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Demonstrative pronouns in Croatian and English: Insights from students' translations

Croatian and English differ significantly in terms of the demonstrative system – Croatian has a three-way person-oriented system, while English has a binary system. The demonstrative pronouns in Croatian are the proximal *ovaj(m.)/ova (f.)/ovo (n.),* the medial *taj (m.)/ta (f.)/to (n.)* and the distal *onaj (m.) /ona (f.) /ono (n.).* English demonstrative pronouns are the proximal *this* and the distal *that.* In order to find out more about how Croatian students translate demonstrative pronouns, an analysis of 557 translations from Croatian into English and 422 translations from English into Croatian was conducted. The analysis focused on both error-rate and the type of errors made. The hypothesis was that the most problematic element would be the medial Croatian demonstrative pronoun since English has no corresponding element. The hypothesis was confirmed, and several factors were identified as playing a role when it comes to the error-rate. The primary factor seems to be proximity since the participants had the least problems with the proximal pronoun in both languages, while the distal, and, in particular, the medial pronoun, proved to be significantly more challenging. The second factor seems to be the presence of a noun, since, as a rule, the error-rate was lower when the pronoun was accompanied by a noun. Finally, in the case of the medial pronoun, gender also seems to play a role, but coupled with the presence of the noun, as the neuter medial pronoun without a noun proved to be the most problematic in terms of translation.

Keywords: demonstrative pronouns, Croatian, English, translation

1. Introduction

Demonstratives, the class of words to which demonstrative pronouns belong, seem to be special in several respects. They belong to the class of grammatical words, and Diessel (2006: 464) states that they "constitute a unique class of linguistic expressions serving one of the most fundamental functions in language: In their basic use, they serve to coordinate the interlocutors' joint focus of attention." Perhaps the simplest way to define them is to say that they are words used to refer to entities, locations, events (usually from the temporal perspective), propositions, etc., without naming them directly because they are already known either by being present in the surroundings at the moment in which the communication is taking place, or because they have already been mentioned, or will be mentioned later on, in verbal communication.

Crosslinguistic studies indicate that they seem to be present in all languages, i.e., are candidates for linguistic universals (e.g., Dixon 2003; Diessel 1999a; 2006). Diessel (2006) also points out that they are very old and that "their roots cannot be traced back to other linguistic items" (2006: 463). In his work, Diessel (1999b: 21) states that 3rd person pronouns in many languages have been derived from pronominal demonstratives, and several authors (e.g., Diessel 1999a: 115; Brala-Vukanović 2015: 48) have noted that the definite article *the* has evolved from the demonstrative *that*. These claims seem to support the idea that demonstratives are indeed very old in terms of the development of language. Caldano and Coventry (2019: 1) also claim that they are among the words with the highest frequency in a language.

They are also some of the first words that children learn. According to Clark and Sengul (1978), demonstratives are included in the first 50 words children use and tend to be accompanied by gestures. By the age of 2:6 or 3:0, children begin to use *this* and *that* and *here* and *there* spontaneously in their speech (Clark 1978: 102). In a study that analysed data from the CHILDES database (McWinney 2000), Diessel and Coventry (2020) also found that a large proportion of children's early words consisted of demonstratives both in English and Dutch. However, based on a study of children between the ages of one and six who were speakers of seven different languages, Diessel and Monakhov (2023) report that the use of demonstratives declines with age as children begin adopting other types of referring terms, which suggests that the use of demonstratives evolves over life.

According to Diessel (2005), who studied demonstratives in 234 languages, all languages have at least two demonstratives, one for objects that are proximal and one for those that are distal. This should not be surprising if we take into account findings from neuroscience. Kemmerer (1999) claims that we actually have two separate perceptual systems: one being in charge of perceiving objects that are within our reach, which helps us to manipulate and avoid objects, and the other being in

charge of perceiving objects that are further away, which helps us to identify objects with our eyes. Based on the findings of previous studies, Caldano and Coventry (2019) claim that the reach-related area of the superior-parieto-occipital cortex and the intraparietal sulcus are involved in the processing of objects that are within reach.

Diessel (2005) states that, in terms of frequency of demonstrative systems in languages, the most common one is a binary proximal-distal system (he found it in 127 languages), with the next most common system being a three-way one. Languages that have three-way systems can be divided into two types: a) those in which the system is distance oriented, i.e., the entity/situation/aspect of reality being referred to is described in terms of its distance from the speaker as proximal, medial or distal; b) those in which the system is person oriented, i.e., proximal is what is close to the speaker, medial is what is close to the hearer, and distal is what is far both from the speaker and hearer.[1]

Demonstratives have been described as 'verbal pointing'[2] (e.g., Kita 2003) and they can be used both for exophoric reference, in which case the object being referred to is present in the interlocutors' surroundings and can, and frequently is, also pointed at by a gesture (either a hand gesture or a body gesture) and does not necessarily have to be named, and for endophoric reference, in which case the object being referred to is not present in the interlocutors' surroundings, but is represented in the interlocutors' minds, in which case it has to be named at some point in the conversation (or written communication).

One of the basic prerequisites for the use of demonstratives (and, indeed, for the use of language in general) is joint attention (e.g., Diessel 2006; Brala-Vukanović 2015; Brala-Vukanović & Matešić 2015; 2014; Peters & Özyürek 2016; Talmy 2017; etc.), and the main prerequisite for joint attention is the theory of mind (for more on the relationship between language and the theory of mind see Antonietti et al. 2006; Wilde Astington & Baird 2005; Tomasello 1999; Clark 1996), which is the ability to perceive a situation from the interlocutor's perspective, i.e., to adopt their perspective. In other words, for joint attention to be achieved the interlocutors have to be focused on the same entity/situation/aspect of reality, and each participant has to understand that the other participant(s) view(s) the entity/situation/aspect of reality in question from their particular perspective and that they will communicate successfully only if they take the other person's (or persons') perspective(s) and mental state(s) into consider-

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[1]   It seems that there may be languages with a three-way system that is both distance and person-oriented (as claimed by Coventry et al. (2008) for Spanish).

[2]   Although not everyone agrees with this. For example, de Mulder (1996) clearly states that demonstratives are not pointers since "it is only when the demonstrative and its associated demonstration are combined with the noun phrase that the referent can be identified" (1996: 35).

ation. If we accept the approach that demonstratives are words that are used to point to things, then it becomes clear that their main purpose is to establish joint attention. The nature of the process of using and understanding demonstratives is still debated with some experts claiming that it is egocentric in nature (e.g., Diessel 2014; Diessel & Coventry 2020), i.e., based on an egocentric frame of reference, while others claim it is sociocentric (e.g., Peters & Özyürek 2016), or that it depends on the language (e.g., Levinson et al. 2002; Levinson 2003, claim that speakers of English seem to use an egocentric perspective, while speakers of other languages use the absolute system of reference). Burenhult (2008) even claims there is one language, Jahai, which has demonstratives that encode an intrinsic frame of reference.

Perhaps, the best explanation of what happens in the hearer's mind when they encounter a demonstrative is offered by Talmy (2017: 2). According to him, the key elements in this process are the trigger (the deictic element itself, i.e., the demonstrative), the cues (information that helps identify the target) and the target (the linguistic element referred to by the demonstrative). In the first stage of the process, on hearing the trigger, the hearer looks for information he already has access to, i.e., for cues that would help him to identify the target. In the second stage, the hearer uses these cues to determine the target that the speaker has in mind. The cues the hearer has access to help him to rule out certain potential target candidates and to narrow down his choice to only one candidate which is the target. In the third stage, i.e., once he has identified the target, the hearer maps the concept in question onto the trigger that was used in the original sentence produced by the speaker, thus establishing joint attention.

1.1. Demonstrative pronouns in English

English has a binary proximal-distal system. The proximal demonstrative pronoun is *this* and the distal one is *that.* Brown-Schmidt et al. (2005) point out that demonstrative pronouns can be used to refer to those entities that have activated status in the interlocutors' minds (2005: 293) and that demonstratives are used to refer to less salient referents,[3] while Roberts (2002) stresses that noun phrases with *this* and *that* are a type of a definite noun phrase. According to Strauss (2002: 149), there is a tendency to use *this* to indicate that the information referred to is new, while *that* tends to be used to indicate that the information referred to is familiar. O'Keefe et al. (2007: 34) state that *this* and *that* are elements of the basic 2000-word vocabulary of English and that they are the 34th and 10[th][4] most frequent words in the Cambridge International Corpus, which includes both spoken and written English.

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[3]   According to them, personal pronouns are used for more salient referents.

[4]   Here we should keep in mind that *that* is not only a demonstrative pronoun in English, but has multiple functions, which would partly account for its high frequency.

Botley and McEnery (2001) studied three corpora (American Printing House for the Blind (APHB), the Associated Press (AP) and the Hansard Corpus) and found that in all three corpora demonstratives tend to predominantly appear in anaphoric uses, with only a few cases of cataphoric use.

1.2. Demonstrative pronouns in Croatian

Croatian grammar books (Maretić 1963; Brabec et al. 1963; Barić et al. 1995; Raguž 1997; Težak & Babić 2000; Silić & Pranjković 2005) agree that Croatian has a three-way system of demonstratives. The proximal demonstrative pronoun has the forms *ovaj* (m.)/ *ova* (f.)/ *ovo* (n.), the medial *taj* (m.)/ *ta* (f.)/ *to* (n.) and the distal *onaj* (m.)/ *ona* (f.)/ *ono* (n.). The proximal pronoun is used to refer to entities close to the speaker, the medial to refer to those close to the listener, and the distal to refer to those that are far from both the speaker and listener, i.e., Croatian has a person-oriented system. However, the system has been undergoing changes for a long time. Almost three decades ago, Žic-Fuchs (1996) noted that the proximal element *ovdje* and the medial element *tu* were used interchangeably in the Zagreb dialect and that the medial element had been used more frequently in contexts in which the proximal element should have been used. Brala-Vukanović and Matešić (2015) point out that even though in the standard language the demonstrative paradigm is three-way, in practice many speakers use a binary system and state that "what is by the norm described as the medial form *taj* is used both in proximal and distal senses (where it is used interchangeably with the normative proximal *ovaj* and the normative distal *onaj*)." (ibid.: 44).

Kordić (1997: 276-277) points out that the use of demonstrative pronouns in Croatian, Polish, Czech and Russian is particularly important, as these languages do not have articles, and, as a result, the demonstrative pronouns perform some of the functions that are typically performed by articles in other languages. This is corroborated by a recent study by Belaj et al. (2019: 216) who claim that the Croatian *ovaj, taj* and *onaj* in some contexts function as articles. Their analysis of 300 examples from the hrWaC corpus[5] revealed that *taj* is used as a definite article in 19% of instances (ibid.: 217-218). This should not be surprising if what Talmy (2017) claims is true: when listing the properties of triggers, he states that "the trigger is apparently always grammatically definite" (2017: 22).

Finally, a study of the hrWaC corpus (Brala-Vukanović & Memišević 2023) has revealed that the demonstrative pronouns in Croatian are almost exclusively used in the anaphoric position. The only exception was the medial pronoun in the neuter gender *to.* However, *to* also appeared very infrequently in the cataphoric position.

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[5]   hrWaC is a corpus of all texts from the hr. domain, i.e., consists only of written language.

2. The current study

Experience has shown that Croatian students of English, even those who are very proficient, frequently make errors when it comes to the use of English demonstratives, both in spontaneous production and when translating either from English into Croatian or from Croatian into English. One possible reason for this is the mismatch between the demonstrative systems in the two languages, i.e., the fact that English has a binary and Croatian a three-way system of demonstratives. If we accept Slobin's (1996) thinking-for-speaking hypothesis, which claims that each language trains its speakers to think in a way that is appropriate for it, i.e., to pay attention to those aspects of the world around them that have to be encoded in the language, and that that training is very hard to undo, then this mismatch becomes a likely reason for the issues that Croatian speakers have when it comes to demonstratives in English. When we combine this with Brala-Vukanović and Matešić's (2015) claim about the actual use of demonstratives by Croatian speakers, where the medial element is frequently used both for what is proximal and distal, it becomes likely that the medial element is the most problematic. Hence, we hypothesize that the Croatian speakers of English find translating the medial element more challenging than translating the proximal or distal one and that, because of this, they also have problems when translating from English into Croatian.

In order to test this hypothesis, a corpus-based study of student translations was conducted. As far as we know, no such studies have been conducted before, as studies of second-language speakers' use of demonstratives are quite rare and tend to focus on spontaneous use of demonstratives (e.g., Swierzbin 2010) or on how they interpret demonstratives (e.g., Ionin et al. 2012).

2.1. Methodology

The analysis was conducted on two corpora of student translations. The English-Croatian corpus consisted of 422 student translations from English into Croatian, and the Croatian-English corpus consisted of 557 translations from Croatian into English. The discrepancy in the number of translations in the two corpora results from the fact that the sample from which the translations were taken was a convenience sample.

The criteria for inclusion were as follows: 1) the original text had to contain at least one demonstrative pronoun; 2) only translations that were in-class graded assignments were included. The second criterion was applied for two reasons, i.e., to ensure that students produced the best translation they could and to ensure that they did not use any online translation tools, as these could influence which demonstrative pronoun they chose as the appropriate translation in a particular case. To

avoid the possible lack of general translation skills affecting the results, no translations by 1st year BA students were included in the corpora since students are taught basic translation skills during their first year of study.

All students whose translations were included in the corpora were native speakers of Croatian and their proficiency level in English was at least C1. They were students of English language and literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka. The prerequisite for enrolling in this program is a B2 level of proficiency in English, and by the second year, the students reach at least B2/C1 level. All translations included in the corpora were graded assignments and were additionally examined to exclude any that might reflect knowledge of English lower than the C1 level.

The original texts whose translations were included in the corpora varied in length from 251 to 1418 words. They were all written by native speakers of Croatian and English, respectively. The texts usually contained only one to two demonstrative pronouns, and the highest number of demonstrative pronouns per text was eight. All the demonstrative pronouns that appeared in the texts were used endophorically, i.e., for in-text reference. In terms of genre, all texts were newspaper/journal articles or scientific texts published in reputable publications (i.e., they had undergone proofreading prior to being published).

This approach enabled us to study translations of demonstrative pronouns in as natural a way as possible since the translated texts were not specially constructed for the purposes of research, i.e., they were texts written by various authors for the purpose of publication. The disadvantage of this approach is that it does not allow for control of actual use of demonstrative pronouns, i.e., the number of instances of use of particular demonstrative pronouns could not be controlled.

2.2. The procedure

In the first step, the original texts were analysed, i.e., examined for the presence of demonstrative pronouns. As already pointed out, only translations of those texts that contained instances of demonstrative pronouns were included. The task of identifying demonstrative pronouns cannot be performed automatically,[6] since in both languages the demonstrative pronouns have homonyms/ homographs. For example, in Croatian, the distal demonstrative pronoun for feminine gender and the 3rd person feminine personal pronoun are homographs, as are the distal demonstrative pronoun for neutral gender and the 3rd person neuter personal pronoun. In addition to this, the neuter forms of demonstrative pronouns (i.e., *ovo, to, ono*) are homonymous with general demonstrative words. The only way to distinguish be-

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[6]   At least, not without using an annotated corpus and a CQL tool.

tween them is to determine if, in a particular instance of use, the word is congruous with a noun that it refers to in terms of gender, case and number.[7] If it is, then it is a demonstrative pronoun. Below is an example from one of the original texts containing a demonstrative pronoun which appears without a noun:[8]

*Kada je upitan je li govorio o rješenju kojega je ponudio predstavnik Francuske, rekao je da nije govorio o **tom**, već o rješenju koje je ponudio predstavnik Njemačke.* ('When asked if he was referring to the solution offered by the French representative, he said that he was not referring to **that one**, but the solution offered by the German representative.')

In this example, ***tom*** refers to the noun *rješenje* and agrees with it in terms of gender, case and number (neuter, locative, singular).

If the neuter form is not congruous with the noun it refers to, i.e., it is used in such a way as to point to the referent (in speech, this is frequently accompanied by an appropriate hand gesture, i.e.), then it is a general pointing word. An example of such use would be:

Ovo *je naša nova tvornica.* ('**This** is our new factory.')

In the case of this sentence, the demonstrative word at the beginning of the sentence is a general pointing word since it does not agree with the noun in terms of gender, case and number, and is used to point to the referent, rather than to establish a within-text reference. Since the focus of this research were demonstrative pronouns, instances of general pointing words were not included in the analysis.

The English texts also had to be examined manually, since *that* can function as a determiner, demonstrative pronoun, conjunction and an adverb, while *this* can function as a determiner, demonstrative pronoun and an adverb. In terms of English grammar, the distinction between a demonstrative determiner and a demonstrative pronoun lies in the presence, i.e., absence, of a noun. In other words, when *this* or *that* replaces a noun, it is traditionally referred to as a demonstrative pronoun. When it appears with a noun, and at the same time demonstrates and introduces a noun, it is considered a demonstrative determiner. Traditionally, in English grammar, these two categories are considered demonstratives, and they are translated into Croatian as demonstrative pronouns. Only those instances when *this* and *that* appeared as demonstratives were included in the analysis, i.e., instances in which

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[7]   Naturally, except in those cases where the demonstrative pronoun performs the function of the subject and by default has to be in the nominative case.

[8]   Due to space restrictions, we will strive to bring simpler examples in which the demonstrative pronouns refer to nouns contained within the same sentence. In the original texts there were also a number of instances in which the pronouns referred to nouns explicitly stated in sentences that preceded them.

this was used as an adverb, and *that* was used as an adverb or a conjunction were excluded.

Even though demonstrative pronouns can sometimes function as articles in Croatian (or, more precisely, can perform some of the functions of articles), this does not mean that when they do, their translational counterparts in English will be articles. In fact, in the great majority of cases, their English counterparts are demonstratives. Let us take a look at the following example from one of the original texts, which is comparable to an example of a demonstrative pronoun used as an article given by Belaj et al. (2019: 202):

Među djevojčicama na fotografiji vjerojatno ste zapazili plavokosu u crvenoj haljini. **Ta** *je djevojčica deset godina kasnije postala jedna od najpoznatijih glumica na svijetu.* ('Among the girls in the photograph, you have probably noticed the blond one in the red dress. Ten years later, **that** girl became one of the most famous actresses in the world.')

The appropriate translation for the demonstrative pronoun *ta* in this case is the English demonstrative *that*, since we are still referring to the same girl mentioned in the first sentence. In English, in cases like this, when we are referring to the same entity as the one previously mentioned, a demonstrative has to be used. If a definite article were used, that would indicate a change of referent. In other words, in such a case, the blond girl in the red dress would be used as a referent point for defining another girl in the photograph, e.g.:

Among the girls in the photograph, you have probably noticed the blond one in the red dress. The girl standing behind her…

The most common cases in which the appropriate translational equivalent of a Croatian demonstrative pronoun is the definite article in English are probably those in which we are distinguishing between several entities belonging to the same class with the help of their properties, e.g., *ona viša* ('the taller one'), or, e.g., description of their location, e.g., *onaj na brdu* ('the one on the hill'). However, the original Croatian texts did not contain any such examples, or any other examples where the appropriate English translation of a Croatian demonstrative pronoun would have been the definite article.

The second step consisted of analysing the translations. The analysis of translations of demonstrative pronouns focused on two aspects – whether the translation was correct and, in case it was not, on the type of error made, i.e., whether the error consisted of using the wrong demonstrative pronoun, leaving it out, translating is as a personal pronoun or another type of functional word, or, in the case of translations into English, whether it was translated as an article when it was supposed to be translated as a demonstrative. For each analysed pronoun, data will be presented

separately for instances in which it appears with a noun and those in which it appears without a noun, as the presence of the noun is one of the factors that could affect the error rate. In order to see whether gender affects the error rate, the data for Croatian demonstratives will also be analysed with respect to gender.

3. Results

In this section the results for translations from Croatian into English will be presented first, followed by those for translations from English into Croatian. Due to space restrictions, examples of wrong translations will be given only when a particular type of mistranslation is mentioned as the predominant one (or one of the predominant ones) for the first time.

3.1. Croatian to English translations

The original texts contained 552 instances of the proximal pronoun (*ovaj* (m.): 332; *ova* (f.): 125; *ovo* (n.): 95), 121 instances of the distal pronoun (*onaj* (m.): 71; *ona* (f.): 34; *ono* (n.): 16), and 798 instances of the medial pronoun (*taj* (m.): 96; *ta* (f.): 72; *to* (n.): 630). All the pronouns were used anaphorically. In the following subsections, the results will be presented separately for the proximal, distal and medial pronouns according to gender, as it is one of the factors that may have an impact on the error-rate.

3.1.1. Proximal pronoun (ovaj, ova, ovo)

Figure 1 shows the results. In this and all following figures Correct-n stands for a correct translation of a demonstrative pronoun that appears with a noun, Incorrect-n stands for an incorrect translation of a demonstrative pronoun which appears with a noun, Correct-w/n stands for a correct translation of a demonstrative pronoun that appears without a noun, and Incorrect-w/n stands for an incorrect translation of a demonstrative pronoun that appears without a noun.
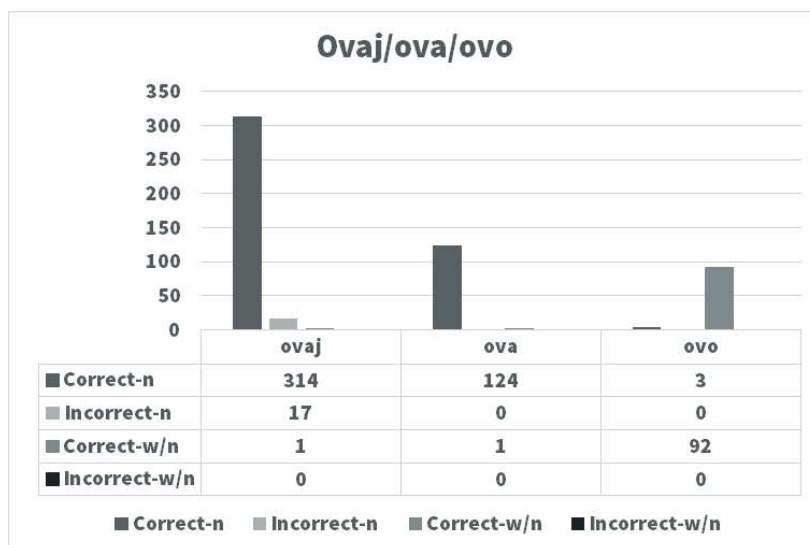
Figure 1. Croatian-English translation, proximal pronoun

The masculine form of the proximal pronoun, i.e., *ovaj*, almost exclusively appeared with a noun (99.7% of total instances) (Figure 1). It was correctly translated as *this* in 94.86% of instances. In those instances when it was not translated correctly (5.14% of total instances), the majority of errors consisted of it being translated as the definite article *the* (88.2%), e.g.:

Ovaj *je znanstveni skup privukao vodeće svjetske stručnjake iz područja genetike.* ('**This** scientific conference has attracted leading world experts in the field of genetics.')

translated as:

The *scientific conference has attracted leading world experts in the domain of genetics.*

The context in which the sentence appeared clearly indicated that '*this*' was the appropriate translation as the sentence directly referred to an already mentioned scientific conference, i.e., the function of the demonstrative pronoun was to establish within-text reference. The definite article might have been an appropriate translation if a reference was made to another conference, e.g., '*The scientific conference held last year, unlike this one, …*'

The analysis of the use of the masculine form revealed that it was used as an article in 30.8% of instances out of the total of 331 instances in which it appeared with a noun, and the analysis of instances when it was translate incorrectly as the definite article (15 instances) revealed that it was used as an article in seven instances and as a demonstrative in eight instances.

In the remaining cases it was incorrectly translated as the distal demonstrative *that*. In the only case when it appeared without a noun it was translated correctly.

The feminine form of the proximal pronoun, *ova*, also almost exclusively appeared with a noun (99.2% of total instances). All translations of this pronoun, regardless of whether it was used with or without a noun, were correct.

The pattern for the neuter form of the proximal pronoun, *ovo*, was the opposite of that for the masculine and feminine form as it predominantly appeared without a noun (96.84% of total instances). All the translations, regardless of whether it appeared without or with a noun, were correct.

Overall, the results indicate that the proximal pronoun does not seem to be problematic for highly proficient Croatian speakers of English when it comes to translating it into English, regardless of its gender.

3.1.2. Distal pronoun (onaj, ona, ono)

Onaj/ona/ono

	onaj	ona	ono
■ Correct-n	8	5	3
▨ Incorrect-n	4	5	2
■ Correct-w/n	29	18	4
■ Incorrect-w/n	30	6	7

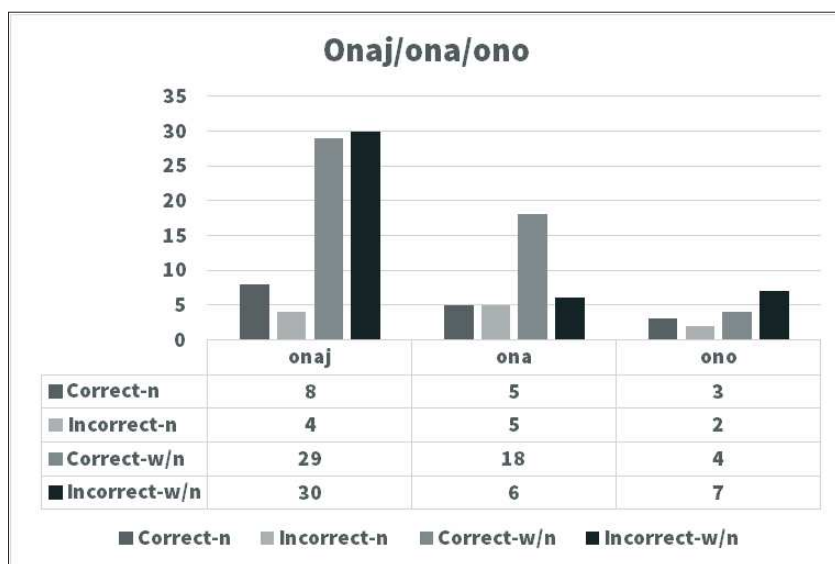■ Correct-n   ▨ Incorrect-n   ■ Correct-w/n   ■ Incorrect-w/n

Figure 2. Croatian-English translation, distal pronoun

As can be observed from Figure 2, the number of instances of the distal pronoun that appeared in the original text was significantly lower than that of the proximal pronoun. However, some conclusions can still be drawn.

The masculine form, *onaj*, appeared without a noun in the majority of cases (83% of total instances). When it appeared with a noun, it was translated correctly as *that* in 66.67% of cases. All the incorrect translations (33.33% of total instances) consisted of it being incorrectly translated as the definite article. Out of the total

of 12 instances in which it was used with a noun, it was used as an article in five instances, and the analysis of incorrect translations revealed that two of these were incorrectly translated as articles, while the remaining two incorrect translations where it was translated as the definite article were those in which it was used as a demonstrative. When it appeared without a noun it was translated correctly in less than half of instances (49.15%). Incorrect translations predominantly consisted of the demonstrative pronoun being translated as a personal pronoun *they* (53.3% of incorrect translations), or as the definite article *the* (40% of incorrect translations). In only 6.7% of cases, it was incorrectly translated as the proximal pronoun *this*. The examples of translations in which the demonstrative was incorrectly translated as the definite article are comparable to the one given above for *ovaj,* so here we will bring only an example of a mistranslation involving replacement of the demonstrative by a personal pronoun:

Kada je rekao da mu se sviđa što nije dizajniran kao suvremeni modeli, već kao **oni***, mislio je na modele s početka stoljeća.* ('When he said that he liked that it was not designed like modern models, but like **those**, he meant the models from the beginning of the century.' – *it* in this sentence refers to a ring)

translated as:

When he said that he liked that it was not designed like modern models, but like **they***, he meant the models from the beginning of the century.*

The feminine form of the distal pronoun, *ona*, also predominantly appeared without a noun (70.59% of total instances). In cases when it appeared with a noun it was translated correctly as *that* in 50% of cases. All the errors (50% of total instances) consisted of it being translated as the definite article *the.* Out of the total of 10 instances in which it appeared, it was used as an article in three, and two of these were incorrectly translated as an article (the remaining three incorrect translations as articles involved uses of *ona* as a demonstrative). The error rate was significantly lower when it appeared without a noun, since it was translated correctly in 75% of instances. In the case of incorrect translations (total of 25% of total instances), it was either translated as the definite article *the* (83.3%) or as the proximal pronoun *this* (16.7%). The caveat here is that there were only a total of 10 instances of this pronoun with a noun and 24 instances without a noun in total.

The neuter form also appeared without a noun in the majority of cases (68.75% of total instances). When it was used with a noun, it was translated correctly in 60% of instances. In the 40% of instances in which it was translated incorrectly, it was translated as the definite article *the.* Here, we are talking about only a total of five instances of use of this pronoun with a noun, and in three of these it was used as an article, one of which was incorrectly translated as the definite article. When it was used without a noun, the error rate was extremely high – it was translated incorrect-

ly in 63.63% of instances. In the majority of cases, it was incorrectly translated as the definite article *the* (85.7%) and only in one instance (14.3%) as the 3rd person pronoun *it.* Here again, we need to be careful about making conclusions, as there were only five instances of *ono* with a noun and only 11 instances of *ono* without a noun.

3.1.3. Medial pronoun (taj, ta, to)

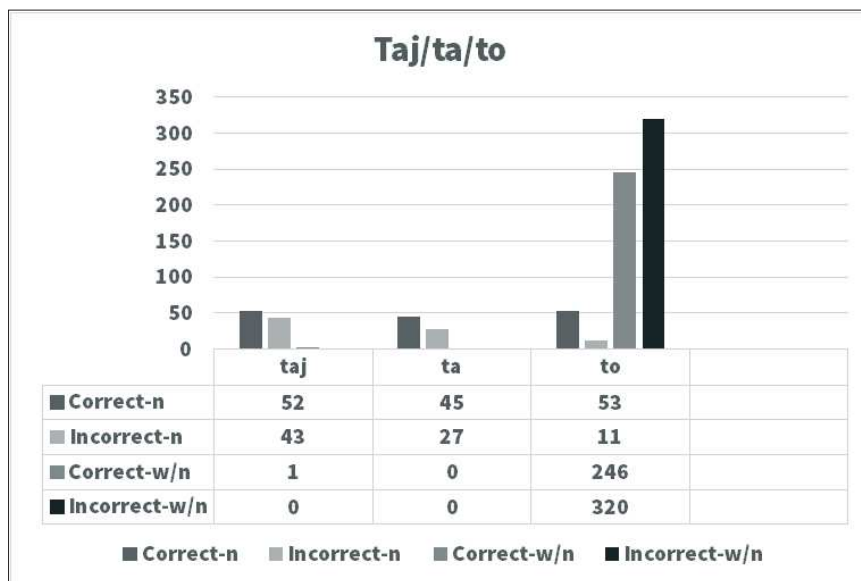|	taj	ta	to	
■ Correct-n	52	45	53	
■ Incorrect-n	43	27	11	
■ Correct-w/n	1	0	246	
■ Incorrect-w/n	0	0	320	

Figure 3. Croatian-English translation, medial pronoun

In terms of frequency, the medial pronoun was the most represented demonstrative pronoun in the original texts. In the great majority of cases it appeared in the neuter gender (Figure 3).

Because the medial pronoun tends to be used in non-standard ways by some native speakers, i.e., they tend to use it when they are supposed to use the proximal or the distal pronoun, the original texts in Croatian were checked for standard and non-standard use of the medial pronoun. The analysis revealed that the medial pronoun was used in non-standard ways in 11% of cases. When translations of such examples were compared to the translations of examples in which the medial pronoun was used in standard ways, no significant differences in the error-rate, or the type of errors made, were found. Therefore, the results were pooled together and are presented below.

The masculine form almost exclusively appeared with a noun (98.95% of all instances). It was correctly translated in 54.74% of instances (*this:* 82.7%; that: 17.3%). Incorrect translations consisted of it being translated as the distal demonstrative

that in those instances when it was supposed to be translated as the proximal one (67.4% of incorrect translations), e.g.:

*Pokazalo se da je **taj** muškarac njezin otac.* ('It turned out that **this** man was her father.')

translated as:

*It turned out that **that** man was her father.*

or as the definite article *the* (32.5%). *Taj* was used as an article in 29.5% of total instances in which it appeared with a noun (i.e., 28 instances), and out of these, it was incorrectly translated as the definite article in five instances. The remaining incorrect translations as the definite article (14) involved *taj* used as a demonstrative. When it was used without a noun, which was just one instance, it was translated correctly.

The feminine form appeared in the original texts exclusively with a noun. It was translated correctly in 62.5% of total instances (*this:* 82.2%; *that:* 17.8%). Incorrect translations (37.5% of total instances) included the following errors: being translated as the distal demonstrative *that* when it should have been translated as the proximal one (63%), being translated as the definite article *the* (22.2%) and being translated as the proximal demonstrative *this* instead of as the distal one (14.8%). *Ta* was used as an article in 29.1% instances (i.e., 21 instances), and six of these were incorrectly translated as the definite article, while the remaining incorrect translations as the definite article were those of instances where *ta* was used as a demonstrative.

The neuter form predominantly appeared without a noun (89.84% of total instances). When it appeared with a noun (10.16% of total instances), it was translated correctly in 82.81% of instances as *that* (73.6%) and *this* (26.4%). The most common type of incorrect translation was the pronoun being left out (45.45%), e.g.:

*Slobodno je vrijeme provodio slikajući **ta** prostrana polja.* ('He spent his free time painting **these** vast fields.')

translated as:

He spent his free time painting vast fields.

The next most common incorrect translation was the distal demonstrative *that* (45.45%), followed by the proximal demonstrative *this* (9.1%). Interestingly, even though *to* was used as an article in 25% of instances, none of the incorrect translations involved it being translated as the definite article. In the instances when it appeared without a noun, the participants produced more errors than they did correct translations, i.e., the percentage of correct translations was only 43.36% (*this:* 52%; *that*: 48%). The most common type of error was translating the medial demonstrative pronoun as the 3rd person pronoun *it* (49.4%), e.g.:

(8) *Kada je upitan je li govorio o rješenju kojega je ponudio predstavnik Francu-*
*ske, rekao je da nije govorio o **tom**, već o rješenju koje je ponudio predstavnik Njemač-*
ke. ('When asked if he was referring to the solution offered by the French represent-
ative, he said that he was not referring to **that one**, but the solution offered by the
German representative.')

translated as:

When asked if he was talking about the solution offered by the French represent-
*ative, he sad that he was not talking about **it**, but about the solution offered by the*
German representative.

The remaining types of errors included: demonstrative pronoun being left out
(24%), distal pronoun *that* instead of the proximal one (20.6%), *which* (4.9%), proxi-
mal pronoun *this* instead of the distal one (1.25%).

3.2. English to Croatian translations

The original texts contained a total of 419 instances of the English proximal de-
monstrative *this* and 170 instances of the distal demonstrative *that*. In all instances
the demonstratives were used anaphorically, i.e., they referred to an already men-
tioned referent.

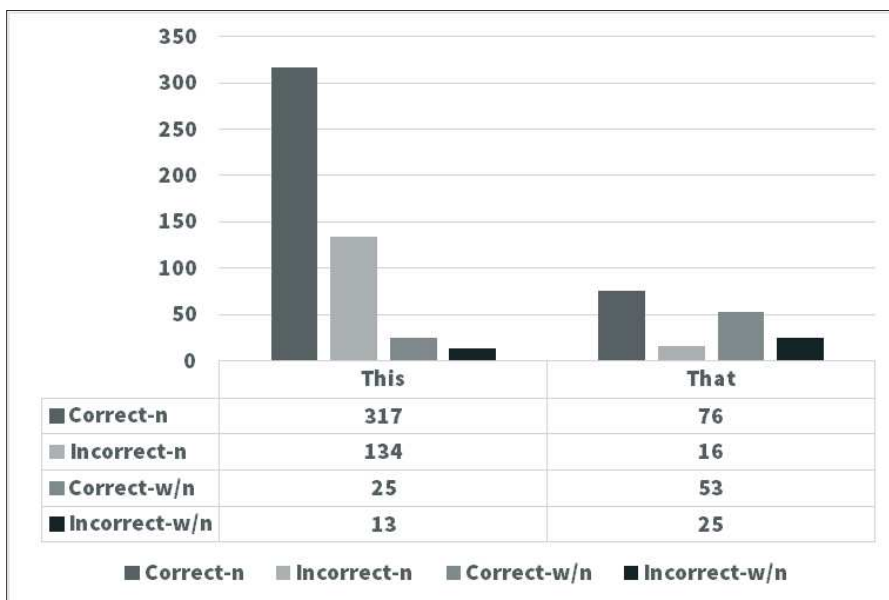|	This	That
■ Correct-n	317	76
■ Incorrect-n	134	16
■ Correct-w/n	25	53
■ Incorrect-w/n	13	25

Figure 4. English-Croatian translation

As can be observed (Figure 4), in the analysed texts, the proximal demonstrative *this* appeared much more frequently with a noun (93% of instances) than without it (7%), while the distal demonstrative *that* appeared almost equally frequently with a noun (54.1%) and without it (45.9%).

Analysis of translations of the proximal demonstrative *this* in those instances in which it appeared with a noun has revealed that the participants translated it correctly in 63% of cases. Out of these correct translations, the appropriate translation into Croatian in 61.63% of instances was the proximal pronoun *ovaj/ova/ovo*, while in 38.37% of instances it was the medial pronoun *taj/ta/to*. When it comes to incorrect translations (37% of total instances), the great majority of errors consisted of the participants using the medial pronoun *taj/ta/to* instead of the proximal pronoun *ovaj/ova/ovo* (72%). The remaining incorrect translations included leaving out the pronoun completely (25.8%), *takav* ('such') (1.6%), *onaj* ('that') (0.5%).

When it comes to the instances in which *this* appeared without a noun, the participants offered correct translations in a total of 65.8% of instances. Out of these, the appropriate translation was the Croatian proximal pronoun *ovaj/ova/ovo* in 52% of instances, and the medial pronoun *taj/ta/to* in 48% of instances. In the case of incorrect translations (total of 43.21%), the most common type of error was the use of the medial pronoun instead of the proximal one (69%). In the case of *this* without a noun, the participants left out the pronoun or translated it incorrectly as the distal pronoun equally frequently (15.38%).

When it comes to the distal demonstrative *that,* when it was used with a noun the participants produced correct translations in 82.6% of cases (*taj/ta/to* in 97.4% of instances, *onaj* in 2.6% of instances). The distribution of incorrect answers (total of 17.5%) was as follows: *taj* (medial pronoun) – 52.5%, *ovaj* (proximal pronoun) – 18.75%, *onaj* (distal pronoun) – 12.5%, *takav* ('such') – 6.25%, pronoun left out – 6.25%.

In those instances in which *that* was used without a noun, the correct translations were noticeably less frequent (67.9% of total translations) compared to instances in which it was used with a noun (82.6%). The appropriate translation was *onaj/ona//ono* in 81.1% of instances and *taj/ta/to* in 18.9% of instances. In the case of incorrect translations (32.1% of the total number of translations), the predominant type of error consisted of leaving out the demonstrative pronoun (92%), while the participants much less frequently used the medial pronoun *taj* (8%) in cases where the appropriate translation was the distal pronoun.

4. Discussion

The participants had issues translating demonstrative pronouns both from Croatian into English and from English into Croatian, and the majority of errors they made involved the Croatian medial element. Thus, the hypothesis was confirmed.

Translating the proximal Croatian pronoun did not seem to present a problem for the participants, as they only made errors in the case of the masculine form, but even in this case, the percentage of errors was almost negligible. This is not surprising since the proximal pronoun in Croatian always refers to an entity close to the speaker, and it is relatively easy to identify that the corresponding English pronoun is also the proximal one, i.e., *this.* What is more interesting here is that our participants only made errors when translating the masculine form and that almost all the instances of incorrect translations, which were few, involved our participants translating the demonstrative pronoun as the definite article. This supports the claims previously made in the literature that demonstratives are always definite (cf. Talmy 2017) and that demonstrative pronouns are also used in Croatian to express definiteness (cf. Belaj et. al 2019). It would seem that these participants have not yet fully mastered the distinction between referring to an entity that is unique in the discourse and encoded by the definite article (i.e., the only entity of its type mentioned in the discourse) and referring to an entity that is unique in the immediately salient situation (encoded by the demonstrative pronoun) (cf. Roberts 2002). In other words, in these examples of masculine proximal pronouns, the participants seem to have focused only on the identification component while disregarding the demonstrative component, which also needed to be included in the translations to ensure proper understanding of the connections between entities in the text.

The distal Croatian pronoun proved to be more challenging for the participants. As has already been mentioned in the Results section, this pronoun was the least represented in translations, but it appeared in a sufficient number of instances to enable us to draw some tentative conclusions.

The first thing that can be noticed when looking at the translations of the distal pronoun is that the presence of a noun with the demonstrative pronouns seems to have an effect on the error rate. In the masculine and neuter form, the error rate was lower in those cases when the pronoun appeared with a noun, while in the case of the feminine form the pattern was reversed, i.e., the error rate was lower when it appeared without a noun. This would seem to suggest that the presence of noun along with the demonstrative pronoun might be one of the factors that affect the error rate in the case of the distal pronoun. However, due to the low number of instances of distal pronoun (compared to those of the proximal and medial one), it is impossible to make strong claims.

Once again, the types of errors can reveal something about the possible reasons for errors. In the case of the masculine form, when it appeared with a noun, all the instances of incorrect translation involved participants using the definite article instead of the demonstrative pronoun, just like in the case with the proximal pronoun. However, when the pronoun appeared without a noun, the participants made another type of error very frequently – in addition to translating it as the definite article, they also frequently translated it as the personal pronoun. Two reasons might explain this: the first is that the masculine distal demonstrative pronoun is homonymous with the masculine 3rd person personal pronoun in several cases, particularly in its plural form (including the nominative case), which might have mislead some of the participants; the second reason is that demonstrative pronouns and 3rd person personal pronouns are closely related, since, according to Diessel (1999), 3rd person personal pronouns in many languages have been derived from demonstrative pronouns.

Interestingly, in the case of the feminine form, even though it is once again homonymous with the 3rd person feminine personal pronoun, none of the participants translated it as a personal pronoun. Instead, the errors predominantly consisted of using the definite article instead of the demonstrative pronoun. The same is true of the neuter distal pronoun (also homonymous with the neuter 3rd person personal pronoun), where the participants made the same type of errors, with only one instance of use of the neuter 3rd person pronoun instead of the demonstrative pronoun. However, the total number of instances of the neuter distal demonstrative pronoun in the texts was significantly lower than that of the masculine one, and it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. It is entirely possible that had the number of these pronouns been higher, the distribution of errors might have differed significantly.

It is important to note that the errors that involved using the proximal pronoun instead of the distal one were extremely rare, which indicates that the participants did not, as a rule, have issues with the basic opposition near-far.

The medial pronoun was the most represented one in the texts, and it predominantly appeared in the neuter form. In the masculine and feminine form, it almost exclusively appeared with a noun. The error rate was high, almost 50% for the masculine and over 35 % for the feminine form. In terms of errors, the majority of incorrect translations (over 60% of errors in the case of both forms) consisted of using the distal pronoun when the proximal one was supposed to be used. This should not be surprising as the Croatian medial pronoun does not have an English counterpart, meaning that the participants had to opt for either the English proximal or the distal pronoun. The problem in choosing between these two is twofold: a) the medial element in Croatian should encode those entities that are close to the

listener; b) as mentioned in the Introduction, many native speakers use the medial pronoun in daily communication to refer both to those entities that are proximal to the speaker and to those that are far from both the speaker and listener, i.e., the concept of medial element is being lost and taking over the function of the proximal and distal elements. This would suggest that those participants who do use the medial element the way it is supposed to be used in Croatian still face the issue of there not being a corresponding element in English and having to choose between two elements, neither of which necessarily encodes the situation appropriately from the perspective of Croatian. When faced with such a situation, they may not be able to map it appropriately onto the English system which would then lead to this type of error where the inappropriate English demonstrative pronoun is used, i.e., in such a case the problem would stem from participants not being able to switch appropriately from the Croatian to the English demonstrative system. In the second case, i.e., those speakers using the medial element to refer to proximal and distal elements, the reason for this type of error might be a simple direct transfer from Croatian into English – i.e., the participants do not even consider the differences between the two systems, but simply choose the demonstrative pronoun they would normally replace by the medial one in Croatian.

The second most common error in the case of both forms was, yet again, the use of the definite article instead of the demonstrative pronoun. As already mentioned above, this type of error seems to be the result of the inability to distinguish between situations in which an entity that is unique in the discourse is mentioned, and as a result, encoded by the definite article, and those in which an entity that is unique in the immediately salient situation, and thus encoded by the demonstrative pronoun, is mentioned (cf. Roberts 2002).

The neuter form of the medial pronoun was particularly interesting. It was the form with absolutely the highest number of instances in the original texts out of all the forms of all the pronouns. Unlike the masculine and feminine form, it predominantly appeared without a noun, and, in that case, it was especially problematic for the participants as they translated it incorrectly in almost 60% of instances. This is the only case in which the participants offered more incorrect than correct translations, indicating that this form is particularly problematic.

The most common type of error in translating the neuter medial pronoun was using the 3rd person neuter pronoun *it* (almost 50% of all the errors) instead of the appropriate demonstrative pronoun. There are two possible explanations for this type of error. The first is that the participants were unable to appropriately judge the salience of the entity being referred to and used the personal pronoun, which is in English used for more salient entities (see Brown-Schmidt et al., 2005). However, if we look at the next most common error, leaving out the demonstrative pronoun

all together (24% of instances), this suggests the two types of errors might be the result of a strategy used by the participants – when unsure of which demonstrative pronoun should be used in English, they employ strategies to avoid it by either using a personal pronoun or avoiding mentioning it. In the majority of cases, both strategies still resulted in grammatically correct sentences. However, what the participants failed to realise was that this way they were changing the meaning significantly, thus breaking the first postulate of translation – the meaning has to be the same in both languages.

In those instances where they used the inappropriate demonstrative pronoun, they predominantly used the distal pronoun instead of the proximal one (bit over 20%). When we combine this with the results for the masculine and feminine form, and with the fact that half the errors in instances in which the neuter pronoun appeared with a noun were of the same nature, this would seem to suggest that the medial pronoun in Croatian is, at least by these speakers, primarily used to replace the distal pronoun, which then causes issues when it comes to translating into English.

Considering that demonstrative pronouns can have an article-like function in Croatian, it might be expected that this would be one of the factors that might affect the error rate when it comes to translating them into English, i.e., that they might be more frequently inappropriately translated as definite articles into English when they are used as articles. The data does not support this, as in those cases where the demonstrative pronouns were used with nouns, the participants were not more likely to translate article-like instances as articles than they were likely to translate instances in which they were used as demonstratives as articles. Additionally, in the case of the distal pronoun, they even showed a tendency towards translating instances in which the demonstrative pronoun was used without a noun as the definite article (i.e., as *the one*).

Let us now turn our attention to translations from English into Croatian. In the case of the proximal pronoun *this,* the majority of errors consisted of participants using the medial pronoun instead of the proximal one, once again showing that the medial pronoun is challenging. When it comes to the distal pronoun, in those instances in which it was used with a noun, it did not represent much of a problem for the participants since they produced correct translations in almost 83% of cases. The most common type of error was the use of the medial element instead of the distal one, which is line with the results for Croatian-English translations. When the English distal pronoun appeared without a noun, the error rate was not negligible (around 32%), and the overwhelming majority of errors (92%) consisted of leaving out the demonstrative pronoun from the translation, which again is in line with the results for Croatian-English translations.

Taken together, these results for both languages suggest that the primary factor that affects the error rate is proximity, since the participants, overall, had the least problems with the proximal pronouns, regardless of whether we are talking about the translation from Croatian into English or the translation from English into Croatian. The distal pronoun posed certain challenges, but, as expected, due to the basic differences between the two systems, the most challenging was the medial element. The presence of a noun with the demonstrative pronoun also seems to have some effect in the case of the non-proximal pronouns, as the participants made fewer errors when these pronouns appeared with a noun. Finally, in the case of the medial pronoun, in translations from Croatian into English, gender combined with the (lack of) presence of a noun with the pronoun also had a significant effect. Analysis of errors made when translating the proximal and distal pronouns from Croatian into English and from English into Croatian, suggests that participants, as a rule, do not have major issues with the basic opposition near-far. However, it suggests that participants encounter significant issues with the medial element.

5. Conclusions

The results of the study have confirmed the hypothesis that the most problematic element when translating demonstrative pronouns from Croatian into English and from English into Croatian is the medial element. The reason for this probably stems from the basic difference in the demonstrative systems of the two languages where Croatian has a three-way system and English a binary one, which would be in line with the thinking-for-speaking hypothesis (Slobin 1996), as the most challenging element was precisely the one which exists in only one language indicating that it is very difficult for the participants to switch from the way of thinking appropriate in their mother tongue to the one appropriate in their second language.

Several factors were identified as playing a role when it comes to the error rate in translations, the most significant one of which is proximity. Another factor which seems to play a relevant role is the presence of a noun with the demonstrative pronoun, while gender seems to play a role only in the case of the medial pronoun but coupled with the presence of a noun.

Future research should focus on a more detailed study of the identified factors that have an impact on the error-rate as this could help us better understand the underlying issues when it comes to translating demonstrative pronouns. Also, studies employing specially constructed texts, which would ensure a balanced presence of all the pronouns, could provide more information, particularly about translating the Croatian distal pronoun. Since in this study organic texts were used, the number of instances of the distal Croatian pronoun was relatively low compared to the number

of instances of the proximal and medial pronoun. As a result, the conclusions about the distal Croatian pronoun are more tentative.

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POKAZNE ZAMJENICE U HRVATSKOME I ENGLESKOME: UVIDI IZ STUDENTSKIH PRIJEVODA

Sustavi pokaznih zamjenica hrvatskoga i engleskoga jezika uvelike se razlikuju – hrvatski ima tročlani, a engleski dvočlani sustav. Hrvatske pokazne zamjenice uključuju proksimalnu *ovaj(m.)/ova (f.)/ovo (n.),* medijalnu *taj (m.)/ta (f.)/to (n.)* i distalnu *onaj (m.) /ona (f.) /ono (n.).* Engleske su pokazne zamjenice proksimalna *this* i distalna *that.* Kako bi saznali više o tomu kako hrvatski studenti prevode pokazne zamjenice s jednoga na drugi jezik provedena je analiza 557 prijevoda s hrvatskoga na engleski i 422 prijevoda s engleskoga na hrvatski. Analizirana je učestalost grešaka ali i priroda grešaka. Polazna je hipoteza bila da će najproblematičnija za prijevod biti hrvatska medijalna pokazna zamjenica jer u engleskome jeziku ne postoji ekvivalentna pokazna zamjenica. Hipoteza je potvrđena te je identificirano nekoliko čimbenika koji imaju utjecaj na učestalost pogrešaka. Čini se da je primarni čimbenik blizina jer su ispitanici, neovisno o smjeru prijevoda, najmanje problema imali pri prevođenju proksimalne pokazne zamjenice, dok se prevođenje distalne, a osobito medijalne zamjenice, pokazalo znatno zahtjevnijim. Drugi je bitan čimbenik prisutnost imenice, jer je učestalost grešaka bila znatno niža u slučajevima kada je pokazna zamjenica stajala uz imenicu. Konačno, u slučaju medijalne zamjenice, čini se da i rod ima utjecaja, ali samo u kombinaciji s imenicom, jer se najproblematičnijom za prijevod pokazala medijalna zamjenica srednjega roda u slučajevima kada se pojavljuje bez imenice.

Ključne riječi: pokazne zamjenice, hrvatski, engleski, prijevod

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