

DP in a model NP language: Evidence from Serbo-Croatian personal pronouns

This talk presents and analyzes the properties of Serbo-Croatian (SC) full (non-clitic) personal pronouns in object positions, arguing that they are DPs. This contrasts them with other SC nominals, whose NP status has been argued for extensively (e.g., Zlatić 1997, Bošković 2008, 2009, Despić 2011). The talk is built around two crucial observations regarding the placement, subextraction patterns, and modification of these pronouns. First, their clausal distribution differs from that of other object nominals. The neutral SVO order can be preserved with all objects except personal pronouns, regardless of case-form and phonological weight (1).

(1) Context: You are at the police station identifying a suspect out of two people. In (a-b), the suspects you see are Madonna and Cher. In (c-d), you do not know the female suspects' name. The police officer asks you: "Who did (your friend) Magda see at the crime scene?"

- a. Magda je videla ŠER / OVU pevačicu (na mestu zločina).
Magda AUX seen Cher.ACC this.ACC singer.ACC on place crime
- b. ?* Magda je ŠER / OVU pevačicu videla (na mestu zločina).
Magda AUX Cher.ACC this.ACC singer.ACC seen on place crime
'Magda saw CHER/THIS singer at the crime scene.'
- c. ?* Magda je videla NJU (na mestu zločina).
Magda AUX seen her.ACC on place crime
- d. Magda je NJU videla (na mestu zločina).
Magda AUX her.ACC seen on place crime
'Magda saw HER at the crime scene.'

The context in (1) forces a contrastive reading of the pronoun; however, non-focused pronouns pattern alike (2). In (2), the focus is on the temporal adverbial, and the pronoun is unstressed. The uniform placement of full object pronouns, regardless of their information-structural status, casts doubt on discourse-based accounts of this asymmetry between personal pronouns and other nominals (Stojanović 1997).

(2) A: When will Marija meet Rok next?

B: Marija njega sreće svakoga dana u isto vreme.

Marija him meets every day at same time

'Marija meets him every day at the same time.'

(Stojanović 1997:307)

Second, I show that SC pronominal phrases have a richer structure than other nominals. Unlike English, SC nominal phrases allow Left Branch Extraction (LBE); an influential analysis attributes this asymmetry to the NP/DP parameter (Bošković 2008, 2009). However, SC pronouns pattern with English nominal phrases in disallowing LBE, suggesting that they are DPs (3). The same contrast holds for PP adjunct extraction.

- (3) a. Videli smo pravog njega/glumca.
seen AUX real him actor
'We saw the real him/actor'
- b. Pravog smo videli glumca/*njega.
real AUX seen actor him

Additionally, if SC pronouns were NPs, we would expect them to allow modification by all sorts of NP-adjoined material. This is what we observe in Japanese (4a), whose pronouns have been analyzed as bare-NPs (e.g., Noguchi 1997). However, SC pronouns pattern with the English DP pronouns in (dis)allowing the same types of modifiers (4b).

- (4) a. *ōkina boku / utsukushī anata / tiisai kare*
 big me beautiful you small he (XYZ, p.c.)
- b. *pravi ja / mi sa dugačkim nogama / *veliki / *crveni / *Markovi / *ti oni*
 real me us with long legs big red Marko's those they

Finally, as discussed in Progovac 1998, certain adjectives that can appear as modifiers of personal pronouns must obligatorily follow them (5a), while the same adjectives uniformly precede nouns (5b). Assuming that the adjectives in (5) occupy a fixed structural position, Progovac argues that this noun/pronoun asymmetry is best accounted for by placing SC pronouns in D, and nouns in N.

- (5) a. *I (?*samu) nju / mene (samu) to nervira*
 and alone her me alone that irritates
 'This irritates even her/me.'
- b. *I (samu) Mariju (?*samu) to nervira.*
 and alone Mary alone that irritates
 'That irritates even Mary.'
- (adapted from Progovac 1998)

Based on the evidence here, I argue that SC personal pronouns, unlike other SC nominals, are DPs. This is against Progovac's proposal which extends the DP hypothesis to all SC nominals. If (5) were the only data the child had for the presence of DP in SC, it would indeed be hard to argue that the NP/DP distinction could be deduced from the input. However, as I have shown, SC also offers evidence to this effect from subextraction and, crucially, from the clausal distribution of pronouns. I will also provide evidence that the displacement we observe with full pronouns is not cliticization; rather, these pronouns must move to a functional projection (AgrOP) to check their Case features. This account has the potential to unify all SC personal pronouns, including clitics, which have independently been argued to move to the same position in the syntax (Bošković 2001). More broadly, the analysis pursued here lends support to accounts that argue against attributing the NP/DP parameter to entire languages, but rather for a view that nominal phrases may come in various sizes within a single language (e.g., Pereltsvaig & Lyutikova 2014, Erschler 2019).

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