

Expletive Dative clitics are situation pronouns On the switched-situation Dative pronominal in Serbian

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Abstract The paper examines the clitic *mu* ‘it’, an inanimate non-core (3rd singular neuter) Dative pronominal in Serbian, which behaves as a typical expletive (‘dummy’) pronoun in not having an antecedent in the previous discourse or available for deictic reference, and whose main pragmatic contribution is ‘objectivization’ – it implies that the truth value of a given proposition is not to be seen as a subjective ‘judgment’ of the evaluator (the speaker by default). We argue that this ‘expletive’ Dative is a situation pronoun referring to an arbitrary situation different from both the Topic Situation of a given clause and the situation hosting the Speaker, generated in a point-of-view projection at the T-C edge. The analysis explains the ‘objectivization’ effect straightforwardly: by switching the evaluation domain from a Topic Situation, it is indicated that the proposition is not evaluated by any of the referents to whom the Topic Situation is relevant, most prominently the speaker as default evaluator and source of information. On a broader theoretical level, the analysis of the pronominal clitic *mu* ‘it’ provides support against treating (non-core) animacy/sentience as the core property of (non-core) Datives, as well as support for eliminating ‘expletiveness’ as a relevant concept in grammar.

Keywords Dative. Clitic. Pronoun. Situation. Expletive. Serbian.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The distribution of the SSD: an overview. – 3 The analysis. – 4 Theoretical implications. – 4.1 Datives. – 4.2 Expletiveness. – 5 Conclusion.



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1 Introduction

We present a formal analysis of an inanimate non-core Dative pronominal in Serbian, illustrated in (1), which behaves as a typical expletive ('dummy') pronoun in not having an antecedent in the previous discourse or not being available for deictic reference. Morphologically, it is realized as the 3rd singular clitic,¹ which is syncretic between neuter and masculine. In the previous literature, its pragmatic contribution has been described as 'objectivization' (Miloradović 2007) or 'de-subjectivization' (Jovanović 2020a): it implies that a given proposition is not epistemically evaluated by and/or presented from the perspective of any available attitude holder – most prominently, the Speaker, as default perceiver and evaluator in the sense of Speas (2004).

- (1) *To nemoj da te čudi. To mu je tako.*
that.NOM don't comp you.ACC.CL surprises that.NOM ssd cop so
Don't let that surprises you. That simply functions like that.²

We argue that this expletive/'dummy' Dative pronominal is actually a situation pronoun referring to an (arbitrary) situation 'switched' from both the Topic Situation (TS) of a given clause and the situation hosting the Speaker; we accordingly label it 'Switched-Situation Dative' (SSD). We propose that the SSD is generated in a point-of-view projection at the T-C edge (closely matching PoVP in Guéron, Haegeman 2012), as elaborated in §3. Our analysis explains the objectivization contribution of SSD straightforwardly: by switching the evaluation domain from TS, it is indicated that the proposition is not evaluated by any of the referents to whom TS is relevant, most prominently the speaker as default evaluator and source of information. The following arguments support the proposed analysis: (i) The SSD is in *complementary distribution with other perspectival Datives*, such as the one expressing the Speaker's perspective; (ii) Cross-linguistically, non-core Datives, if inanimate, are (virtually) always situational (e.g. Berman 1982; Al-Zahre, Boneh 2010; 2016; Haddad 2018a,

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1 The SSD is always realized as a clitic, which distinguishes it from typical referential use of the same pronominal. The latter can also take the strong form *njemu* in relevant contexts, e.g. when focused.

2 The effect of 'objectivization' of the SSD is not apparent in the English translation, as there is no direct equivalent to capture its meaning

2018b; Milosavljević 2019); (iii) The very nature of SSD as a *domain restricting pronoun* relates it to typical situation pronouns, which have been amply used in explaining various areas of the domain restriction cross-linguistically (Kratzer 2007-21; Schwarz 2009); (iv) The featural configuration [3rd[sing[neut[pron]]]] is the morphologically least marked set of features (Harley, Ritter 2002) and is characteristic of situation-referring pronouns (cf. Klein 2006; 2008; Hinterhölzl 2022; Langacker 2007; 2011; Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022).

The analysis of SSD has significant theoretical consequences for detecting a core property of the Dative as a case, on the one hand, and for the nature of expletiveness in grammar, on the other hand. The SSD as a *Dative* clitic is theoretically challenging since non-core Datives are cross-linguistically usually animate and sentient (see e.g. Janda 1993; Aristar 1996; Dabrowska 1997; Palić 2010; Boneh, Nash 2011; 2017; Horn 2008; 2013; Arsenijević 2013), and sentience/animacy is often employed as a core property in defining the Dative case (see Kagan 2020 for an overview and §4.1 below for additional discussion). Expletive pronouns have recently been argued to be either situational (Klein 2006; 2008; Langacker 2011; Borer 2010; Hinterhölzl 2019; 2022), or PoV pronouns (Hinzelin, Kaiser 2007; Guéron, Haegeman 2012; Gupton, Lowman 2014; Greco et al. 2018a; 2018b). The analysis of SSD as a *situational PoV* pronoun provides further support for eliminating the notion of ‘expletiveness’ as relevant for pronouns and grammar more broadly (cf. Tsiakmakis, Espinal 2022).

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. §2 presents the distribution of the SSD across different syntactic and pragmatic contexts. In §3, we provide our analysis of SSD, and discuss its theoretical implications in section §4. §5 concludes the paper.

2 The distribution of the SSD: an overview

In this section, we provide a detailed descriptive overview of the contexts of use of the SSD. We collected a list of about 120 examples with the SSD from colloquial language – mainly from internet portals available on *Google*, and from personal communication. As for examples found on the internet, our initial list of verbs that easily combine with the SSD was formed by looking at the verbs provided in the database WeSoSlav (Arsenijević et al in prep.) and choosing those verbs that, according to the intuition of the two authors, both native speakers of Serbian, accord well with the SSD. We then searched for actual attestations of the collected verbs on internet portals.³ Examples

³ Such a procedure was ‘forced’ due to the absence of a comprehensive corpus of colloquial Serbian which would serve as the primary source for this type of Dative.

from personal communication were included if their felicity is confirmed by at least two additional native speakers of Serbian.⁴

Our list is by no means exhaustive, but it enables identifying typical verbal classes and contexts in which the SSD appears, summarized in Table 33. We have found that the SSD most typically combines with K(imian) states in the sense of Maienborn (2005a) – copular and pseudo-copular verbs and states like *znati* ‘know’, *značiti* ‘mean’, *ličiti* ‘resemble’ (cf. also Jovanović 2020a).

Table 33 Types of verbs that frequently combine with the SSD

	copular verbs / verbs used as copulas	<i>jesam/biti</i> ‘be’, <i>doći</i> ‘come’
	pseudo-copular verbs	<i>izgledati</i> ‘sound’, <i>zvučati</i> ‘appear’
SSD <i>mu</i> +	states	<i>značiti</i> ‘mean’, <i>koštati</i> ‘cost’
	meteorological verbs	<i>pljuštati</i> ‘rain’, <i>grmeti</i> ‘thunder’
	activities used generically	<i>ići</i> ‘go’, <i>raditi</i> ‘work’

We start the overview with copular constructions, which are the most typical context in which the SSD appears. In such constructions, the subject is often propositional, expressed by the demonstrative *to* ‘that’ referring to a situation known to the interlocutors, as in (1) above, and in (2), (3), (5), and (8). However, other types of subjects are also possible, as shown by (4), (6), and (7).

- (2) *Kako reče onaj tip: tako mu je to.*
 how say.AOR3SG that guy.NOM so ssd cop that.NOM
Mada, ne kažu oni badava: kakav narod –
 however neg say.3PL they.NOM gratis what people.NOM
takva vlast.
 such authority.NOM
 ‘As the guy said: That’s how it is. Although, they don’t say for nothing: Like people – like government.’⁵

- (3) *Pravo da ti kažem, i ja dosta slabo*
 right comp you.DAT.CL say.1SG and I.NOM enough weak
jedem od kad su krenule vrućine – to
 eat.1SG from when aux start.PTCP heats.NOM that
mu valjda normalno.
 ssd likely normal
 ‘To tell you the truth, I’ve been eating quite a bit since the heat started – I guess that’s normal.’

⁴ We acknowledge, however, that since the usage of SSD is primarily limited to colloquial language, there may be some variation in the acceptability of examples across the Serbian language area. We defer the investigation of this variability to future research.

⁵ Source: <http://skr.rs/z8Bx>.

- (4) *Žao mi je, al subota mu je najradniji*
sorry I.DAT.CL cop but Saturday ssd cop most_working
neradni dan za svaku zaposlenu ženu.
non-working day.NOM for every employed women.ACC
'I'm sorry, but Saturday is the busiest non-working day for every working woman.'
- (5) *U, da! Videh to. To mu dođe u*
interj yes see.AOR.1SG that.ACC that.NOM ssd comes in
nedelju, u tri ujutru?
Sunday.ACC in three morning
'Uh, yes! I saw that. That happens to be on Sunday, at three in the morning?'
- (6) *Koje mu ovo godišnje doba dođe kad*
which ssd this anual season.NOM comes when
jedeš jagode i sediš pored šporeta?
eat.2SG strawberries.ACC and sit.2SG by stove.GEN
'What season does it come when you're eating strawberries and sitting by the stove?'⁶
- (7) *Ovo su najskuplji gradovi na svetu!*
this are the_most_expensive cities.NOM on world.LOC
Beograd mu dodje bagatela u poredjenju
Belgrade.NOM ssd comes trifle.NOM in comparison.LOC
sa njima.
with they.INST
'These are the most expensive cities to live in the world! Belgrade is a trifle compared to them!'⁷
- (8) *Premijera filma #nizbrdo će se održati 29.*
premiere movie.GEN nizbrdo will refl keep.INF 29th
novembra. To mu pada nedelja u već
November.GEN that ssd falls Sunday in yet
nam dobro poznatom Bioskopu Šumadija
we.DAT.CL well known cinema.LOC Šumadija.NOM
'The premiere of the film #nizbrdo will take place on November 29th, that's Sunday, at the already well-known Cinema Šumadija on Banovo Brdo.'⁸

⁶ Source: <http://skr.rs/z8JS>.

⁷ Source: <http://skr.rs/z8JM>.

⁸ Source: <http://skr.rs/z8BY>.

In the above examples, a copular verb is expressed either by the ‘proper’ copular verb *jesam/bititi* ‘be’, or by the verbs *doći* ‘come’ and *padati* ‘fall’ used as copulas or pseudo-copulas (following the analysis in Jovanović 2018). In the former case, the SSD is often accompanied by some epistemic marker that points out the speaker’s uncertainty. For instance, in (3), the modal particle *valjda* ‘likely’ functions as a type of the speakers’s hedge with respect to the truth of the proposition. The use of SSD also allows the speaker to create a sense of detachment from the proposition, but this time it pertains to subjectivity rather than the proposition’s truth value. The speaker seems to suggest that they are not responsible for determining the truth value of the proposition.

The largest number of examples with SSD comes with atypical copulative constructions with the verb *doći* ‘come’, as in (5–7) above. In comparison with the proper copular verb, which just introduces a predicative relation, the verb *doći* ‘come’ implies the process of ‘calculation’ or ‘estimation’ – the speaker calculates or estimates the relation to be assigned (cf. Jovanović 2018, 33). E.g., in (5), the speaker calculates the day of the week corresponding to a specific date, coming to the conclusion that it is Sunday. The speaker uses the SSD in order to distance themselves from that ‘calculation’ or ‘estimation’, and then from attributing the relevant relation. In this way, the speaker desubjectivizes their speech act. A similar effect is achieved with the verb *padati* ‘fall’ in its (pseudo-)copular use, as in (8).

The SSD is also common with pseudo-/semi-copular verbs with the meaning of inducing an impression about someone or something, e.g. *delovati* ‘seem’ in (9); similar holds for *izgledati* ‘appear’, *zvučati* ‘sounds’, etc.

(9) [Status on Twitter]

<i>Pa</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>mu</i>	<i>deluje</i>	<i>kao</i>	<i>životna</i>	<i>istina!</i>
well	that.NOM	ssd	seems	like	vital	truth.NOM
‘Well, that seems like the truth of life!’ ⁹						

We may wonder why the SSD mainly combines with pseudo-copular verbs of this type. Our speculation is that this is due to their use as perception or inference verbs, both of which typically involve high subjectivity. In such cases, the SSD comes handy to ‘neutralize’ the subjectivity.

⁹ Source: <http://skr.rs/z8BI>.

The SSD also commonly appears with states like *značiti* ‘mean’, *koštati* ‘cost’, *spadati* ‘belong’, *imati* ‘have’, as illustrated in (10) for the first-listed verb.

- (10) *Open Broadcaster Software, hm?! To mu valjda znači za*
Open Broadcaster Software interj that.NOM ssd likely means for
emitovanje...
broadcasting.ACC
‘*Open Broadcaster Software*, hm?! I guess that means for broadcasting.’¹⁰

Another convenient context that licenses the use of SSD is when a verb is used generically,¹¹ to describe some kind of rule, as illustrated in (11) for the verb *raditi* ‘work, function’.

- (11) *Pa ne radi mu se to tako, čoveče!*
well neg works ssd refl that.NOM so man.VOC
‘That’s not how one does that, man!’

While the use of SSD is most common with (pseudo-)copular verbs, states and generically used activities, it can be also used with dynamic predicates in episodic/‘eventive’ contexts. Those contexts must, however, be such to involve some kind of uncertainty. For instance, in (12), the use of SSD is motivated by the speaker’s unexpectedness that Marko drives a bicycle. This is also signaled by the particle *ma*, which in this context indicates unexpectedness (see Ivić 2005 for a more detailed analysis of this particle and additional pragmatic components that it brings).

- (12) *Ma jel mu ono Marko bicikl vozi?!*
interj q ssd that Marko.NOM byke.ACC drives
‘Is that Marko riding a bike?!’

Similarly, in (13), the SSD is only acceptable in a discovery context like (13a), where the speaker updates the current discourse with a new piece of the just-discovered state of affairs. Neutral contexts such as (13b), by contrast, are infelicitous, because such statements

¹⁰ Source: <http://skr.rs/z8BL>.

¹¹ An anonymous reviewer wonders whether the SSD here interacts with some kind of intensional covert operator, e.g. Chierchia’s GEN. While examples like (11) plausibly involve a generic operator in the sense of Chierchia (1998), as pointed out immediately below, the SSD is also possible with dynamic readings of predicates (which do not include such an operator) in the so-called discovery contexts.

usually come with direct evidence experienced by the speaker, and no need for objectivization arises.

- (13) a. [After learning that it is raining by looking through the window.]
Pa to mu napolju kiša pljušti!
well that.NOM ssd outside rain.NOM rains
'Well, it's raining outside!'
- b. #*Napolju mu pljušti kiša.*
outside ssd rains rain.NOM
'It is raining outside.'

In the next section, we present the analysis that aims at capturing the above-described properties of the SSD.

3 The analysis

We argue that the SSD is a situational pronoun referring to an arbitrary situation 'switched' from both the Topic Situation (TS) of a given clause and the situation hosting the Speaker. Specifically, we propose that the SSD is generated in a point-of-view projection (PoVP in Guéron, Haegeman 2012), as depicted in Figure 1. As introduced in §1, the SSD is a dative clitic 3rd person pronoun syncretic between masculine and neuter. We propose that the Dative case contributes to a point-of-view role of the SSD, while its situational nature is compatible with it being a weak pronoun with the least marked featural configuration, which are properties typical for situation pronouns (as shown in more detail in Figure 1).

Our analysis accounts for the objectivization/desubjectivization effect of the SSD straightforwardly: by switching the evaluation domain from TS, it is indicated that the proposition is not evaluated by any of the referents to whom TS is relevant, most prominently the speaker as default evaluator and source of information.

Let us now turn to a step-by-step explanation of and motivation for the analysis depicted in Figure 1, starting from the bottom of the tree. We assume, with Krifka (2021), that the TP hosts a proposition. We take that the TopicP intervenes between the TP and the PoVP. The TopicP here is to be understood as a projection that hosts a definite/specific Topic Situation (TS) that is introduced by the respective clause. The TS is a situation a given sentence is about (Klein 2008; see Kratzer 2007-21 for an overview). With Klein (1994; 1995); Maienborn (2005b); Ramchand (2014); Ramchand, Svenonius (2014); Milosavljević, Milosavljević (2022), we take that the TS pronoun originates in an aspectual projection immediately dominated by the TP

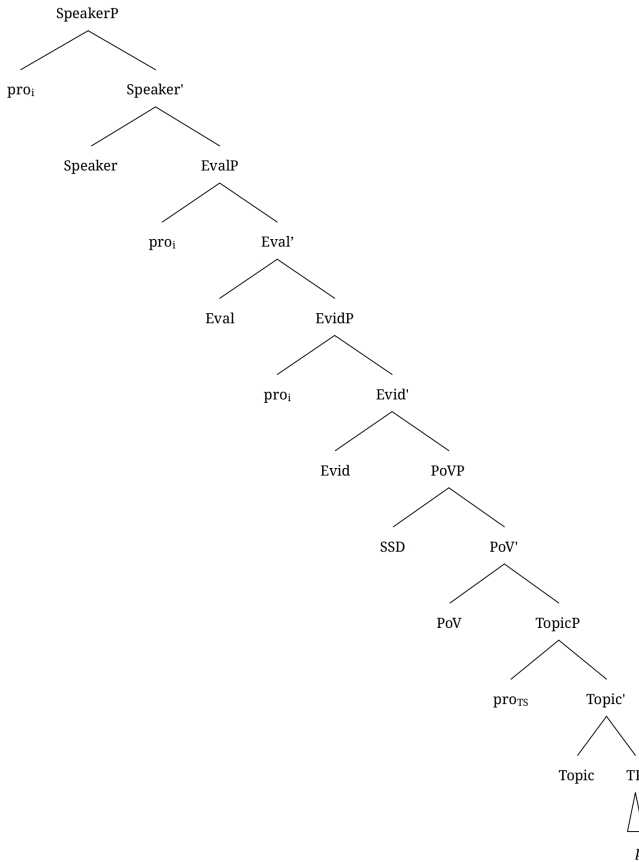


Figure 1 SSD and the T-C edge

(specifically, in the Spec,AspP, as suggested in Ramchand, Svenonius 2014, 163),¹² but moves to the Spec,TopicP when the TS acts as a topic of a given sentence, i.e. when the relevant sentence receives a thetic interpretation (with pro_s as a subject of predication).¹³ The movement to the Spec,TopicP is responsible for the definiteness/specificity of the TS (cf. Erteschik-Shir 1997; Aboh 2010; Jiménez-Fernández,

12 The motivation for generating a TS pronoun in the AspP comes from the assumption that the semantic role of aspect involves establishing a temporal relationship between the referent of the verbal phrase (vP) and the topic situation (Maienborn 2005b, 169).

13 This is in line with Basilico (2003), for whom the TopicP hosts a pro that saturates the event argument under the thetic interpretation. See Milosavljević, Milosavljević (2022) for a recent overview and discussion of the literature on the TopicP and closely related projections argued to host a TS pronoun.

Spyropoulos 2013; Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022). This is important because the SSD combines with epistemically specific TSs. A piece of evidence for the claim that the SSD combines with a definite/specific TS comes from examples where the SSD combines with the accusative clitic *ga* ‘it’, as in (14), which is argued in Milosavljević, Milosavljević (2022) to receive its reference from an epistemically specific TS.

- (14) *Šta mu ga ti znaš ko dolazi!?*
what ssd it.ACC.CL you.NOM know.2SG who.NOM comes
‘How could you possibly know who is coming!?’

The PoVP is a projection at the T-C edge, which is a field of ‘struggle’ between sentient subjects and the Speaker for imposing the PoV (in terms of Guéron 2008; Guéron, Haegeman 2012). Namely, when available in the T-domain (as in 14), a sentient subject may be promoted to a PoV holder, else the Speaker takes control by default. Both of these options are subjective, in the sense that they present a proposition from the perspective of a sentient attitude holder. In such a constellation, the SSD comes handy as a ‘third-party’, anti-subjective solution: it implies that the truth value of a proposition is not to be judged from the perspective of either a sentient nominative subject, or the Speaker. This is syntactically achieved in the following way. In the absence of SSD, the specifier position of PoVP is filled either by the subject moving from the Spec,TP to this position, or is expressed by *pro*, which must be bound by a higher (local) pronoun, i.e. the one in the EvidP. *Pro* in the EvidP is bound by *pro* in the EvalP, which in turn is bound by *pro* in the SpeakerP. This analysis aligns with the framework proposed by Speas (2004). When the SSD occupies the Spec,PoVP, it *refers* to an arbitrary situation, thus banning the two alternative options described above.

We take that, in the absence of explicit marking, evidential and evaluative domains are in the control of the Speaker - in accordance with the general assumptions that the C-domain is a domain controlled by the Speaker (see e.g. Grohmann 2000; Speas, Tenny 2003; Giorgi 2010; Guéron, Haegeman 2012, among many others). This control is, however, constrained by the lower domain: the Speaker’s evidence must be indirect or inferential - exactly because they are not, in terms of Speas (2004, 265), the one whose degree of experience with the event determines how likely proposition is to be true, which is a job of the PoVP, hence beyond the Speaker’s control in the presence of an SSD. The inferential status of the Speaker’s evidence is indicated, as pointed out in §2, by using evidential/inferential particles like *valjda* ‘likely’, or evidential-like verbs such as *izgledati*

‘appear’, *zvučati* ‘sound’ (for analyses of these verbs as evidential, see Čudomirović 2015; Jovanović 2020b).

Let us now present the arguments in support of the proposed analysis. The argument for the SSD as a *perspectival* (PoV) pronoun comes from the fact that the SSD is in *complementary distribution with other perspectival Dative clitics* in Serbian, i.e. the ones expressing the Speaker’s or the Subject’s perspectives, as illustrated in (15) and (16), respectively.

(15) *To mi/ mu (*mi + mu / *mu + mi) dođe na isto.*
that.NOM I.DAT.CL ssd comes on same
‘That turns out to be the same (from my perspective / from the SSD perspective).’

(16) *To joj/ mu (*joj + mu / *mu + joj) dođe na isto.*
that.NOM she.DAT.CL ssd comes on same
‘That turns out to be the same (from her perspective / from the SSD perspective).’

Importantly, the SSD *can* be combined with other Dative clitics, which occupy different syntactic slots. Example (17) illustrates the suitability of combining the SSD with the Interested Hearer Dative *ti* ‘you’, which refers to the hearer, indicating that the conveyed information or the act of conveying it holds significant importance for the Hearer, potentially benefiting them in some way (cf. Arsenijević 2013, 13).¹⁴

(17) *To ti mu je tako.*
that.NOM you.DAT.CL ssd cop so
‘That’s simply like that (you know).’

In South-East Serbian, the SSD can also be combined with the Evaluative Reflexive Dative *si* (sitting in the EvalP in Arsenijević 2013, cf. also Milosavljević 2019), as in (18).¹⁵ It is even possible to combine the SSD, the Evaluative Reflexive Dative and the Interested Hearer

¹⁴ We assume that this type of Dative is generated in the HearerP above the SpeakerP; see Wiltschko (2021) and references there for arguments that the Hearer is syntactically higher than the Speaker.

¹⁵ This type of reflexive dative is not used in standard Serbian. According to Milosavljević (2019), its key effect in South-East Serbian is to indicate the autonomy of the situation expressed by the clause.

Dative, as in (19) – exactly because these three Dative clitics occupy different syntactic positions.¹⁶

(18) *To si mu je tako.*
that.NOM refl.dat.cl ssd cop so
'That's simply like that.'

(19) *To ti si mu je tako.*
that.NOM you.DAT.CL refl.dat.cl ssd cop so
'That's simply like that.'

We can now turn to arguments that the SSD is a *situation* pronoun. The first argument comes from its grammatical specification: it is a clitic / weak pronoun and it has the featural specification [3rd[sing[neut[pron]]]]. Situational pronouns are cross-linguistically weak pronouns, most often null (see Kratzer 2007:21 for an overview), and even when overt, they are usually weak (see Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022 for a recent overview).¹⁷ The featural configuration [3rd[sing[neut[pron]]]] is the morphologically least marked set of features (Harley, Ritter 2002), and is one of the most typical sets of features when it comes to situation-referring pronouns (cf. Klein 2006; 2008; Hinterhölzl 2022; Langacker 2007; 2011; Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022).¹⁸ For instance, Klein (2006; 2008) and Hinterhölzl (2022) analyze the 'expletive' *es* in German in a context like (20)

¹⁶ Since there is no handy way to translate the contribution of these Dative clitics, we use the same translation in all examples (based on the propositional meaning).

¹⁷ An anonymous reviewer highlights the filler word *ovaj* (roughly corresponding to the English interjection *erm*; see Halupka-Rešetar, Radić-Bojanić 2014, 792) as an example of a situational pronoun that is not weak. However, if we adopt the analysis proposed by Halupka Rešetar, Radić-Bojanić (2014, 792), which considers *ovaj* as a discourse marker indicating hesitation, we cannot interpret it as a situational pronoun that directly represents or refers to a specific situation (although it helps in identifying a discourse situation).

¹⁸ One of the reviewers points to examples with the pronoun *ti* 'you', as in (i), as a possible exception to the observation that 'non-deictic' pronouns contain the least marked set of features. However, our claim is not that 'non-deictic' pronouns have to contain the least marked set of features, but rather that the least marked set of features (namely, [3rd[sing[neut[pron]]]]) is characteristic of *situation* pronouns. As pointed out by the reviewer, *ti* in (i) indicates that the speaker requires support for their claim from some imaginary/arbitrary interlocutor who is set as an authority. This implies that *ti* in this context functions as a Hearer Dative and is not a situational pronoun. Since it refers to the Hearer, it is naturally marked for the second person, just like all other instances of pronouns that refer to the Hearer.

(i) *To ti je da poludiš.*
that.NOM you.DAT.CL cop comp drive_crazy.2SG
'That would drive you crazy!'

as a Topic Situation pronoun. Similarly, it has been suggested in Langacker (2007; 2011); Borer (2010); Jovanović (2020a); Milosavljević, Milosavljević (2022), among others, that the English expletive *it* as illustrated in (21) is a situation pronoun (referring to a Topic Situation of a given clause).

- (20) German (Klein 2008, 301)
a. Jemand hat angerufen. vs. b. Es hat jemand angerufen.
c. Das Licht war an. vs. d. Es war das Licht an.

- (21) It is raining.

In Serbian, the neuter singular demonstrative pronouns illustrated in (22–24),¹⁹ adjusted from Milosavljević, Milosavljević (2022), are commonly used as situation pronouns (see Progovac 1998; 2005; Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022 for discussion).

- (22) *Jel' ovo pada kiša, ili mi se pričinjava?*
q this falls rain.NOM or I.DAT.CL refl appears
'Is it raining or does it just seem so to me?'

- (23) *Ono Marko silazi s brda.*
that Marko.NOM gets_off from hill.GEN
'That's Marko coming from the hill!'

- (24) *Idemo Juče Mika i ja kroz šumu.*
go.1PL yesterday Mika.NOM and I.NOM through woods.ACC
Odjednom, to ne da je počelo da grmi!
suddenly that neg comp aux start.PTCP comp thunders
'Yesterday, Mika and I were walking through the woods. Suddenly, it started to thunder!'

Further, the very nature of SSD as a *domain restricting pronoun* relates it to typical situation pronouns which have been amply used in explaining various areas of the domain restriction (see Barwise, Perry 1983; Percus 2000; Stanley 2000; Stanley, Szabo 2000; Marti 2003; Kratzer 2004; 2021; Schwarz 2009; 2012; 2019; Keshet 2008;

¹⁹ The three demonstratives in (22–24) differ in their deictic specification. The component *ov-* marks the proximity to the speaker, *t-* marks the proximity to the communication situation, while *on-* is specified as distal (cf. Arsenijević 2018, 165). In the cited Arsenijević's work, *on-* is modeled as carrying just the demonstrative feature [dem], *t-* includes an extra proximal feature [dem: proximal], whereas *ov-* encompasses an additional feature related to the speaker [dem: proximal: speaker].

Salfner, Salfner 2011; Arsenijević 2021; Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022, among others).

A final argument that we provide comes from the interaction of the *Dative* pronouns and animacy: non-core Datives, if referring to inanimate entities, are virtually always situational cross-linguistically (and realized as weak pronouns or clitics, just as the SSD). For instance, non-core Datives have been argued to indicate the autonomy and/or (informational) relevance of the situation/event denoted by the respective clause in Modern Hebrew (Berman 1982, 55), Syrian Arabic (Al-Zahre, Boneh 2010, 277; 2016), Bulgarian (Petrova 2012), South East Serbian (Milosavljević 2019). Similarly, Haddad (2018a; 2018b) points out a type of Dative in Lebanese Arabic that indicates that the event is insignificant/minor and/or significant/shocking, which at the same time implies the relevance of a specific spatio-temporal setting of the event (roughly corresponding to a specific Topic Situation in our approach).²⁰

4 Theoretical implications

The proposed analysis of SSD raises important theoretical consequences for identifying the core property of the Dative as a case, as well as for the nature of ‘expletive’ or ‘dummy’ pronouns. Regarding the former, it provides evidence against treating (non-core) Datives as animacy/sentience oriented. As for the latter, our analysis provides further support for eliminating ‘expletiveness’ as a relevant concept in the pronoun system (see also Langacker 2007; 2011), and possibly in grammar more generally (cf. Tsiakmakis, Espinal 2022). We address these two theoretical issues in some more detail in §4.1 and §4.2, respectively.

4.1 Datives

As already pointed out in section 1, the SSD is theoretically challenging since non-core Datives are cross-linguistically usually animate and sentience oriented, and sentience is often assumed to be the key property of the Dative as a grammatical category in both cognitive/functionalist (e.g. Janda 1993; Dabrowska 1997; Palić 2010) and formal approaches (e.g. Boneh, Nash 2011; 2017; see Kagan 2020 for an

²⁰ Based on the presented arguments, an anonymous reviewer wonders whether the proposed analysis can be recast in terms of discourse deixis, specifically deictic-based evidentiality in the sense of Koev (2017) and Pancheva, Zubizarreta (2019). We acknowledge the suggestion as a valuable pathway for further research, but due to the limited scope of this work, we must leave it for future exploration.

overview). The nature of SSD points out to an alternative account, i.e. the one that employs the notion of directedness as the core property of the Dative case, as proposed in Belaj, Tanacković Faletar (2012).

It is a common assumption in the formal literature that the Dative DPs can have different attachment sites in the syntactic tree. For instance, Datives expressing Goals or Recipients, illustrated in (25) and (26), respectively, are generated VP/vP internally, whereas Datives marking some kind of benefactive/malfactive (plus possessive) relation, as in (27–28), are hosted between the VP/vP and the VoiceP (see e.g. Bosse et al. 2012; Bosse 2015; Boneh, Nash 2017; Kagan 2020). Datives expressing Experiencers that usually combine with involuntary states, exemplified by (29–30), are argued in Rivero (2009) to merge between the TP and the MoodP.²¹ The Ethical Dative, illustrated in (31), is generated above the TP (cf. Boneh, Nash 2011), presumably in the SpeakerP. As already introduced above, in (32), repeated from (19) above, besides the SSD (generated in the PoVP/EpisP), Dative clitics *ti* ‘you’ and the reflexive *si* are generated in the HearerP and EvalP, respectively. Except for the vP/VP internal Datives, all the others are analyzed as non-core, non-selected, or ‘high’ Datives, since they are not arguments of the verb.

(25) *Maja se približila mostu.*

Maja.NOM refl approach.PTCP bridge.DAT
‘Maja has come closer to the bridge.’

(26) *Pera je Maji dao poklon.*

Pera.NOM aux Maja.DAT give.PTCP gift.ACC
‘Pera gave Maja a gift.’

(27) *Stavio sam joj knjigu na sto.*

put.PTCP aux she.DAT.CL book.ACC on table.ACC
‘I put the book on her table.’

(28) *Polupao sam Milanu auto.*

smash.PTCP aux Milan.DAT car.ACC
‘I smashed Milan’s car.’

(29) *Maši se sviđa Petar.*

Maša.DAT refl likes Petar.NOM
‘Maša likes Peter.’

21 Similarly, Tsedryk (2020) analyzes Dative constructions that express possessive modality in Russian as merged immediately above the TP.

- (30) *Spava mi se.*
sleeps I.DAT.CL refl
'I feel sleepy.'
- (31) *Kako si mi?*
how aux I.DAT.CL
'How are you?'
- (32) *To ti si mu je tako.*
that.NOM you.DAT.CL refl.dat.cl ssd cop so
'That's simply like that.'

While Datives expressing a Goal, such as the one in (25), are often analyzed either as arguments of the verb or of an abstract P(reposition), in the contemporary syntactic literature, all the other types of Datives are usually analyzed as introduced by the Applicative heads (building on Pylkkänen 2008), which can be introduced at various sites (as sketched above – vP internally, between the vP and the VoiceP, between the TP and the MoodP, etc.), and hence often labeled as 'low', 'high', 'higher' applicatives (see Rivero 2009; Boneh, Nash 2010; 2011; 2017; Bosse et al. 2012; Hutchinson, Armstrong 2014; Bosse 2015; Al-Zahre, Boneh 2016; Lee 2016; among many others). The affectedness of a sentient Participant is usually assumed to be brought about by the Appl head (see Boneh, Nash 2010, 13; similar holds in other approaches postulating Appl heads in analyzing Datives). This entails that all Dative DPs denote sentient referents (excluding Goals, which are introduced by Ps). This assumption is not unique only to the contemporary formal approaches: sentience and/or affectedness is proposed as the core contribution of the Dative case in cognitive linguistic approaches (e.g. Janda 1990; 1993 for Czech; Rudzka-Ostyn 1996; Dabrowska 1997 for Polish; Palić 2010 for Bosnian/Croatian/ Serbian).

The SSD poses a problem for the analysis of the Dative case whose core property is sentience and/or animacy. In South East Serbian, the same holds for the Evaluative Dative Reflexive, which is analyzed as situational in Milosavljević (2019). (32) above combines both these situational Datives. This can be viewed as a piece of evidence that supports the analysis suggesting that the core property of the Dative is directedness, as posited by Belaj, Tanacković Faletar (2012). These authors write:

The key thesis of this paper is thus that case coding is based on firm conceptual and semantic foundations and that in the case of the dative the motivation for case assigning is the concept of spatial directionality or some aspect of its metaphoric extension

to non-spatial relations. In that sense it is possible to establish a schematic concept which would unite all the dative meanings, regardless of the differentiation of the specific dative referents according to the animate component or according to the differences between the spatial and non-spatial scenarios in which those referents appear. (Belaj, Tanacković Faletar 2012, 60)

The analysis proposed by Belaj and Tanacković Faletar is coached within the Cognitive Linguistic Framework, but it can easily fit into the framework adopted in the preset paper, if we assume that the Dative case is licensed by the (functional) feature [directed] on the Applicative(-like) head, with its different interpretations stemming from different attachment sites of the relevant DP. For instance, the vP internal Dative DPs emerge due to the directedness of a Figure toward a Goal or of an object toward a Recipient. Benefactive/mal-factive-possessive Datives arise when the content of the entire vP is directed towards an individual, and higher Datives (perspectival, evaluative, ethical) might rely on the directedness of propositions, situations, or Speech Acts towards salient individuals or situations. In that sense, the perspectival role of some Datives, including the SSD, can be seen as a kind of abstract directedness of an epistemic evaluative domain towards individuals or situations. The fully-fledged analysis of different types of Datives goes, however, far beyond the ambitions of the present paper. For our purposes here, it suffices to conclude that the SSD provides strong support for directedness-oriented approaches to the Dative over those employing the notion of animacy and/or sentience.

4.2 Expletiveness

As already pointed out in §3, it has been recently proposed to treat ‘expletive’ or ‘dummy’ subject and object pronouns as situation pronouns (e.g. Klein 2006; 2008; Langacker 2007; 2011; Borer 2010; Jovanović 2020a; Hinterhölzl 2019; 2022; Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022, among others), instead of treating them in purely syntactic terms (most prominently, EPP checking). A growing body of recent research also points to treating ‘expletive’ pronouns as conveying Speaker/C-related effects. For instance, building on Haegeman, Vandeveldel (2008), and Haegeman (2008), Guéron and Haegeman (2012) analyze the 3rd singular neuter pronoun *tet* in West Flemish as encoding the speaker’s point of view (in the PovP projection above the TP). They propose that this pronoun creates an interaction between the speaker and the subject:

In the unmarked case, with a ‘neutral speaker’, the hearer integrates the proposition into the default discourse context. By using *tet* the speaker overrules the subject’s point of view and imposes her own point of view onto the sentence, steering the interlocutor away from the default context. *Tet* is inserted when the speaker wants to intervene explicitly to modify an inference that the proposition would otherwise give rise to in the default context. The precise content of the inference comes from the content of the sentence and/or its context. (Guéron, Haegeman 2012, 78)

The expletive *sitä* in Finnish, a partitive form of the 3rd person singular non-human pronoun has been proposed by Holmberg, Nikanne (2002) to occupy the high functional projection FP in the sense of Uriagereka (2004), which performs a Topic-like function (cf. Greco et al. 2018a, 72-4). The expletive neuter pronoun *ello* in Dominican Spanish has been analyzed as a point of view marker that conveys the speaker’s commitment to the proposition (Hinzelin, Kayser 2007; Gupton, Lowman 2014; Greco et al. 2018a). Other *left-periphery*-related effects have been also detected as the contribution of ‘expletive’ subject-like pronouns in various languages. For instance, the Vietnamese expletive *nó* has been analyzed by Greco et al. (2018a; 2018b) as contributing speaker-related epistemic specificity, whereas the same marker is analyzed in Dao (2021) as an ego-evidential marker (roughly, indicating the speaker’s assessment of a particular situation based on their knowledge and beliefs). Expletive-like pronouns have been observed also to act as cleft-like items linking a predication to a previous discourse (Camacho 2019 for Central Colombian Spanish), exclamative force markers (Remberger, Hinzelin 2009 for Portuguese, Balearic Catalan), complementizers of main clauses (de Clercq, Haegeman 2018; 2021 for the Ghent dialect; van Craenenbroeck 2022 for Belgian Dutch dialects), etc.; see also Greco et al. (2018a); Tsiakamis, Espinal (2022) for recent overviews. All of these functions exhibited by expletive-like pronouns suggest that they are more than mere expletives. They possess a discourse function or some form of functional meaning, albeit highly abstract.

The analysis of SSD as a *situational point-of-view* pronoun brings together these two prominent roles of ‘expletives’ (*situational* nature plus encoding *point-of-view*), thus providing further support for eliminating the notion of ‘expletiveness’ as relevant for pronouns.²²

Furthermore, our analysis, which advocates for the removal of expletives from grammar, has significant implications for the standard

22 This is also in accordance with recent proposals arguing against the relevance of expletiveness as a relevant concept in grammar more broadly (see Tsiakmakis, Espinal 2022 for a recent approach and an overview).

analysis of pronominal clitics. In their seminal work on the typology of pronouns, Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) argue that clitics either require a discourse topical referent from which they get a semantic range, or they are not referential and have no semantic range, as in impersonal or generic uses (see also Milićev 2008 for Serbian), or in the case of the so-called non-referential Datives. Our analysis of the SSD and other types of non-core Datives in §4.1 provides a unified analysis of pronominal clitics, according to which they always inherit their reference from some (topical) antecedent. The only difference is that in the case of non-core Datives, this antecedent is situational: an arbitrary situation in the case of the SSD, or the situations hosting the Speaker and the Hearer in the case of Speaker- and Hearer-related Datives. A similar conclusion is reached in Milosavljević, Milosavljević (2022) regarding the ‘expletive’ accusative clitic *ga* ‘it’ in Serbian, which is analyzed in that work as an ordinary Direct Object clitic inheriting its reference from the Topic Situation of the respective clause.

5 Conclusion

We investigated the clitic *mu* ‘it’, an inanimate non-core (3rd singular neuter) Dative pronominal in Serbian, which behaves as a typical expletive pronoun in not having an antecedent in the previous discourse or available for deictic reference, and whose main pragmatic contribution is ‘objectivization’, i.e. the implication that the truth value of a given proposition is not to be seen as a subjective ‘judgment’ of the evaluator (the speaker by default). We argued that this ‘expletive’ Dative is a situational pronoun referring to an arbitrary situation different, i.e. ‘switched’ from both the Topic Situation of a given clause and the Speech Act Situation (hence Switched Situation Dative, SSD), which is generated in a point-of-view projection at the T-C edge. The analysis explains the ‘objectivization’ effect straightforwardly: by switching the evaluation domain from a Topic Situation, it is indicated that the proposition is not evaluated by any of the referents to whom the Topic Situation is relevant, most prominently the speaker as default evaluator and source of information. The following arguments support the proposed analysis: (i) SSD is in *complementary distribution with other perspectival Datives*, e.g. the one expressing the Speaker’s perspective; (ii) Non-core Datives, if inanimate, are (virtually) always situational (e.g. Berman 1982; Al-Zahre, Boneh 2010; 2016; Haddad 2018a; 2018b; Milosavljević 2019); (iii) The very nature of SSD as a *domain restricting pronoun* relates it to typical situation pronouns, which have been amply used in explaining various areas of the domain restriction cross-linguistically

(Schwarz 2009; Kratzer 2007-21); (iv) The featural configuration [3rd[sing[neut[pron]]]] is the morphologically least marked set of features (Harley, Ritter 2002) and is characteristic of situation-referring pronouns (cf. Klein 2006; 2008; Hinterhölzl 2022; Langacker 2007; 2011; Milosavljević, Milosavljević 2022).

On a broader theoretical level, the analysis of the pronominal clitic *mu* ‘it’ provides support against treating (non-core) animacy/sentience as a key property of (non-core) Datives, as well as support for eliminating ‘expletiveness’ as a relevant concept for pronouns.

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