

The importance of having a degree: Missing short and long form adjectives in BCMS

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Introduction: Long and short form adjectives in BCMS

- Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian (BCMS) exhibits two forms (long: LF and short: SF) of adjectives in attributive positions:

- (1) a. plav kaput
blue.SF coat
- b. plav-i kaput
blue-LF coat

- LFs are generally disallowed in predicative positions.

- (2) Taj kaput je {plav / *plav-i}.
- that coat BE blue.SF blue-LF
- 'This coat is blue.'

Note 1 In Russian only LFs are used attributively (Borik, 2014)

Note 2 BCMS shows significant regional variation, with a tendency towards a loss of attributive SFs; the contrast is best preserved in NOM.SG.M forms (Stanković, 2015).

Introduction: Gaps

Gap 1: Certain adjectives have only one of the two forms.

- (3) { *ist / isti-i } kaput (LF only)
 same.SF same-LF coat
 'the/a same coat'
- (4) { ??glav(a)n / glav-n-i } istraživač (SF degraded)
 main.SF main-LF researcher
 'the/a main researcher'
- (5) { Petr-ov / *Petr-ov-i } auto (SF only)
 Peter-POSS-SF Peter-POSS-LF car
 'Peter's car'

Introduction: Gaps

Gap 2: Adjectives that lack LF or SF do not derive comparative forms.

- (6) *ist-iji kaput (no comparative)
 same.COMP coat
- (7) ??glavniji istraživač (comparative degraded)
 main.COM researcher
- (8) *Petr-ov-iji auto (no comparative)
 Peter-POSS-COMP car

Introduction: Claims

- **Account:** SF vs. LF distinction signals **Definiteness of Degree (DoD)**.
- **Empirical claim:** LF vs. SF distinction collapses with non-gradable adjectives that resist comparative formation.
Therefore, **Gaps 1 and Gaps 2 go hand in hand:**
 - true gaps: Gap 1 (*SF) \Leftrightarrow Gap 2 (*Comp)
 - semi-gaps: semi-Gap 1 (??SF) \Leftrightarrow semi-Gap 2 (??Comp)
- **This talk:** Testing and modeling the predictions of our account.

SF vs. LF distinction in traditional grammars

- **Traditional** grammars associate the SF vs. LF distinction with **nominal (in)definiteness**, stated as a **tendency** rather than a rule (Maretić 1963; Stevanović 1986).

- (9)
- a. taj velik-i kaput
that big-LF coat
'that big coat'
 - b. jedan velik kaput
one big.SF coat
'a/one big coat'

Note: BCMS is an articleless language

SF vs. LF distinction and the NP/DP debate

- **Early pro-DP accounts:** SF vs. LF distinction signals **(in)definiteness**
→ evidence in favor of a DP analysis (Leko 1999; Progovac 1998)

- Trenkic (2004) shows that LFs can be used in indefinite contexts

(10) Kad uđeš u sobu, na sredini je velik-i okrugl-i sto.
when enter in room on middle is big-LF round-LF table
'As you enter the room, there is a big round table in the middle.'

Trenkic: epistemic specificity rather than definiteness (no DP)

- Aljović (2002) ties the SF/LF distinction to (partitive)
(non-)specificity, still suggesting the presence of a DP in BCMS.

SF vs. LF distinction and no-DP accounts

- **Original no-DP analyses** (e.g. Zlatić 1997; Trenkic 2004; Bošković 2005):
 - do not question the alleged correlation between SF/LF and nominal (in)definiteness (or (non-)specificity);
 - SF vs. LF is treated as an insufficient argument for the presence of DP in BCMS, as all adjectives are optional.
 - The no-DP case is built on other syntactic evidence, e.g. availability of Left Branch Extraction (Corver 1990; Zlatić 1997; Bošković 2005):

- (11) a. *Expensive_i; he bought [a *t_i* house].
 b. Skupu_i; je kupio [*t_i* kuću].
 expensive AUX bought house
 'He bought an expensive house.'

SF vs. LF distinction and no-DP accounts

- More recent no-DP accounts of BCMS confine the SF vs. LF distinction to the adjectival domain (AP), while still tying it to nominal (in)definiteness/(non-)specificity.

e.g. Despić (2011):

- LF morphology diachronically derives from a clitic pronoun located in an XP on top of AP: [XP [AP]],
- the presence of the pronoun forces a definite interpretation of the whole NP without projecting a DP.

e.g. Talić (2014) offers a similar solution with more syntactic evidence but ties the LF/SF distinction to nominal (non-)specificity.

SF vs. LF: A complex empirical picture

Stanković (2015): extensive empirical overview (cf. his table on p. 308)

	def.	indef.	unique	non-unique	spec.	non-spec.
[A _{LF} N]	+	+	+	+	+	+
[A _{SF} N]	-	+	-	+	-	+
[Det A _{LF} N]	+	+	n.a.	n.a.	+	+
[Det A _{SF} N]	+	+	n.a.	n.a.	+	+

Table 1: SF/LF and (pragmatic) definiteness, uniqueness, (epistemic) specificity

	ILP	SLP	restrictive	non-restrict.	intersect.	subsect.
LF	+	+	+	+	+	+
SF	-	+	+	-	-	+

Table 2: Other properties for SF/LF in [A N]

→ **General idea:** With indirect modification (in the sense of Cinque, 2010), we always get predicative As → SF

Examples for indirect modification in Stanković (2014)

- SFs can only be interpreted as **stage-level predicates** (12) (attributed to Maretić, 1963) [**here: as a depictive**].
- **Postnominal As**, which are necessarily interpreted as non-restrictive (and sometimes also appositive), have to appear in the **SF** (13).

- (12) a. Srdit Marko jezdi niz Kosovo.
 angry.SF Marko rides through Kosovo
 'Marko is riding through Kosovo angry.'
NOT: 'Marko is an angry person and he is riding through Kosovo.'
- b. Srditi Marko jezdi niz Kosovo.
 angry.LF Marko rides through Kosovo
 'Marko is an angry person and he is riding through Kosovo.'
- (13) a. lijep(-i) momak vs. momak lijep(*-i)
 handsome-LF guy guy handsome-LF
- b. momak, lijep(*-i) i {pametan / *pamatn-i}
 guy handsome-LF and smart.SF smart-LF

Problems of Cinque's (2010) model

- Strong form (as suggested by Cinque): SFs always involve indirect modification; problems:
 - SFs should then always involve reduced relative clause structures (islands for extraction), but LBE is still possible (14)
 - SFs can also be ILPs (e.g. 'intelligent'), requiring direct modification (and thus LFs) in Cinque's model.
 - LFs can also be evaluative (e.g. 'beautiful'), requiring indirect modification (and thus SFs) in Cinque's model.

(14) Izuzetno_i je kupila t_i lijep kaput.
 extremely AUX bought beautiful.SF coat
 'She bought an extremely beautiful coat.'

(from Talić, 2017, 207)

Stanković's (2015) proposal

(back to Table 1:)

	def.	indef.	unique	non-unique	spec.	non-spec.
[A _{LF} N]	+	+	+	+	+	+
[A _{SF} N]	-	+	-	+	-	+
[Det A _{LF} N]	+	+	n.a.	n.a.	+	+
[Det A _{SF} N]	+	+	n.a.	n.a.	+	+

- LF: unmarked; SF: marked;
- split DP (Giusti 2005): [NumP [PartP ... [NP]]];
- each layer subdivides into Spec(ific)P and Def(inite)P, where heads carry either $\boxed{+}$ or $\boxed{-}$ values for the respective categories;
- LF triggered by agreement with a $\boxed{+}$ -valued head in any of these projections;
- SF results from agreement with $\boxed{-}$ -valued heads in the split DP domain.

SF vs. LF: Neither (in)definiteness nor (non-)specificity?

- Problems of Stanković's (2015) account:
 - **Conceptual**: mismatch in morphological and semantic markedness
 - **Empirical**: SF adjectives in definite and specific contexts (15)

(15) Volim taj velik kaput.
love that big.SF coat
'I love that big coat.'

Stanković (2015) acknowledges the conceptual problem and bypasses the empirical problem by stipulating LF movement of the AP outside the domain of both DP layers, escaping syntactic agreement.

Our account: SF vs. LF as Definiteness of Degree (DoD)

- **Hypothesis:** LF vs. SF revolves around Definiteness of Degree (DoD): LF signals definite degree, SF indefinite degree.
- **Precedent:** Marušič and Žaucer's (2014) analysis of the particle *ta* in colloquial Slovenian.
- **Syntactic implementation:** following Corver (1997), a functional projection of Degree projected above AP.
- **Semantic implementation:** Building on Kennedy and McNally's (2005) semantics for the positive degree head involving an existentially bound degree variable (indefinite), we posit a definite version of the same head involving an iota-bound degree variable (16).

(details in the appendix; see also Gehrke et al. 2025)

- (16) a. $\llbracket \text{POS} \rrbracket = \lambda G \lambda x \exists d [\text{standard}(d)(G)(\mathbf{C}) \wedge G(d)(x)]$
 b. $\llbracket \text{POS} + \text{LF morphology} \rrbracket$
 $= \lambda G \lambda x . \iota d [\text{standard}(d)(G)(\mathbf{C}) \wedge G(d)(x)]$

Predictions of the DoD analysis of the SF vs. LF distinction

1 (Contextually) unique *d* maps onto LF.

- non-gradable adjectives always get LF (link between Gap 1 and Gap 2),
- vague degree modifiers (e.g. 'very', (17)) combine with SFs,
- specific degree modifiers (e.g. 'two meters', (18)) combine with LFs.

(17) veoma {mlad- \emptyset / ??mlad-i} čovek
 very young-SF young-LF man
 'a/the very young man'

(18) dva metra {??visok- \emptyset / visok-i} čovek
 two meters tall-SF tall-LF man
 'a/the two-meter tall man'

2 SF and LF adjectives can co-occur within the same NP/DP.

(19) Treba mi [običn-i jeftin-i pouzdan quartz sat].
 need me regular-LF cheap-LF reliable-SF Quartz watch
 'I need a regular cheap reliable Quartz watch.' (attested online)

Difficulties testing the predictions

1 the issue of coercion:

- (20) a. ??lokanan – lokaln-i – ??lokaln-i-ji
 local.SF local-LF local-LF-COMP
- b. *evrops(a)k – evropsk-i – ?evropsk-i-ji
 European.SF European-LF European-LF-COMP

2 the issue of ambiguity:

- (21) a. {radan / radn-i} čovjek
 diligent.SF diligent-LF man
 ‘a/the diligent man’
- b. {*radan / radn-i} kaput
 work.SF work-LF coat
 ‘a/the work coat’

3 SF decline and regional differences (⇒ varying judgments)

Solution

- Formulating the predictions in non-categorical terms and testing them quantitatively → reformulated predictions 1a. and 1b.:
 - the frequency of SF is strongly correlated with the frequency of the comparative, unlike the frequency of LF, where no such correlation is expected;
 - the frequency of the indefinite degree modifier *veoma* 'very' (also: *koliko* 'how-much') is significantly higher in combination with SF than in combination with LF (despite the overall higher frequency of LF).

Quantitative corpus study

- **Sample:** 1100 most frequent adjectival lemmas in the Serbian Web Corpus srWaC (Ljubešić and Klubička, 2016).
- Drawing **frequency data** (number of attestations) for:
 - the lemma itself (in the first 100 million tokens),
 - nominative singular masculine form of the lemma (SF and LF)
 - nominative singular masculine comparative form
 - nominative singular masculine form (SF and LF) preceded by the indefinite modifier *veoma* ('very')
 - nominative singular masculine form (SF and LF) preceded by the wh-degree modifier *koliko* ('how-much')

Corpus study: Data collection

- Procedure

- Dedicated CQL queries automatically generated for each of the targeted measures for each of the 1100 adjectival lemmas (function REGEXREPLACE in MS Excel).
- Customized Python script (Kovačević, 2025a) developed to execute the queries automatically via API calls and output a spreadsheet with frequency data replacing CQL expressions (Kovačević, 2025b).

Corpus study: Data processing and analysis

- Raw frequency data were log-transformed to comply with Zipf's law and stabilize the variance.
- 2 linear models:
 - Model 1 predicts LF frequency based on overall lemma frequency and the frequency of the comparative form.
 - Model 2 predicts SF frequency based on overall lemma frequency and the frequency of the comparative form.
- Means comparisons
 - t-test comparing overall frequencies of LF and SF,
 - t-test comparing frequencies of LF and SF in combination with the degree modifier *veoma* ('very').
 - t-test comparing the frequencies of LF and SF in combination with the *wh*- degree modifier *koliko* ('how-much')

Results: LF frequency unaffected by COMP frequency

- The frequency of LF is purely a function of the overall frequency of the lemma.

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	-5.12860	0.72975	-7.028	3.68e-12***
log_frequency	1.11375	0.08789	12.672	<2e-16***
log_COMPfreq	0.01401	0.03486	0.402	0.688

Residual standard error: 2.28 on 1096 degrees of freedom
 Multiple R-squared: 0.1391, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1375
 F-statistic: 88.55 on 2 and 1096 DF, p-value: <2.2e-16

Table 3: Linear regression results predicting $\log(\text{LFfreq})$ from $\log(\text{frequency})$ and $\log(\text{COMPfreq})$.

Note: Signif. codes: 0***, 0.001**, 0.01*, 0.05, 0.1, 1.

Results: SF frequency strongly associated with COMP frequency

- The frequency of SF is primarily a function of the frequency of the comparative form of the lemma and only secondarily the overall frequency of the lemma

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.0008565	0.6022461	0.001	0.9989
log_frequency	0.1425999	0.0725317	1.966	0.0495*
log_COMPfreq	1.0072073	0.0287682	35.011	<2e-16***

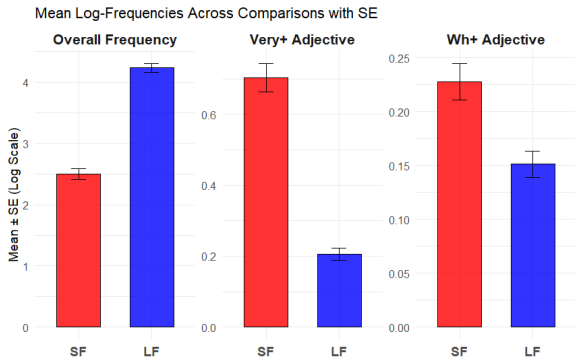
Residual standard error: 1.882 on 1096 degrees of freedom
 Multiple R-squared: 0.556, Adjusted R-squared: 0.5552
 F-statistic: 686.3 on 2 and 1096 DF, p-value: <2.2e-16

Table 4: Linear regression results predicting $\log(\text{SFfreq})$ from $\log(\text{frequency})$ and $\log(\text{COMPfreq})$.

Note: Signif. codes: 0***, 0.001**, 0.01*, 0.05, 0.1, 1.

Results: Means comparison

- LF is significantly more frequent overall ($t = 16.745$, $p < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$).
- SF is significantly more frequent in combination with:
 - an indefinite degree modifier *veoma* ('very') ($t = -14.256$, $p < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$).
 - the degree modifier *koliko* ('how-much') ($t = -3.6678$, $p < 0.0003$).



Discussion

- The LF vs. SF distinction is heavily influenced by the gradability of the adjective.
- This link is unexpected on any account that ties it to nominal definiteness or specificity.
- It is, however, predicted if the distinction signals DoD.

Conclusion

- The LF vs. SF distinction in BCMS is best understood as a **definiteness of degree (DoD)** phenomenon, rather than a marker of nominal definiteness or specificity.
- Our **quantitative corpus study** confirms a strong **correlation between the frequency of SFs and that of comparatives**, supporting the DoD hypothesis.
- **Implications:**
 - Challenges previous DP-based analyses of BCMS.
 - Suggests that degree heads (Deg/Pos) can be definite or indefinite.

Future research

- Investigate additional semantic and syntactic diagnostics for DoD (under way).
- Semantics: (In)definiteness (uniqueness / anaphoricity / familiarity) and/or (non-)specificity (epistemic / scopal / partitive / determinate)?
 - Explore the parallels to the nominal domain further (incl. Maximize Presupposition, anti-presupposition etc. when a language has grammaticalized definiteness marking).
- Explore regional and dialectal variation by collecting data from other (modern and historical) varieties of BCMS.

Hvala!

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Statistic	Value
t-value	-14.256
Degrees of Freedom (df)	1098
p-value	$< 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$
95% CI Lower Bound	-0.5658610
95% CI Upper Bound	-0.4289378
Mean Difference	-0.4973994

Table 5: Paired samples t-test comparing `log_deg[very]_LFfreq` and `log_deg[very]_SFfreq`.

Results

Statistic	Value
Test Type	Paired t-test
Data	log_LFfreq vs log_SFfreq
t-statistic	16.745
Degrees of Freedom (df)	1098
p-value	< 2.2e-16
Alternative Hypothesis	True mean difference $\neq 0$
95% Confidence Interval	(1.534832, 1.942261)
Mean Difference	1.738546

Table 6: Paired t-test results comparing log_LFfreq and log_SFfreq

Paired t-Test: Wh+Adjective

Paired t-test Results

Statistic	Value
Data	<i>df\$log_wh_LFfreq vs. df\$log_wh_SFfreq</i>
t-statistic	-3.6678
Degrees of Freedom (df)	1099
p-value	0.0002564
Alternative Hypothesis	True mean difference $\neq 0$
95% Confidence Interval	(-0.1173, -0.0355)
Mean Difference	-0.0764

Standard assumptions about gradable As

(e.g. Kennedy and McNally, 2005)

- involve **scale structure**
- express a relation between an entity x and a **degree** d (a point on the scale), e.g. (22) (K&McN: 349)

$$(22) \quad \llbracket \text{expensive} \rrbracket = \lambda d \lambda x. \text{expensive}(x) = d$$

- K&McN: The degree argument gets **existentially closed** in the further derivation.

Standard assumptions about gradable As (K&McN)

- 2 options for existential closure of d :

- by a **null degree morpheme** pos , which locates d on the scale with respect to a contextually determined standard (23-a) (K&McN: 350) (**C**: comparison class)
- by **degree modification** (incl. comparatives etc.) (23-b) (K&McN: 367) (**R**: some restriction on the degree argument of the adjective, specific to the individual degree modifier)

$$(23) \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{a. } \llbracket pos \rrbracket = \lambda G \lambda x \exists d [\mathbf{standard}(d)(G)(\mathbf{C}) \wedge G(d)(x)] \\ \text{b. } \llbracket \text{Deg}(P) \rrbracket = \lambda G \lambda x \exists d [\mathbf{R}(d) \wedge G(d)(x)] \end{array}$$

e.g. (24), (25), where d_c is the degree introduced by the comparative clause (cf. K&McN: 368f.)

$$(24) \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{a. } \llbracket \text{two meters} \rrbracket = \lambda G \lambda x. \exists d [d \succeq \mathbf{two\ meters} \wedge G(d)(x)] \\ \text{b. } \llbracket \text{two meters tall} \rrbracket = \lambda x. \exists d [d \succeq \mathbf{two\ meters} \wedge \mathbf{tall}(x) = d] \end{array}$$

$$(25) \quad \llbracket \text{er/more than } d_c \rrbracket = \lambda G \lambda x. \exists d [d \succ d_c \wedge G(d)(x)]$$

Our modifications to this system

- The degree (the point on the scale) can be (in)definite (unique or anaphoric), and (epistemically and/or scopally) (non-)specific.
- Also non-gradable As involve scale structure. (following Sassoon, 2013)
 - Gradability is a reflex of vagueness resolution.
 - Less vague or sharp/crisp predicates appear less or non-gradable because they involve a trivial 2-point scale ($[0,1]$).
- We dissociate degree modification from existential closure of d .
(following Bierwisch et al., 2024)
 - Degree modification adds further conditions on d .
 - Existential (or other) import does not depend on this.

Our proposal for LFs in BCMS

- **Existential closure** is just one way of binding d .
 - This is the standard way in languages that lack definiteness marking in the degree domain, such as English.
 - BCMS has a **definite marker** in the degree domain: adjectival LF morphology; tentatively formalised as in (26)

$$(26) \quad \llbracket pos + LF \text{ morphology} \rrbracket \\ = \lambda G \lambda x. \iota d [\mathbf{standard}(d)(G)(\mathbf{C}) \wedge G(d)(x)]$$

NB Direct parallels to nominal definiteness in article- vs. articleless languages (Heim, 2011; Šimík and Demian, 2020; Seres and Borik, 2021)

- In the absence of (in)definite articles, languages like, e.g., Russian, always involve existential closure of x .
- Definiteness effects are due to context and/or world knowledge.
- **Prediction** [of the general idea]: When d is determinate, (contextually) unique (incl. anaphoric to another degree in the context) and/or specific, we get the LF, and the SF should be banned.

Argument #1: Paradigmatic gaps

- Missing SFs with relational and spatial As:

- (27)
- $\{ *seo-sk-\emptyset / seo-sk-i \}$ *put* 'village road'
 - $\{ *glav-an-\emptyset / glav-n-i \}$ *istraživač* 'head/main researcher'
 - $\{ *pred-nj-\emptyset / pred-nj-i \}$ *točak* 'front wheel'

These As are also **non-gradable** (28)

- (28)
- **seo-sk-ij-i* 'village-ADJ-COMP-LF'
 - ?? *glav-n-ij-i* 'head-ADJ-COMP-LF'
 - **pred-nj-ij-i* 'front-ADJ-COMP-LF'

→ **Our explanation:** These are crisp predicates, which involve definite/specific points on the scale (1; nothing in between 0 and 1).

NB In some cases, non-gradable As can be coerced into gradable predicates, by moving to a typicality scale (e.g. (28-b)).

The gaps cannot (always) be explained phonologically

- Some of the most frequent suffixes that derive As lacking SFs introduce phonological structures that are not attested word-finally (e.g. suffix *-sk*), so the SF would require a phonological repair (Simonović, 2016).

→ Possible phonological explanation of the gap for these

BUT There are also minimal pairs, and the phonological explanation cannot be extended to those; e.g. suffix *-(a)n*:

- (29) a. {rad-n-i / rad-an-∅ / rad-n-iji} čovek
 work-AN-LF work-AN-SF work-AN-COMP man
 'a/the (more) diligent/hardworking man'
- b. {rad-n-i / *rad-an-∅ / *rad-n-iji} dan
 work-AN-LF work-AN-SF work-AN-COMP day
 'a/the work day'

Further paradigmatic gaps that we set aside

- Missing SFs with deverbal As:

(30) a. $\{*\textit{let-eć-}\emptyset / \textit{let-eć-i}\}$ *objekt* ‘flying object’
 b. $*\textit{leteć-ij-i}$ ‘flying-COMP-LF’ [active participle]

(31) a. $\{*\textit{umr-l-}\emptyset / \textit{umr-l-i}\}$ *čovek* ‘deceased man’
 b. $*\textit{umrl-ij-i}$ ‘deceased-COMP-LF’ [attributive *l*-participle]

- Can probably be integrated into our proposal; additional future research: event/scale structure underlying the verbal predicates

Argument #2: LF with specific degree modifiers

- Strong preference for LFs over SFs with **specific measure phrases**:

(32) dva metra {^{??}visok- \emptyset / visok-i} čovek
 two meters tall-SF tall-LF man
 'a/the two-meter tall man'

- BCMS **comparative (and superlative) forms** always appear in LF:

(33) a. {novij-i / bolj-i / plavlj-i} kaput
 newer-LF better-LF bluer-LF coat
 '(a/the) newer / better / bluer coat'
 b. *{novij- \emptyset / bolj- \emptyset / plavlj- \emptyset } kaput

Argument #2: LF with specific degree modifiers

- Assumption:** Both measure phrases and comparatives/superlatives operate on degree intervals, following Bierwisch et al. (2024).
 - Measure phrases like '2 meters': The relevant endpoint on this interval is specified and thus requires definiteness marking.
 - Comparatives/superlatives involve anaphoric definiteness.

Recall analysis in Kennedy and McNally (2005, 368f.):

$$(34) \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{a. } \llbracket \text{two meters} \rrbracket = \lambda G \lambda x. \exists d [d \succeq \mathbf{two\ meters} \wedge G(d)(x)] \\ \text{b. } \llbracket \text{two meters tall} \rrbracket = \lambda x. \exists d [d \succeq \mathbf{two\ meters} \wedge \mathbf{tall}(x) = d] \end{array}$$

$$(35) \quad \llbracket \text{er/more than } d_c \rrbracket = \lambda G \lambda x. \exists d [d \succ d_c \wedge G(d)(x)]$$

Argument #3: SF with non-specific degree modifiers

- **Non-specific degree modifiers** like *veoma* ‘very’ disprefer LFs:

(36) *veoma* {*mlad-∅* / ??*mlad-i*} *čovjek*
 very young-SF young-LF man
 ‘a/the very young man’

→ These are mere standard boosters, which still only involve an indefinite degree on the scale.

- **Wh-degree words** like *kolik* ‘how much’ disprefer LFs:

(37) *Koliko* {*značajan-∅* / **značajn-i*} *faktor si*
 how-much significant-SF significant-LF factor AUX.2SG
otkrio?
 discovered
 ‘How significant a factor did you discover?’

Argument #4: SF-LF-co-occurrence

- **Co-occurring SFs and LFs** within the same NP challenge nominal \pm DEF/ \pm SPEC accounts; for example (38) (attested online):

(38) Treba mi [običn-i jeftin-i pouzdan quartz sat].
 need me regular-LF cheap.LF reliable.SF Quartz watch
 'I need a regular cheap reliable Quartz watch.'

- LF *obični* 'regular': relational A, non-gradable (crisp predicate, lacks comparative form: ??*običniji*)
- LF *jeftini* 'cheap': discourse-unique (native speakers' intuition)
- SF *pouzdan* 'reliable': The degree is not unique in the context of (Quartz) watches.

Revisiting the problems for nominal $\pm_{\text{DEF}}/\pm_{\text{SPEC}}$ accounts

- LFs in indefinite and/or non-specific contexts

- (39) a. Kad uđeš u sobu, na sredini je okrugl-i sto.
 when enter.2SGPRS in room on middle is round-LF table
 'As you enter the room, there is a round table in the center.'
- b. Treba mi neki velik-i kaput.
 needs me some big-LF coat
 'I need a big coat.'

- SFs in definite and/or specific contexts

- (40) Volim taj velik kaput.
 love.1SGPRS that big.SF coat
 'I love that big coat.'

- Our explanation:

(39-a) Crisp predicate (lacks comparative form: ??*okrugliji*)

(39-b) Speaker needs a coat of a specific degree of bigness (known size)

(40) The degree of 'big' is not specified or discourse-unique.

Summary and implications

- If correct, the analysis presents a case for a cross-linguistically rare **morphological category of definiteness**, DoD, which sheds new light on both definiteness and degree in natural language.

Open issues within the scope of this proposal:

- **(In)definiteness** (uniqueness / anaphoricity / familiarity) **and/or (non-)specificity** (epistemic / scopal / partitive / determinate)?
 - Explore the parallels to the nominal domain further (incl. Maximize Presupposition, anti-presupposition etc. when a language has grammaticalised definiteness marking)
- **Participles?** (require LFs)
 - Explore the potential role of the event/scale structure underlying the verbal predicates

Open issues outside the scope of the proposal

- Missing LFs with possessives:

- (41) a. $\{Petr-ov-\emptyset / *Petr-ov-i\}$ *auto* 'Peter's car'
 b. $*Petrov-ij-i$ 'Peter's-COMP-LF'

- Simonović and Kovačević (2022): *-ov* attaches to a referential, gender-marked N (a full phasal *n* head); prosodic faithfulness to N, full productivity, semantic transparency
 - Such As contain too much (independent) nominal structure to allow additional adjectival structure responsible for LF?

NB Relational As are different: non-referential N, “true” adjectives (see, e.g., McNally and Boleda, 2004; Boleda et al., 2012; Arsenijević et al., 2014)

- Ignored in this talk: Tendency to replace attributive SFs by LFs in some dialects, potential loss of attributive SFs overall.
 - Corpus data: With some (highly frequent) As, which display a lexically determined preferences for LFs, this process might be more advanced.