

Demonstrative Pronominal Adjectives

Earlier this week we discussed demonstrative pronouns, like *ovo*, *ono*, and *to*. These words mean “this” or “that,” as in sentences like “This is a cat” (*Ovo je mačka*) and “That is a dog” (*Ono/To je pas*). Because these are pronouns, it means that they stay the same, they don’t change to modify the words *mačka* (which is a feminine noun) and *pas* (which is a masculine noun). Simple enough.

But what if we want to say something like “This cat is cute” or “That dog is big”? In sentences like these, the words “this” and “that” are functioning like adjectives. In other words, they’re modifying the words “cat” and “dog” in each sentence. Because they’re adjectives, that means that in BCS they must agree with the noun according to gender (and as we’ll later see, according to number and case). So, “This cat is cute” would be *Ova mačka je slatka*. And “That dog is big” would be *Onaj/Taj pas je velik*. You’ll notice that *ova mačka* and *onaj/taj pas* agree according to grammatical gender. Let’s look at these words in a chart:

	This	That (1)	That (2)
Masculine	Ovaj	Onaj	Taj
Feminine	Ova	Ona	Ta
Neuter	Ovo	Ono	To

Let’s look at some examples, so that we can see this in context:

Ovaj čovek/čovjek je dobar. This man is nice.
Ova haljina nije nova. This dress is new.
Ovo pismo je staro. This letter is old.
Onaj udžbenik je moj. That textbook is mine.
Ona knjiga je lepa/lijepa. That book is beautiful.
Ono brdo je visoko. That hill is high.
Taj profesor je loš. That professor is bad.
Ta žena je moja majka. That woman is my mother.
To polje je usko. That field is narrow.

Ask yourself, what’s the difference between “This is a nice man” (*Ovo je dobar čovek/čovjek*) and “This man is nice” (*Ovaj čovek/čovjek je dobar*)? In the first sentence, “this” is a pronoun, and in the second “this” is an adjective. The difference between the two often causes students a lot of confusion, so be sure to study this and practice writing sentences on your own time. Let’s look at some more examples using demonstrative pronominal adjectives, this time in yes/no questions:

Da li je taj student Bosanac?/Je li taj student Bosanac? Is that student a Bosnian?
Da li je ova učenica vaša sestra?/Je li ova učenica vaša sestra? Is this schoolgirl your sister?

Da li je ono dete/dijete njen brat?/Je li ono dete/dijete njen brat? Is that child her brother?
Da li je ta knjiga duga?/Je li ta knjiga duga? Is that book long?

Now let's look at some examples that use both demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative pronominal adjectives in the same sentence:

To je taj čovek/čovjek. That is that man.
Da li je ovo ona knjiga?/Je li ovo ona knjiga? Is this that book?
Ovo je to dugo pismo. This is that long letter.

One last thing, before we go. When using both demonstrative pronominal adjectives and possessive pronominal adjectives in sequence with an adjective, you will always use the long form of the adjective. This means that masculine adjectives will have the “-i” ending. For example—*ovaj dobri muškarac* (“this good man”), *taj visoki profesor* (“that tall professor”), *tvoj slatki pas* (“your cute dog”), *vaš novi udžbenik* (“your new textbook”). I think it's important to be aware of this, but don't sweat it if you forget about it as you're doing your work.

The most important thing is that you can tell the difference between demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative pronominal adjectives. Can you come up with a few sentences of your own?