If the speaker considers that this entity is not close to her/him, she will use, everything otherwise being equal, the distal *onaj*.

Such a characterization offers precise predictions for what happens in the situation in which a victim has to recognize a person among a display presenting several candidates.

Note that in this situation, the speaker and hearer being so-located, and after a question like: “Can you identify your aggressor from these pictures”, *taj* cannot be used for 3, even if the hearer is sitting very close to the entity. This clearly indicates that the usual view of *taj* as the expression devoted to what is close to the second person does not make the right prediction.

Our view is that *taj* cannot be used because the only expected referents are all men, and because *taj* as a definite prefix cannot be used to contrast its own referent to other referents of the same kind. So, the answer to the question “Who is the aggressor?” cannot be “Taj čovek” with appointing gesture on 3, as would predict a theory of *taj* as a demonstrative of the second person.

The same holds for the following situation, where there are three plates in front of the hearer.

What is the preferred form in Serbian if A wants to refer to the closest plate to B and use a pointing on it? *Daj mi ovaj tanjir*, or *Daj mi taj tanjir*?

The native speakers students we have interviewed confirm that they will not say: „*Daj mi taj tanjir!*” (‘Give me that plate’), and that *ovaj* will be preferred. In our view, this is so because *taj* cannot pick up its own referent among a set of referents of the same sort, a typical function of demonstratives, and because *taj*, as a definite, requires that in some sense, its referent be unique in some discourse domain. Again, the data is not expected if *taj* were a second person demonstrative.

As a genuine demonstrative, *ovaj* can be used in reference chains in narrative texts, in some distinguished positions especially for contexts in which it is useful to make the referent salient. It can be used, for instance, as a proximal demonstrative for referring back to an indefinite NP introducing a new referent, but it is not licensed for an already established discourse topic, and it cannot be repeated freely in anaphoric chains, unless there is a particular reason to bring the entity under consideration into focus again. As soon as an entity has been introduced and becomes “part of the picture”, the expected form in Serbian is the standard zero definite.<sup>13</sup>

Consider an interesting test situation which can be interpreted as providing arguments in favour of the classical view (*ovaj* is used for what is related (e.g. closer) to the first person, and *taj* is used for what is related to the second person). In this situation, a teacher asks her students to read a book for the course:

46) You will have to read this book during the semester. ‘Moraćete da pročitate ovu knjigu tokom semestra.’

The teacher may just have written the references of the book on the blackboard, or may have a copy of the book in her hand, or both. In any case, she will

<sup>13</sup> We will come back later to the fact that *taj* itself cannot be repeated in the course of long chains.

use *ovaj*, and *taj* would be odd, especially for a book which is introduced by her/him at that point.

In any discussion by the students following on from that introduction, the probability of them using *ovaj* will decrease rapidly:

47) Is this book accessible at the library? ‘Da li se ova/ta knjiga može naći u biblioteci?’

*Ovaj* is possible in the immediate proximity of the first mention of the book (*Da li treba da napišemo prikaz ove knjige?* ‘Should we write a review of this book?’), although *taj* is considered by many speakers as the standard form. Adopting the classical view, one may argue that this is so because for the students, the book is strongly related to the second person, their professor. But it is more difficult for the classical theory to explain why, the relation of the referent to the professor remaining what it is, first, *ovaj* is not strictly impossible in the close context, and why the preference for *taj* increases strongly as the discussion goes on. In our view, this is not a matter of contrast first/second person, but a matter of discourse topic establishment, which explains that the probability of using *ovaj* will decrease, and for both speakers, although both can choose to use *ovaj* again for a second or third mention in order to insist on the peculiarity of the book under consideration.

48) Podvlačim da je ova knjiga jako važna. ‘I underline that this book is very important.’

Table 3. Possibilities of using *ovaj* and *taj*

The teacher presents a new book	Students are talking about it
<i>Ovaj</i> * <i>taj</i>	<i>Taj</i> <i>ovaj</i>
For some close mentions	
<i>Taj</i> <i>ovaj</i>	<i>Taj</i> <i>ovaj</i>
As the discourse processes	
* <i>ovaj</i>	* <i>ovaj</i>

Note that in this case *onaj* is absolutely impossible.

Another noticeable feature of *ovaj* is that it is difficult to use it in quantificational contexts, i.e. in cases where no individual entity is its referent.<sup>14</sup> In French at least, a demonstrative NP can be interpreted as a bound variable. For instance, ‘Aucun pays n’acceptera qu’on déclare la guerre à ce pays sans réagir’ (‘No country will accept a declaration of war against this country without a reaction’). This is not licensed for *ovaj*: in such contexts, among the expressions under consideration in this paper, only *taj* can be used, which again appears to be confirmation that *taj* shares some common properties with definites and pronouns.

Veran Stanojević in our p.c. also points out that *ovaj* is not usually acceptable in *irrealis* contexts referring to possible worlds:<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This property has been brought to our attention by our colleague Dr. Veran Stanojević (Full Professor, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University) in personal correspondence.

<sup>15</sup> The examples (50–52) are Veran Stanojević’s own examples (P.C.). We would like to express here our gratitude for his comments and precious help.

49) Bio jednom jedan kralj. Taj/Ovaj kralj nije imao dece i zbog toga je bio mnogo tužan. 'Once upon a time there was a king. This king had no children and for this reason he was very sad.'

50) Da li je taj/ \*ovaj kralj imao dece? 'Did that king have children?'

51) Opiši mi tog/ \*ovog kralja! 'Describe that king to me!'

The same is true for the following example with the negation:

52) Nisam čuo za tog / \*ovog kralja. 'I have not heard about this king.'

This observation confirms that *ovaj* is not good if the speaker cannot use it for some particular individual she has in mind.

5.2. *ONAJ*, A DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVE. *Onaj* is used for objects visible to both participants, when the speaker judges that the referent is not in their close proximity. An interesting property is that *onaj* is, so to speak, a strong demonstrative, in the sense that an actual demonstration *must* be performed when using it. It is impossible, for instance, to use it for an entity on which the situation itself puts the focus, without making an explicit pointing gesture.

Consider the following situation test: I am a passenger, and both I and the driver cannot ignore a car in the distance, which is driving on the wrong side and, things remaining equal, will crash into our own car. There are some languages for which demonstratives without explicit demonstration can be used:

53) Mais cette voiture va nous heurter ! 'But this car will run into us.'

In Serbian, *onaj* cannot be used unless the speaker makes an explicit pointing gesture, and without such a gesture, *ovaj* will be the preferred form.

*Onaj* can be used in contrast with *ovaj*, for opposing two entities of the same kind, depending on their respective distance from the speaker.

54) Smatram da je ovaj pas lepši od onog. 'I find this dog more handsome than the other one.'

The contrast between a proximal and a distal demonstrative is confirmed by their anaphoric mentional uses:

55) Petar i Jovan, ovaj je lepši od onog. 'The closest (John) is nicer than the most distal one (Peter).'

As for standard anaphoric uses, the distal nature of *onaj* is confirmed by the fact that it cannot refer back to recently introduced entities, and is thus deprived of a frequent function of demonstratives, as illustrated above by the use of *ovaj* for anaphorizing close introductions of entities by indefinites.

If compared to English, the Serbian opposition proximal/distal is stronger: in English, *this* and *that* can be used for contrasting two entities on the basis of their relative proximity to the speaker, and this is also true in Serbian for *ovaj/onaj* (see 3.1 above). But in Serbian, the distal form cannot be used for close mentions, in contrast to English in which *that* can be soused. As a result, there is, in Serbian, a unique demonstrative form for referring back to a close introduction of an entity by an indefinite (i.e. *ovaj*).

A typical function of *onaj* is its notoriety interpretation, which does not show up for *ovaj*. It might be related to its strong distal nature: *onaj* does not refer back

to recently mentioned objects, but to objects which are “far” from the actual discourse environment, but which are salient in a longer term memory.

A typical function of *onaj* is its notoriety interpretation, which does not show up for *ovaj*. It might be related to its strong distal nature: *onaj* does not refer back to recently mentioned objects, but to objects which are “far” from the actual discourse environment, but which are salient in a longer term memory.

56) *Onaj film je stvarno fantastičan.* ‘That movie is really fantastic.’ (About the movie that the speaker and the hearer saw two weeks ago but that made a strong impression on them.)

57) *Ona plaža je bila božanstvena... Često je se setim.* ‘That beach was wonderful... I remember it so often.’ (Talking about the beach the speaker and the hearer visited a previous summer.)

5.3. *TAJ*, A SPECIAL DEFINITE. In our analysis, *taj* introduces a definite NP, although only some of the typical properties of definites are accessible to it.

As we have already explained, in Serbian the only form which exhibits the whole range of definite properties is the zero form.

What we have shown is that although *taj* does not have weak interpretations (but remember nevertheless the case of *tu* and of *taj* + ‘place’), it has some associative interpretations, and otherwise exhibits the typical properties of definites.<sup>16</sup>

*Taj* is typical for anaphorizing entities recently introduced by one’s conversation partner, and for topics already established in an ongoing discourse, although the zero-definite of Serbian will be quasi-obligatory when the topic becomes very well-established, or if the discourse has to return to this particular entity for a long time.

For all these reasons, we are led to reject the thesis that *taj* is a demonstrative NP of second person.

But it might be necessary to look more closely at the relevance of the second person for the semantic interpretation of the form. What we have rejected is mostly the idea that *taj* should be considered a demonstrative. Now, if one puts together the idea that *taj* has some features of definiteness and a morphological relation to the second person, what comes to mind is that *taj* might be analysed as a *possessive* form, namely: “*the only x related to you*”.

Again we have to take into account that there is a standard possessive adjective in Serbian for the second person, namely *tvoj*:

58) *Ovo je tvoj novi sat. Kupio sam ti ga u Ženevi.* ‘This is your new watch. I bought it for you in Geneva.’

59) *Da li si pozvala svog brata?* ‘Did you call your brother?’

60) *Is your hand still aching? ‘Da li te još boli ruka?’*

But there are some examples in which the possession is less inherent and natural. In these cases the possessive adjective can be used, but, according to some speakers, could also be replaced by the *taj* form. For instance in (61):<sup>17</sup>

61) *Tvoja – ta ruka mi se dopada.* ‘I like your – this hand.’

<sup>16</sup> A neat difference with full definite NPs, like the zero-definite of Serbian, is that *taj* has no cataphoric uses (see above §4.3).

<sup>17</sup> This example will be discussed in our future papers.

In this case *ta* would denote not the addressee's own hand, but a hand strongly related to her.

We would like to note that there are many uses of possessive adjectives for denoting relations to an individual, which are quite far from the paradigmatic strong relations of possession. Let us use, just for the sake of the present discussion, the distinction between strong possessives (e.g. examples 58–61 above) and weak possessives, i.e. possessives used for a particular relation between a “possessor” and an object, which relies heavily on some accidental relation between these two elements. As examples of weak possessives, consider the following:

(62) An object *x* is very close to A: Now look carefully to *your* coin. ‘Pogledaj pažljivo u tvoj/taj novčić.’ (The teacher has placed a coin in front of each pupil.)

(63) An object *x* is being made by A: *Your* hand is well constructed, but not expressive. ‘Tvoja/ta ruka je dobro urađena ali nije ekspresivna.’ (Each pupil is drawing a human hand.)

(64) An object *x* is a constant topic of A: Is it by reference to *your* novel that you say that? ‘Je l' u vezi s tvojom/onom pričom kažeš to?’ (John speaks very often of a novel he has finished last week.)

Our observation is that in Serbian the possessive *tvoj* is fine in all these cases, but that *taj*, for these weak possessives, is also accepted, and for many speakers sounds even better than *tvoj*.

In particular *taj* is optimal when the relation between the object and the “possessor” is visible and when the object is an already established discourse topic (see the coins and the drawing of hands examples).

*Taj* is not as good in the notoriety-like case of the novel example (64). Serbian speakers tend to propose only *onaj* (notoriety demonstrative, see above) as a concurrent of *tvoj* in similar examples.

We also note that any time the context contrasts the referent of an object of type X to another object of type X, the acceptability of *taj* decreases strongly, and that only *tvoj* is accepted.

(65) Da li misliš da je tvoj novčić stariji od mog? ‘Do you think that your coin is older than mine?’

(66) Ovaj novčić a ne tvoj je stariji. ‘This coin and not yours is older.’

This difficulty when contrasting one X to other Xs confirms, in our view, that *taj* is actually a definite NP, and not a genuine possessive.

Our general conclusion is that there are very few arguments for considering *taj* as a possessive NP, even restricted to weak possessivity.

A last argument against the view of *taj* as a possessive is that *taj* and *tvoj* can be combined:

(67) Ne dopada mi se tvoja haljina. ‘I don’t like your dress.’

(68) Ne dopada mi se ta haljina. ‘I don’t like that dress.’

(69) Ne dopada mi se ta tvoja haljina. ‘I don’t like that dress of yours.’

According to the judgment of some native speakers of Serbian,<sup>18</sup> in (69) we have an emphatical relation to the dress in question. In other words the speaker is insisting on the fact that he dislikes the dress in question.

<sup>18</sup> Actually the students and colleagues of Tijana Ašić, one of the authors of this paper.



The combination of a demonstrative and a possessive is not rare across languages, but it would be probably more difficult to account for this association if the two forms were possessives.

In order to be more precise about the semantic relation of *taj* to the second person, we might suggest, rather tentatively, that *taj* behaves, so to speak, as a second-person definite. As a definite, it denotes the unique X of a domain of objects, exactly like any definite.

In general, a standard short definite, can be used if there is a salient domain within which the head noun applies to a single object. For instance, a set of vegetables on the table we are looking at, legitimates the use of “the cabbage” if there is one and only one cabbage on the table. In the case of standard definites, the selection of the relevant domain is only constrained by pragmatic factors; if I utter “the dog”, I may have in mind many different domains of objects within which there is a single dog. I am just assuming that you will find which domain I am thinking about. For instance, suppose you and I are drawing a hunting scene, while looking through the window in my house: the relevant domain of entities might be the picture we are drawing, what we can see through the window, or my own house.

70) The dog is barking.

The sentence (70) can be interpreted as a dog represented in the picture, a dog we can see through the window, or my own dog. In itself the definite NP does not say anything governing the choice of the relevant domain, which can be any domain. Only pragmatic factors are relevant for identifying the relevant domain.

What seems to happen in Serbian, a language having a standard all-purpose definite, is that there is, in addition, a definite marking dedicated to a domain of entities strongly related to the second person: in other words, a standard definite in Serbian can rely on any domain of objects pragmatically accessible, while *taj* is dedicated to domains related to you.

For example, if there is a known dog in the hearer’s yard, a speaker of Serbian could normally use the *taj* form:

71) *Taj pas divljački laje.* ‘That dog is barking fiercely.’

Whereas, if the known dog is in any other place, the speaker would more naturally use the bare noun form:

72) *Pas divljački laje.* ‘The dog is barking fiercely.’

In other words, *taj* is a strong semantic indication of which domain of objects is intended, a selection which is otherwise, for standard definites, entirely left open to pragmatic factors.

We think that this view can help explain some constraints on the distribution of *taj*. For instance, if *taj* is definite, why is it impossible to repeat it in long chains of reference? The reason is likely to be that *taj* is motivated only if there might be a doubt about the relevant domain of objects made salient by the discourse. When an object is established as a discourse topic, even if it might have been useful at first to use its proximity to you for identifying it, it would become useless and

even misleading to continue to use this proximity for speaking of it, because it is now identified as the only N of our common discourse topic.

This may also explain, why *taj* is rare in traditional written narrative novels. In such a context, reference chains are long chains, the relevant domain is restricted to mentioned entities, and the receptor of the text plays no role, in contrast to what happens in conversation.

**6. CONCLUSION.** Our work challenges claim that there are three demonstratives in Serbian, which are distinguished by a privileged relation to each grammatical person. Our proposition is that Serbian has only two demonstrative adjectives, *ovaj*, a proximal demonstrative, and *onaj*, a strongly distal demonstrative with uses of notoriety (“this famous X”).

However we have to admit that we are not the very first linguist to question this traditional position, Heine and Kuteva in their work say: “If one takes into consideration colloquial language, however, there are indications that Serbian, too, could be on the way to acquiring a definite article, even though this might be a very incipient development” (2002: 116).

As for *taj*, often classified as a demonstrative, our proposal claims that it behaves like a definite NP, although it does not have the full range of definite values.

If correct, this new approach is a clarification concerning demonstratives in Serbian, which appears to be more in accordance with systems existing in most other languages.

But this view creates a new challenge for the analysis of Serbian, and for the theory of definiteness, since it argues that Serbian has two definites, the classical well-known zero-definite, and a definite marked by *taj*. In the light of this, new investigations are in order to provide a well-documented empirical picture concerning the concurrence of the two forms of definiteness in Serbian, and for accommodating the existence of more than one kind of definite in the theory of definiteness. What we have suggested tentatively is that *taj* is “a second-person definite”, understood as a definite which selects for its interpretation domain the set of objects close to the interlocutor, whereas standard definites, in Serbian and in other languages, rely entirely on pragmatic factors for selecting their domain of interpretation. Our very last observation concerns the fact that *taj* has a value of the definite article (just like the lexeme *jedan* (‘one’) can play a function of the indefinite article), which shows that this “special” word is (just like all the other words in every natural language) in the process of grammaticalization or semantic change: this means that, at the same time *taj*, in this very moment, is a demonstrative and a definite article, just like a *photon* in physics is at the same time a wave and a particle.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For this excursion into the domain of quantum mechanics and “the theory of wave-particle duality”, the second author of this paper owes her gratitude to her 17 year old son Dušan Iraki Kangethe.

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## ДА ЛИ СРПСКИ ЈЕЗИК ИМА ТРИ ДЕМОНСТРАТИВНА ПРИДЕВА?

## Резиме

Облици *овај*, *џај* и *онај* традиционално се у граматикама српског језика сматрају показним придевима. У овом раду анализирамо кроз бројне примере њихове употребе њихово функционисање. Наш хипотеза је да српски језик има само два показна придева *овај*, проксимални демонстратив и *онај*, дистални демонстратив који има и употребе ноторијетета (*џај чувени X*). Што се тиче облика *џај*, за њега показујемо да се у неким случајевима понаша као одређени члан, иако, што ваља подвући, нема све вредности типичне за одређеност. С тим у вези препоручујемо даља истраживања која би пружила добро документовану емпиријску слику која се тиче конкурентности два облика за изражавање одређености у српском: голу

именицу, и именицу одређену обликом *īāaj*. Наш предлог је да би се можда облик *īāaj* могао сматрати „одређеним чланом другог лица”.

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