

# Macedonian '*da ne*' questions as distance markers

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# Topic

- Independent use of the modal particle *da* in Mac when it combines with the negative marker 'ne'
- **Deontic** (directive/optative/hortative)  
*Da ne odime sega, docna e!* 'Let's not go now, it's late!'  
*Da ne si mrdnal!* 'Don't you dare move!'
- **Interrogative** (expressing various levels of uncertainty)  
*Da ne imaš malku kafe?* 'You don't happen to have some coffee, do you?'  
*Da ne ti e lošo?* 'You aren't feeling very well, are you?/  
Are you feeling well?'
- **Admirative**  
*Ti da ne znaeš! Ne e možno!*  
'You don't know! That's impossible!'

# The particle *da*

- A wide range of uses in South Slavic languages, in both syntactically dependent and in independent clauses
- *da*-construction has fully replaced the infinitive in Balkan Slavic (Macedonian and Bulgarian)
- The optative and imperative functions of *da* occurred early in Old Slavonic and served as bases for the development of functions that replaced the infinitive in Balkan Slavic (Asenova 2002: 182)

# The independent uses of the particle *da*

- Common for all Balkan languages; discussed in literature on *da*-construction, e.g.
  - Kramer (1986) for Macedonian,
  - Bužarovska (1999) for Macedonian and Greek,
  - Asenova (2002) for Bulgarian, Albanian, Greek and Romanian,
  - Mišeska Tomić (2006) for all Balkan languages (??).
- fulfill a variety of modal meanings that range from deontic to conditional
- more emphasis on the deontic functions.

***Da ne zaboravite da mu se javite na tatko vi!***

**‘Don’t forget to call your father!’** Topolinjska (2008: 49)

# *da* – pragmatically marked

- Particle *da* in the independent *da*-constructions brings in a particular modification of the proposition that makes them suitable for specific discourse-pragmatic functions.
- Asenova (2002: 183): the directive *da*-constructions in Bulgarian and their equivalents in other Balkan languages are ‘emotionally marked’,
- Negative commands express strong prohibition based on the speaker’s assumption that the addressee is reluctant to carry out the order
- Topolinjska (2008: 49): 2<sup>nd</sup> person *da*-construction with imperative semantics have stronger expressive tone in comparison to the ‘synthetic’ Imperative, which, in turn, often has a reminder overtone.

# Levels of politeness in directive *da*-constructions

**Kramer** (1986: 40-41) four levels

- The strongest with I-past

*Vednaš da si došol!* ‘Get over here immediately!’

- Negative command – threat

*Od sega da ne sum te videla da go imaš pred sebe!*

‘From now on don’t let me see you with it in front of you.’

- With non-past – polite requests

*Da mi ja doneseš knjigata!* ‘Bring me the book, please!’

- perfective imperfect are the most polite

*Da mi ja doneseše knjigata.* ‘Bring me the book, would you please?’

# Pragmatic distance Spencer-Oatey (1996)

“Reconsidering power and distance”

- Communication among people is to a great extent ruled by:
  - the factors grouped around the main concept of **power**, placed on the **vertical axis**, and
  - the factors grouped around the concept of **distance**, placed on the **horizontal axis**.
- *Distance* is often described in terms of intimacy, degree of familiarity, degree of friendship/intimacy, like-mindedness, interactive closeness, etc.

# Pragmatic distance

Brown and Levinson (1987)

- Interlocutors consider the *power* and *distance* of their relationship when choosing among different options for conveying a given speech act.
  - (i) the ‘social distance’ (D) of S and H  
(a *symmetrical relation*)
  - (ii) the relative ‘power’ (P) of S and H  
(an *asymmetric relation*)
  - (iii) the absolute ranking (R) of imposition in a particular culture
- Our hypothesis is that *da ne*-questions are primarily employed for horizontal distance



# Interrogative negated *da*-construction

- Epistemic negated *da*-constructions are characterized by interrogative intonation;
- The verb receives the stress.
- The unstressed negative particle creates a single phonological unit with the particle *da*, similar to *dali*.
- Note the difference in the sentence focus between
  - a. the epistemic *da ne* construction and  
*Да не ОДИШ таму?*  
'Are you going there, by any chance?'
  - b. deontic  
*Да НЕ одиш таму!*  
'Don't go there!'

# Treatment in the literature

## - Topolinjska

- *da ne* questions are mentioned in all accounts of independent *da*-constructions, but to our knowledge, they have not been given full attention, at least in the literature on Macedonian and Bulgarian.
- Topolinjska (2009: 54) - a type of yes/no questions in which “the one who poses the question expresses doubt, uneasiness at the thought that the answer may be positive:

*Da ne si go pokanil?* ‘You haven’t invited him, have you?’

- This is however, only one of the possible interpretations, heavily influenced by the semantics of the verb.

# Treatment in the literature

## - Asenova & Kramer

- Asenova (2002:189-190) - in Bulgarian admiratives with the negative particle are common:

*Da ne si poludjal?* ‘Have you gone mad?’

- the modal particle *da* is responsible for the nuance of doubt, disbelieve and assumption.
- Kramer (1986: 43) includes this type of *da ne* questions in the directive (optative) class interpreting the utterance as a wish ‘May you not be sick!’

*Da ne si nešto bolen?* ‘You are not sick, are you?’

# Neutral vs. biased questions

- Neutral polar questions have the scope over the whole proposition. S assumes that there are only two possible answers to the question: yes or no. The S asks the H to make a choice between two poles.

*Dali sakaš da si odime? Sakaš li da si odime?*

‘Do you want to leave now?’

- **Hypothesis:** *da ne* questions have the intonation of polar questions, but they are different semantically and pragmatically. S asks H to confirm or deny the S’s assumption about the proposition.

*Da ne sakaš da si odime?*

‘Do you maybe want to leave now?’

# *da ne* questions are biased

- The speaker already has some expectations depending on the situation, but expresses uncertainty and asks the H for confirmation or denial
- In asking a biased question S has some anticipation as to H's response although the question offers the choice of two.
- The interpretation is **not whether the proposition is negative or positive.**
- There is a **modal epistemic component** - S's supposition regarding the event.

# Pragmatic functions

- S's uncertainty opens a possibility for different implicatures
- These implicatures can assume various pragmatically determined interpretations depending on the situation
- Interpretation is based on shared knowledge between S & H – situational or interpersonal

**Hypothesis:** used between people who know each other well and feel close for some reason

# 1. Seeking confirmation

*Da ne se javi Marko?* ‘Has Marko called?’

Two possible interpretations:

1. S’s assumption ‘that p’ based on the situation knowledge: Marko was supposed to call, no known reason not to call. S wants confirmation from H for his assumption p about a third party.
  2. S may expect a negative answer in different circumstances, e.g. Marko has had a falling out with speaker, so it is unlikely that he would call.
- S communicates the uncertainty of a hoped-for event by stressing its highly improbable realization:

*Da ne slučajno se javi Marko?*

‘Has Marko called, by any chance?’

# Epistemic uncertainty

- Similar situations when an affirmation is expected, but room for *no* is left:

*Da ne e tvoe penkalovo?*

‘Is this pen perhaps yours?’ (It could be because you are/were in the room.)

- Emphasis on the uncertainty (implication of *slučajno* ‘by any chance’):

*Nekoj da ne znae onlajn kursevi za pre-algebra?*

‘Does anyone (by any chance) know of some online courses for pre-algebra?’

**Horizontal distance – signaling social similarity**



## 2. Prompting to action - a

*Da ne vrne nadvor?* ‘It’s raining outside, isn’t it?’

- The assumption p is based on some inference (e. g. *it got cloudy, I can hear the rain patter outside*).
- This creates an implicature, based on the common knowledge of S and H such as
  - a) *S is about to go out,*    b) *there is laundry drying outside*
- The context-induced implicature relevant for the given situation is used to create indirect illocutionary acts and invite various perlocutionary effects:
  - a) *give me an umbrella,*    b) *go get the laundry off the line*

## 2. Prompting to action - b

*Da ne se javi kaj Marko?*

‘You’ve called Marko, haven’t you?’

- S implies an existence of chance that H performed the activity: p may be true because ‘Addressee was supposed to call Marko’.
- With a rising intonation the interpretation serves as a **reminder**. But speaker does not exclude the possibility that H has not carried his obligation.
- Using a *da ne* question S diminishes the effect of a potential negative answer.

# Face saving strategy

- A neutral polar question in this situation  
*Se javi li kaj Marko?* 'Did you call Marko?'  
would be a **face threatening act**, accusing H of negligence.
- As with the situation with the rain, a *da ne* question is used to prompt the H to action in an indirect way.

**Horizontal pragmatic distance – closeness, shared knowledge, familiarity**

# 3. Offers

*Odam vo bifeto. Da ne sakate nešto da vi kupam?*

'I'm going to the canteen. Do you want me to buy you something?'

- By posing a *da ne*-questions instead of a direct yes/no question S signals lack of **imposition**, **absence of vertical distance** and **solidarity**.
- Speaker uses this strategy to show **equal status** and **concern for the other**.
- Used in a vertical distance situation:
  - a higher-status speaker wants to diminish the vertical distance between him/her and a lower-status addressee (teacher- student, manager- secretary).
  - unacceptable if used in the opposite “direction”: by a lower-status speakers to a higher- status addressee.

## 4. Showing concern

- In delicate situations Ss resort to *da ne*-questions in order to avoid putting the H in a face threatening position.
- In a situation when a person is hungry, but does not feel comfortable to ask for food, *da ne* question makes it easier for him/her to give a positive answer.

*Da ne si gladen?* ‘Are you maybe hungry?’

- If S has indication of H’s ill condition, *da ne* question signals that S is genuinely interested.

*Da ne si nešto bolen?* ‘You aren’t ill, are you?’

**Solidarity, empathy, concern, closeness, no imposition**

## 5. Positive unfavourable assumption

- S may be quite sure that something is the case, but *da ne*-question points out that this fact is not favourable.

*Lele, da ne dojdoo gostite? A nie ušte ne sme gotovi!*

‘Oh, dear, have the guests arrived? We are not ready yet!’

- A warning, disapproval, reproach or reprimand, marked intonation (rise-fall)

*Da ne se javi kaj Marko?*

‘You haven’t called Marko, have you?’

- S implies that though H was not supposed to call Marko s/he might have called – S’s indignation if so

**Interlocutors know each other well, have common ground**

## 6. Negative unfavourable assumption

- S is almost sure that p is negative, but still fears that it might be positive.
- The question form reinforces the fact that positive answer would be dispreferred by the speaker

*A: Da ne mu kaža na Ivan za parite?*

‘Did you, by any chance, tell Ivan about the money?’

*B: Ne griži se, ne mu kažuvam.*

‘Don’t worry, I’m not going to tell him.’

*A: Da ne otide i ti na taa zabava?*

‘I hope you didn’t go to that party.’ (I disapprove of it.)

**Horizontal distance – closeness, shared knowledge**

# 7. Expressivity

- Negative answer is assumed, but uncertainty is created for: astonishment, wonderment, criticism, irony.
- In fact *da ne*-questions have **no interrogative** effect
  - S's expressive reactions to someone's behaviour
  - do not require any answer

fixed phrases of criticism and indignation:

*Da ne si poludel?* 'Have you gone mad?'

*Da ne si slep?* 'Are you blind?' or

irony: *Ti da ne si princeza?* 'And maybe you are a princess?'

*Da ne znaeš ti podobro?* 'You may know better, eh?'

**People feeling close, not intended as an offense**



# Concluding remarks

- *da ne*-questions are used to diminish horizontal distance between interlocutors and to signal closeness in the sense that S and H share some kind of ground: profession, social status, age, interests, involvement in some activity etc.

What makes them suitable for such function?

- *da ne*-questions are biased, not neutral, and as such open space for various situation and context dependent implicatures which can be understood by people who have common knowledge and understand each other well.
- Used for such diverse functions as requests, warnings, offers, concern, reproach, criticism, irony.

- Why are *da ne*-questions felt as indirect speech act strategy?
  - Have an epistemic nature - the speaker has some assumption, but implies different degrees of uncertainty and leaves open possibilities for the interlocutor.
  - Used as hedge strategy by means of which we can give redress to the hearer's face.
- Macedonian speakers use the *da ne*-quest. as a **strategy for realising the FTA baldly, with redressive action**
- Our conclusion is that *da ne*-questions are markers of positive politeness employed by speakers in situations of small horizontal distance.

They are markers for solidarity, empathy, closeness.

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