Look at This 'Here'. From Physical to Pragmatic Proximity in English, German and Croatian

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ABSTRACT

Departing from the well-known ontological parallel between the pointing gesture on the one hand, and linguistic deixis on the other, in this paper we analyse the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of the deictic terms 'here' in English, 'hier' in German and 'ovdje' in Croatian. We systematize the different usages of these terms – both intra- and cross-linguistically – and propose a reading of the semantics of the proximal deictic element for 'linguistic spatial location', which – as our analysis shows – ranges from the pure spatial locational function, via a temporal – more generally metaphorical segment - all the way to a series of discourse functions. We observe that the universality of usage patterns that is found at the spatial, and even spatio-temporal level, can still be found – albeit to a lesser degree – at the discourse level. What seems to be maintained at all levels is the primacy of the proximal segment in terms

of referential prominence. We thus conclude that what physical proximity is in the spatial sense, can largely be understood as pragmatic proximity in the linguistic sense.

Keywords: deixis, deictic functions, pointing gesture, spatial language, English, German, Croatian.

1. INTRODUCTION

Consider the following sentence:

1) 'Yesterday I told you to stay there.'

No fluent English speaker is expected to have any problems understanding the sentence above. Understanding its lexical meaning, that is. A speaker told a listener to stay where s/he had been the day before the speech act took place. This is, approximately, the core semantic content of sentence 1). What is interesting about this example is that we understand it while having no idea who the person speaking is or who they are speaking to (so we do not have a precise referent for the pronoun 'I', nor for 'you'), we do not know the exact day or time (and thus cannot temporally locate 'yesterday'), and have no spatial information (thus not being able to locate 'there'). In technical terms, we are missing all the co(n)textual elements needed to precisely connect the lexical items 'yesterday', 'I', 'you' and 'there' to the respective entities in the world to which they refer. Without this information we are left grasping the general lexical meaning of the sentence, but are unable to interpret them in a concrete situation. In other words, we have the lexical semantic reading, but lack the pragmatic or, rather, communicative one.

Sentence 1) is intended to illustrate the linguistic mechanism at play in the case of what is known as deixis in language; a well-known term used to indicate a set of linguistic elements which refer (or point) to discourse elements such as speech act participants, time or place (see Section 2 below). While theoretical treatments of deixis abound, there are fewer accounts of the communicative role of deixis in (crosscultural) communication.

In this paper we propose a comparative-contrastive analysis of the central spatial (locational) proximal deictic term in English, German and Croatian. Departing from the fact that deixis is one of the most heavily

context determined elements in language, we have decided to explore similarities and differences in the use of a universal linguistic element – the proximal spatial deictic element in the three languages under investigation, i.e., English, German and Croatian. A contrastive analysis of the languages or, rather, terms under scrutiny is aimed at identifying the semantic dimension(s) of the local demonstratives 'here' in English, 'hier' in German, and 'ovdje' in Croatian. At a more general theoretical i.e., linguistic level, the rationale behind the study is a better understanding of local deixis as a fundamental communicative and pragmatic tool, and – more specifically – a better understanding of its cognitive semantic dimension. While working on freely available corpora that can be found on the web for each of the three languages (See details below), the study does not take into account any parallel corpus. On the one hand, no such parallel electronic corpus exists for the combination English-German-Croatian. While we could have worked on translations of, e.g., classic literary works in the three languages, we decided not to opt for this possibility. In fact, we wanted to research spontaneous speech in each of the languages rather than translations. This choice was motivated by our assumption that focusing on spontaneous language production in each language was the best way to research pragmatic elements in language. Thus, we decided to examine the most representative corpus in each of the languages under scrutiny, i.e.: the 'British National Corpus' (BNC) for the English language, the Leipzig Corpora Collection (Wortschatz) for German, and the 'Hrvatski jezični corpus' (Croatian language corpus, henceforth CLR) for Croatian and, for each language, choose the most illustrative and most frequent examples found in the corpus (for more details on methodology see 3.1. below). In order to compliment the published corpora, statistical data relative to frequency of usage have been taken from the Google search engine.

2. ON POINTING AND LANGUAGE

Being able to communicate means being able to share information or, perhaps even more accurately, informative focus. We can achieve this by directing our interlocutors' attention to very precise elements of intra- as well as extra-linguistic reality. In this way the speaker and interlocutor(s) have the same element(s) in the shared attention focus. Now, we can direct our interlocutors' focus of attention by pointing our finger to a referent. In fact, *"children enter language hands first. Months before they are able to produce words to refer to people, places, and things, they point"* (Goldin-Meadow 2007:

741)[2]. If, however, the referent is spatially and / or temporally dislocated, we cannot point to it gesturally, but need another tool. It would appear that the most successful tool that has so far been developed by humans for 'pointing to' i.e., directing people's attention is language (Kita 2003). Speaking is, in a way, pointing by means of language (Brala-Vukanović 2015; Brala-Vukanović & Matešić 2015). In language, the most direct translation of the pointing gesture are deictic terms.

2.1. DEIXIS

The word *deictic* has its root in the Greek word "deiknynai", meaning "to show". In linguistics, a related word - "deixis" - is used to refer to a set of linguistic items that serve the function of indicating elements of the situational and/or discourse context, including the speech participants, the location, and the time of the current speech event (cf. Lyons 1977; Fillmore 1982; 1997; Levinson 2004), which are crucial for understanding the deictic term itself.

Although context – as the key to interpreting i.e., understanding deictic terms – has always been central in the interpretation of deictic terms, the role of the context in the understanding of deixis has been further amplified by Levinson (1983). He has argued that deixis is, indeed, the reflection of the relationship between language and context. Following Lyons (1977) and Fillmore (1982), Levinson (1983) defines deixis in the following terms: "*words or phrases that require contextual information to convey meaning are deictic*" (*ibid*: 54)[3]. He goes on to identify five main deictic categories (i.e., fields of contextual information that deixis draws on). They are:

a. personal deixis (I, you, we),

b. spatial deixis (this, that, here, there),

c. temporal deixis (now, today, yesterday).

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2 Diessel (2006) has observed that communicative pointing is a universal communicative device found in all cultures.

3 Yule's (1996: 9) description of deixis is slightly different from Levinson's. In fact, Yule (ibid.) defines deixis as a way of "pointing through language". Most interestingly for our purposes, Yule (ibid.) has pointed out that the most basic uses of deictic expressions are found in face-to-face spoken utterances.

d.   social deixis which covers the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participant-roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee(s) or speaker and some referents, and

e.   discourse deixis which involves the encoding of reference to portions of the unfolding discourse in which the utterance is located.

While most treatments of deixis agree on the types of contextual information that deixis involves, what remains unclear is the exact nature of this information. In other words, speaking about – e.g. – spatial deixis, we are left with the question of what do deictic (spatial) terms **precisely** refer to; do spatial deictic terms identify objects in space, do they indicate their location, or do they do even more than that? It is often claimed that deictic terms represent words that "refer explicitly to spatial information" (Chatterjee 2001). It has, however, been observed that the original role of demonstratives – to refer to objects or places in the current environment – has developed over time to also refer to the common ground of the interlocutors (Clark 1996). Some recent analyses of (spatial) deixis (see Engberg-Pedersen 2003; Gärdenfors & Brala-Vukanović 2018) have gone even further and proposed that spatial deictic terms serve three main functions: a) they refer to objects (referential function – i.e. WHAT); b) they locate objects in space (location and motion – i.e. WHERE) and time (i.e. WHEN); and, finally, c) they can serve the function of predication (i.e. WHAT). It is, indeed, in order to explore the issue of the (crosslinguistic) reference to the common ground of the interlocutors, that we have decided to focus on a particular type of deictic terms in this paper: demonstratives. In fact, demonstratives are – both developmentally and historically - closely related to deictic pointing (see also Diessel 2013). More specifically, demonstratives a) are the only *closed-class* set that appears to be universally present in all world languages (cf. Diessel 1999; Dixon 2003); b) are older than other closed class items (they have been recognized as precursors of determiners); c) are amongst the first words to appear in child language. As such, they are viewed as lexical elements that could possibly serve to code the (universal) semantic elements which are cognitively constrained, and which may provide us with further understanding on some of the basic cognitive-linguistic mechanisms, such as that of metaphoric extension.

In the case of the English demonstrative 'here' and its German and Croatian translational equivalents, in the remainder of this paper we will

explore some of the possible extensional principles that take us from the physical i.e., spatial, into the discourse domain. Crucially, we look for crosslinguistic consistencies which might represent grounds not just for typological work, but also for cognitive-linguistic work on language universals, both in terms of lexical and semantic primes, as well as in terms of universal (cognitive-linguistic) extensional principles. We will now turn to our analysis.

3. THE ANALYSIS

In line with the theoretical framework mentioned above, our point of departure for the analytical part of this study can be summed as follows: how do we 'point' with language in English, German and Croatian? The most immediate answer takes us (once again) into the realm of demonstratives.

The demonstrative 'here' (German 'hier', Croatian 'ovdje') stands primarily to answer the question 'where' or, in other words, it is a deictic adverb of place locating the referent in proximity to the speaker (or, by way of extension, aligning the interlocutor – or rather his / her attention - with the speaker's perspective, the speech act location, or the speaker's attitude towards the utterance content and/or the speech act; for more details see the examples of usage below). We should observe that in Croatian and German the demonstrative paradigm (for spatial locational adverbs) consists of three elements: the proximal 'hier', the medial 'da', and the distal 'dort' in German, and the proximal-medial-distal 'ovdje', 'tu', 'tamo' in Croatian. The English paradigm, on the other hand, has lost the medial element, and nowadays the English system has only two elements ('here' vs. 'there'[4]). It should also be mentioned that in all three languages under investigation, the demonstrative under analysis can be used in two ways:

a)   in copulative construction (e.g. *Marko is* here. / *Marko ist* hier. / *Marko je* ovdje.)

and

b)   in pure adverbial usage (e.g. *Marko has arrived* here / *Marko is* hier *angekommen / Marko je došao* ovdje).

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4   The third element, *yon*, has been lost, and is now retained only in certain northern dialects (Cairns 1991).

3.1. METHODOLOGY

In order to explore and outline the usage categories of the demonstrative under scrutiny in the three languages in the focus of this paper, we have used the following methodology:

We have searched the 'British National Corpus' (BNC), the Leipzig Corpora Collection (Wortschatz), and the 'Hrvatski jezični corpus' (Croatian language corpus, henceforth CLR)[5] in two different moments in time[6]. Given that the search of the corpora yielded a very substantial set of literary examples[7], we expanded the search to the web as well. We have (double) checked examples of usage found in the corpora, and also looked at the statistical frequency of usage, focusing on those most frequent in our choice of examples under scrutiny. The instances i.e., their usages and contexts were manually examined (visually inspected) and grouped (see below), on the basis of their meaning and usage, into a set of semantico-pragmatic categories. In the end, the categories were ordered in terms of usage frequency, and finally compared and contrasted cross-linguistically.

3.2. RESULTS

Our analysis in the three languages in focus (English, German and Croatian), has shown a considerable overlap of usage i.e. semantico-pragmatic realizations of the adverb of the English 'here', German 'hier' and the Croatian 'ovdje'. We will thus now list all the categories that have been identified by our analysis. The first example is always to be taken as the source example, i.e., the original example (in the original language) singled

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5   The British National Corpus (BNC) was originally created by Oxford University press in the 1980s - early 1990s, and it contains 100 million words of text from a wide range of genres (e.g., spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic). The Leipzig Corpora Collection German news corpus is a German news corpus based on material from up to 2021. It contains 33,323,616 sentences and 525,578,241 tokens. Finally, the hrWaC – Croatian web corpus: Croatian corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet, created in January 2014 with the total size over 1.2 billion words.

6   The Google search performed in January 2020 yielded 280,089 results, for 'hier' - 280,013 hits for 'here', while for 'ovdje' it yielded 17,161 instances. The same search performed in January of 2021 yielded the following results: 'hier' 401,000,000; 'here 2,360,000,000, and here 8,230,000. This major increase in the number of matches indicates the massive use of the lexical items under analysis in everyday language.

7   When it comes to the Croatian language, in the majority of cases the examples were from older literary pieces (e.g., 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century), as in contemporary times we are witnessing an overlap between the proximal 'ovdje' and the medial' tu' elements in the paradigm. However, given the limited space and scope of this paper we did not include 'tu' in our analysis, but this element remains to be investigated.

out in the corpus search. For each example, we also propose a cross-linguistic rendering, i.e., propose cross-linguistic / cross-cultural equivalents[8].

The first language in the example list is one example of the usage of which has actually been identified in the corpus. When possible, each example has been translated into the remaining two languages under scrutiny. If a translation into one of the two languages is not present, this means that such a translational equivalent by means of a comparative proximal spatial demonstrative is not possible in that language.

3.2.1.   <u>SPATIAL</u>

a)   Location 'at this place'

Meaning: in the place of, coincidental with the speaker; refers to the environment one is currently in, or to something within reach (within reach[9] and in sight). We have found two types of realizations:

In oral communication:

·   *Setzen wir uns hier aufs Sofa.* / *'Let's sit down here on this sofa.'* / *'Sjednimo ovdje na kauč'.*

In written communication

·   *Sign here on the line _____. / Unterschrift hier _____. / Potpis ovdje _____.*

·   *Click HERE for more information. / Klicken Sie HIER* für mehr Informationen. / Kliknite *OVDJE za više informacija.*

Most interestingly, while in the case of oral communication the examples are usually in usage situations, accompanied by a pointing gesture, in the case of examples from written language, we see that the pointing gesture is replaced by extratextual elements such as the use of lines or different font

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8   The translations of the source examples taken from the corpora are by the authors of the paper.

9   It might be interesting to explore the limits of the 'proximal category'. Departing from the preliminary analysis of our examples, we would like to propose the hypothesis that 'within reach', in this context of usages, might actually be within arm's length. The hypothesis might be tested experimentally, linking language to the central cognitive linguistic notion of embodiment.

(size) or different colour of letters, or arrows etc. (which we see as a very good example of multimodality).

b)   Location 'there' - Emphatic proximal location

Meaning = right there; in that place; refers to something that is considered nearby, or can be seen and pointed at; used with the definite article or the determiner *dieser* ("this, that"); used to refer to spatial segments that are not within reach (not physically proximal), but are in sight and are, as such, considered proximal in discourse. They are made 'discourse proximal' by the use of the proximal determiner 'here', the use of which is further justified (or, rather, made possible), by the use of discourse emphatic elements such as 'right' in 'right here', i.e. 'gleich' and 'odmah' in 'gleich hier' and 'odmah tu', or word order (see postposition of 'hier' in German below). It should be noted that 'gleich' in German and 'odmah' in Croatian are temporal adverbs, which are used to accentuate the proximity of the location, in terms of its being physically close and quick to reach.

· *Die Kirche ist gleich hier am Ende der Straße. / The church is right here / there at the end of the street. / Crkva je odmah tu, na kraju ceste.*

· *Die Kneipe hier ist sehr beliebt. / This pub (here) is very popular. / Ovaj pub (ovdje) je vrlo popularan.*

· *Siehst du die Wolke hier neben der Bergspitze? / Can you see that cloud there, next to the mountain top? / Vidiš li onaj oblak ondje, blizu planinskoga vrha?*

While the first two examples present cross-linguistic matches in terms of the demonstrative used, the third one does not, as the conceptualization of the cloud in English and Croatian is 'too distant' to allow the use of the proximal determiner. In relation to the second example, we note that in English and Croatian, if the demonstrative pronoun is used, the use of the locational 'here' is optional.

c) Extended location - contextual proximal

Meaning: proximity is derived not from the fact that something, while being out of reach, is still in sight (as in b), but rather since the referential

element, indicated as proximal, is within 'discourse reach' via situational context (e.g. referring to building, company, country...).

· *Ich arbeite hier. / I work here. / Radim ovdje.*

Depending on the situational context, the demonstrative can be interpreted as 'room (with a view)', 'building', 'company', 'institution', 'city' ...

· *Wir sind nicht von hier. / We are not from here. / Mi nismo odavdje.*

· *Iz niza razloga, koje ovdje ne navodim, ne slažem se s prijedlogom. / For a number of reasons, that I am here not listing, I disagree with the proposal. / Aus einer Reihe von Gründen, die ich hier nicht anführen möchte, stimme ich diesem Vorschlag nicht zu.*

Note that while in all three languages the demonstrative can be interpreted as 'at this point of the text', 'from this place', 'city', 'region', 'state', only in German it also has the reading of 'planet'.

In this category, we also find instances of use where the demonstrative stands to point the purpose or role of the speaker:

· *I am here to win this championship / Ich bin hier um diese Meisterschaft zu gewinnen. / Ovdje sam da bih osvojio kup (pobijedio).*

c) Extended location (co-textual i.e. anaphoric)

Meaning: proximity is derived not from the fact that something, while being out of reach, is still in sight (as in b), but rather since the referential element, indicated as proximal, is within 'discourse reach' by means of co-text.

· *Biergärten in Hamburg: Statt auf Bierbänken wird hier* auf Paletten gesessen. / Beer gardens in Hamburg: Instead of benches, pallets are used *here as tables. / Pivnice u Hamburgu: Umjesto na klupama, ovdje / tamo se jede na paletama.*

· *It is for Australia, and for Australia alone, to decide who comes here and who lives here. / Es liegt an Australien, und nur an Australien, darüber zu*

entscheiden, wer hierher (dorthin) kommt und hier (dort) lebt. / Australci, i samo Australci, odlučuju tko ovdje (tamo) smije doći i tko ovdje (tamo) smije živjeti.

The reading of 'here' in both examples are anaphorically derived, from the textual introduction of the place ('Beergarden in Hamburg', and 'Australia') as the preceding element that serves as the origo. However, the interpretation of the demonstrative in the target languages (in the translation) would allow, if not prefer, the distal rather than the proximal element, thus interestingly highlighting the issue of the 'reader's perspective'.

d) Idiomatic

Refers to occasional spatial distribution.

·   *There are a few Starbucks here and there. / Hier und dort stößt man auf Starbucks. / Tu i tamo možemo naići na Starbucks.*

Note that in the Croatian example we see the transition, in the idiomatic usage, from the proximal to the medial category (*tu*), so the combination is medial – distal, whereas the German uses the proximal – distal combination.

e) Abstraction level - here (within this context)

Meaning: 'here' stands for something that is contextually implied, rather than for space; the meaning is 'concerning this matter'

·   *Hier gibt es nichts zu lachen. / This is not funny. / Ovo nije smiješno.*

Note that in this example German uses the spatial adverb, whereas the English and Croatian equivalents are rendered by means of the demonstrative proximal pronoun.

·   *Objektivität ging hier völlig verloren. / Here we totally lack objectivity. / Ovdje se potpuno izgubila objektivnost.*

·   *Politische Ironie fehlte hier. / Political irony was lacking here. / Ovdje je nedostajalo političke ironije.*

· *Die Frist wurde hier überhaupt nicht erwähnt.* / *The deadline was not mentioned here at all.* / *Ovdje rok uopće nije spomenut.*

· *Die Polizei demonstrierte hier bereits eine extrem aggressive Haltung.* / *The police has here shown an exceptionally high degree of violence.* / *Policija je ovdje (u ovom slučaju) iskazala vrlo visoki stupanj agresivnosti.*

f) Metaphorical level

Used existentially, with the verb 'to be' ('sein', 'biti') to express proximity in the meaning of support.

· *Mamma ist hier* für dich! / Mommy is *here for you!* / *Ne brini, mamica je ovdje.*

3.2.2. TEMPORAL

a) Metaphorical; at this moment

· *Von* <u>hier</u> *beginnt ein neuer Abschnitt in meinem Leben.* / *A new segment of life begins* <u>here</u> *(at this point).* / <u>Ovdje</u> *(Od ove točke / Odavdje) počinje nova faza mojega života.*

· *Summer is almost* <u>here.</u> / *Der Sommer ist fast* <u>da</u>. / *Ljeto je skoro* <u>ovdje</u>.

Note that in the first sentence of this section, in English and Croatian the spatial demonstrative is a possible translation, but a more natural one would be to use 'from this point'. Our analysis of the corpus seems to suggest that German more readily uses 'hier' in the temporal sense, than English and Croatian do. In the second example we see that in German the medial element is used for what in English and Croatian is expressed by the proximal.

b) Idiomatic

Refers to occasional temporal distribution.

· <u>Hier und da</u> *sehe ich ihn beim Essen.* / <u>Now and then</u> *I see him at lunch.* / <u>Tu i tamo</u> *sretnem ga za ručkom.*

Interestingly, we see that while German uses the proximal – medial combination, and Croatian uses the medial – distal combination, English uses proper temporal adverbs to lexicalize the idiomatic temporal meaning.

3.2.2 a. SPATIO-TEMPORAL

a) Idiomatic

Combines the temporal 'now' ('jetzt', 'sada') and the spatial 'here' ('hier', 'ovdje'); used to idiomatically emphasize the need to act, with immediate urgency and on the spot.

·   *Moramo reagirati sada i ovdje! / We have to act, here and now! / Wir müssen hier und jetzt reagieren.*

3.2.3. DISCOURSE

a) Pragmatic (presentative) marker

Used to emphasize the attitude of the speaker towards the content of the utterance.

·   *I am* <u>here</u>*, in my English class, and* <u>here</u> *comes Evan waltzing in. / Ich sitze* <u>hier</u>*, im Englischunterricht, und* <u>da</u> *kommt Evan walzertanzend hinein. / Ja sam* <u>ovdje</u>*, u učionici engleskoga jezika, kad* <u>evo</u> */* <u>eto</u> *ti Evana, ulazi plešući valcer.*

In the above example, contrast the first demonstrative, which is purely spatial, with the second one, which is pragmatic, i.e. presentative (and is in German rendered with the medial 'da', while in Croatian it employs one of the presentative particles 'evo' or 'eto').

Other interesting examples from this category relate to expressions of politeness, or discourse idiomatic phrases (which, in a sense, seem to border interjections).

·   <u>Here</u> *you go. /* <u>Hier</u>*, bitte. /* <u>Evo</u> *izvolite.* (politeness, when giving something to someone);

- Here *I go again, confusing the issue. /* <u>Schau</u>*, jetzt habe ich die Sache wieder vermasselt. /* <u>Eto</u> *(ti) mene, opet zeznuo stvar!*

We observe that while in German the demonstrative 'hier' cannot be used in the latter example, this example proposes an extremely interesting usage of the verb 'schauen' ('to see'), thus using a lexical item to focus the interlocutor's attention onto something via the sense of sight.

4. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Our analysis has shown that in all three languages under investigation, four key semantico-pragmatic categories of usage can be identified. They are:

1) Spatial

2) Temporal

3) Spatio-temporal

4) Discourse.

In the first two categories, we have further variations (categorial subdivisions) in terms of the oral vs. written contrast, i.e., between contextual and co-textual information. It is almost as if we can trace the path from physical gesture (i.e., the indexical relation) to elements from the context that we can point to (the iconic level), toward elements that are neither within the range of physical reach but also – crucially – out of sight[10], and are introduced textually, where pointing is by language only, and by anaphoric means (symbolic level). Following from there, the next step is towards abstraction, then to metaphor (highest symbolic level). Metaphor takes us to the temporal usages of the deictic term(s), and we also have the combination of the spatio-temporal elements, mostly in idiomatic usages. The structure of extensions from gesture to language ends with the discourse level, where rather than 'pointing to' single objects i.e., conceptual entities, we 'point to' complex conceptual structures such as integral thoughts expressed by fully developed, complete syntactic structures (sentences), including the speaker's attitudes towards complex cognitive

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10 It is known that the need to express ideas relative to the 'out of sight', is one of the driving forces behind the evolution of language.

content i.e., sentential information. In this context, it is very important to observe that analogous developmental paths in the semantico-pragmatic evolution of the (usage of the) spatial deictic term(s) have been noted in three languages that belong to two different language families: Germanic and Slavic. This fact strongly suggests that the underlying structure of the paradigm might be closely related to cognitive elements and mechanisms pertaining to cognitive sub-systems other than language, as proposed by the cognitive linguistic paradigm. As we have tried to argue in the introductory part of this paper, hypotheses, studies and theories in this context are closely linked to the notion of shared attention, triadic communication and both the development and the evolution of language, which – once again – underlies the potential far-reaching implications of explorations in the realm of deictic terms in language, and demonstratives in particular.

The above observations might represent an interesting point of departure for future research on universality in deictic terms, more specifically demonstratives. Such research might productively focus on the features and peculiarities of 'communicative sharing between interlocutors', and the role of 'attention grabbing' (linguistic) devices in both the development of language and linguistic categories (including word classes), as well as the distinction between the semantic and the pragmatic levels of language. In fact, while open classes express semantic content that is stable and also substantially out of context, closed class language items, and deictic terms in particular, gain meaning through use, when we access them and referentially attribute them in a given contextual situation.

Furthermore, it has been noted that languages such as German and Croatian, which (by norm) have a three-way paradigm of demonstratives (proximal – medial – distal) show a tendency towards simplification in usage, with an increasing number of speakers abandoning the distinction between the proximal and the medial, in favour of a bleached 'middle ground' usage where no clear tendencies towards the proximal or the distal have been identified. The tendency towards a simplification of the three-way paradigm can be confirmed by the case of English, where the third element of the system has almost entirely been lost.

It might also be worth exploring whether there are any differences from the sociolinguistic perspective in terms of the usage of the demonstrative paradigm and in the paradigm shifts (e.g., in a rural vs. the urban context, as some anecdotal evidence seems to suggest).

By way of conclusion, we may wish to propose spatial deixis in language, and more specifically demonstratives, as a very vivid example of the mechanisms that drive the semantico-pragmatic continuum in language. In fact, while the meaning of 'here' ('hier' and 'ovdje') can and is centrally described as 'at the location of the speaker', the exact location, i.e., the precise boundaries of the referential space (referential segment) that the lexical item refers to, can be determined only in relation to a concrete contextual situation of language use. As such, deictic terms might really represent one of the best windows into the structural and functional mechanisms of language, and might justifiably be posited as good candidates for the search for universality in language. Finally, the analysis proposed in this paper – by way of a typologically structured finding that suggests that demonstratives have a simple semantic structure which combines a basic deictic component with a (contextually provided) ontological component – provide further evidence supporting the domain hypothesis for demonstratives (see Gärdenfors & Brala-Vukanović 2018; Brala-Vukanović, Gärdenfors & Matešić 2021).

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SAŽETAK

POGLEDAJ OVO „OVDJE": OD FIZIČKI DO PRAGMATIČKI PROKSIMALNOGA U ENGLESKOME, NJEMAČKOME I HRVATSKOME

Polazeći od dobro poznate ontološke paralele između pokazne geste s jedne te jezične deikse s druge strane, u ovome radu analiziramo semantičku i pragmatičku dimenziju deiktičkih riječi „here" u engleskome, „hier" u njemačkome, te „ovdje" u hrvatskome jeziku. Pokušali smo sistematizirati različite uporabe navedenih termina – međujezično i unutarjezično – te ponuditi semantičko čitanje proksimalnoga elementa "jezičnog prostornog lociranja". Rezultati naše analize upućuju na zaključak da navedeno čitanje kreće od prostorne komponente, prelazi na vremensku da bi se potom metaforička lepeza čitanja razvila kroz seriju diskurzivnih funkcija. Jezičnu univerzalnost pri tome nalazimo ne samo na prostornoj odnosno prostorno-vremenskoj osi, već – u nešto manjem opsegu – i u diskurzivnome segmentu. Na svim razinama proksimalnost vezujemo uz referencijalnu prominentnost. Zaključno konstatiramo da fizičku prominentnost u prostornoj domeni možemo usporediti s pragmatičkom prominentnošću u širemu jezikoslovnom smislu odnosno jezičnoj uporabi.

Ključne riječi: deiksa, deiktičke funkcije, pokazna gesta, jezik prostora, engleski, njemački, hrvatski