

Demonstrative Pronouns

Today we're going to start talking about demonstrative pronouns. These are words like "this," "that," etc. For example, in the sentence "This is a cat," the demonstrative pronoun is "this." In the sentence "That is a textbook," the demonstrative pronoun is "that."

You'll notice that in both these examples, the words "this" and "that" are *not* modifying the words "cat" and "textbook." By this I mean that these words are not functioning as adjectives. They're pronouns, and more specifically, they're the *subjects* of those sentences.

That said, demonstrative pronouns aren't always the grammatical subjects of sentences. For example, in the sentence "What is that?" the subject is "what." Likewise, in the sentence "Who is this?" the subject is "who." Now, with all of this in mind, let's turn our attention to what this looks like in BCS.

To put it simply, the word for "this" is *ovo*. So far so good. However, there are two words that can mean "that," *ono* and *to*. There are a number of reasons for why one would use *ono* in a given sentence, as opposed to *to*, and vice versa. But the simplest explanation I've heard is that *to* is used for things that are far away, and *ono* is used for things that are somewhat closer. Let's look at examples.

Ovo je mačka. This is a cat.

Ono/To je udžbenik. That is a textbook.

Šta/Što je ono/to? What is that?

Ko/Tko je ovo? Who is this?

The grammatical gender for the words *ovo/ono/to* in the above sentences is always neuter. That doesn't mean that the words *mačka* and *udžbenik* suddenly stop being feminine or masculine, however. Think of it this way – when you begin to say the sentence *Ovo je mačka*, you don't yet know what *ovo* is going to refer to. It's acting as a kind of placeholder, until you get to the good stuff, *mačka*. So you can have a series of sentences, as follows:

Šta/Što je ovo? What is this?

Ovo je mačka. This is a cat.

Mačka je lepa/lijepa. The cat is beautiful.

Can you come up with a series of similar simple sentences, asking questions using *šta/što* or *ko/tko*, and answering using *ovo/ono/to*?

You can also use *ovo/ono/to* to ask yes/no ("Da li..." and "Je li...") type questions. For example:

Da li je ovo prozor?/Je li ovo prozor? Is this a window?

Da li je ono student?/Je li ono student? Is that a student?