The 'definite article' in the Slovene dialect of Resia

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0. Introduction

Among South Slavic languages Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian lack articles and have recently been argued to lack even the DP layer in nominals, due to the overall absence of articles as a genuine D category (Zlatic (1997), Bošković (2008), a.o). Nonetheless, there is a widespread claim (Steenwijk (1992), Benacchio (2002), Heine&Kuteva (2006), Oštir (2010)) that in the Slovene dialects spoken in Italy the Slavic demonstrative for medial distance, sometimes as a unique, non-fledged form, has been developing into the definite article. In this respect, Heine & Kuteva (2006) report that the highest stage of the grammaticalization of the definite article is found in the Resian dialect, a Slovene dialect spoken in the province of Udine, in the border area between Italy, Slovenia and Austria, by not more than 1000 speakers. [1,2]

The most common distribution of the weak demonstrative/article-like element (henceforth *te*) in the Resian dialect is exemplified by examples (1), (2) and (3).[3] The examples are from Steenwijk (1992).

(1) Somo meli pá   te   rozojánske plaváne jzdé.

    aux.1PL had also   *te*-M.PL.ACC Resian parish-priest here

    'We also had the Resian parish-priests here.'

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[1] Steenwijk (1992: 2) reports that the total population of the Resian valley is somewhat less than 1400. Wikipedia (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resia) reports the total number of 1098 inhabitants. I assume that the number of speakers of Resian is significantly lower.

[2] The Resian dialect has subject clitics and the expletive subject *to*. The three-gender paradigm is in process of reducing to masculine-feminine opposition. It also has analytic superlatives. However, none of the abovementioned phenomena has been object of a specific study whereby the account in terms of language contact with the confining Friulan dialect and Italian would have been explored.

[3] For ease of exposition I take *te* (nominative masculine singular) as representative of all the forms inflected for case, number and gender. In Resian, *te* shares φ-/case-features with the head noun (and adjectives). The whole paradigm is given in table 1.

(2) Somo   narédili din vlíki kɔp   kafɛ   toga bílaga.

aux.1PL made   one big   soup ladle coffe-M.SG.GEN *te*-M.SG.GEN white-

M.SG.GEN

'We made a big soup-ladle of white coffee.'

(3) Din zéc   si   zdélal,   an ma sedan   te   mládi.

One/a rabbit aux.3SG gave birth and   seven   *te*-M.PL.GEN young-M.PL.GEN

'One rabbit gave birth to seven young ones.'

In all three examples *te* appears with adjectival modifiers, prenominal and postnominal in (1) and (2) respectively, and as a licensor of nominal ellipsis in (3). Moreover, *te* is never found with definite bare nouns in languages with articles, where the use of definite articles would be obligatory, since demonstratives are illicit:

(4) Wnedějo si šla na ženetka. (*Te) Novyć jë bil karje vesel.

sunday aux.1SG went to wedding *te* bridegroom aux.3SG was very cheerful

'On Sunday I went to a wedding. The bridegroom was very cheerful.'

The goal of this paper is to present systematic and novel data about the nominal expressions (NEs) containing the weak demonstrative/article-like element. In so doing, I intend to provide a better understanding of their exact status in the dialect of Resia.

The article is organized as follows: in Section 1, I investigate the distribution and semantic import of *te*; in Section 2, I analyze more closely the internal structure of NEs containing *te*. Finally, in Section 3, based on the data from Sections 1 and 2, I phrase several questions with the aim to provide a preliminary analysis pending further and more extensive data. Section 4 concludes the paper.

Data used in the paper come from two sources: written data based on the transcripts of spontaneous oral production data taken from Steenwijk (1992), on newspaper articles from Näš glas and popular stories, and the data I collected during the field work in Stolvizza village in June 2012. Although Resian displays several varieties only data from two varieties, namely those of Stolvizza and San Giorgio, will be taken into account. Due to non-uniformity of the orthographic convention divergent systems will be adopted as they were found in the written texts and hinted at by the informants.[4]

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[4] For help with judgments and most of the presented data, I am indebted to Luigia Negro and Sandro Quaglia.

1. *Te*: floating between demonstrative and article

Table 1 contains the full array of forms of *te*, inflected for number, gender and case.

Table 1 The paradigm of *te* in Resian

	Singular			Plural	
	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Non-feminine	*GenusComune*
Nominative	te	to	ta	ti	te
Genitive	taa		te	tih/teh	
Dative	timu		ti	ti/te	
Accusative	=N/G	to	to	te	
Instrumental	ti		to	tëmi	
Locative	timu		ti	te	

According to Steenwijk (1992) and Benacchio (2002) *te* is used both as weak counterpart of the strong unmarked demonstrative *itë* 'that/this' and as definite article. Following this tradition, I will assume that in Resian there are two *te* elements:

a) *te* as weak demonstrative, which can freely alternate with its strong counterpart *itë* in the prenominal position and as the antecedent of relative clauses: this *te* can also bear its own stress, and may have both deictic (even with deictic reinforcers) and anaphoric values;

(7) a. Ka to jë **to** /**itö** librun?

    what it is *te*-CL/*itë*-STRONG book

   'What book is that?'

  b. ta /jtä ʒornada jzdé[5] (Steenwijk 1992)

   te-F.SG.NOM /that day here

   'this day'

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[5] Steenwijk (1992) describes the variety of San Giorgio (SG). Some of the differences between the two varieties are illustrated by the following minimal pairs:

 (i) a) njaa (ST) b) njaga (SG)
    c) näš (ST) d) naš (SG)
    e) miski (ST) f) mihki (SG)

c. ti/itï   ki   be   tël mët lïbrun   (Näš glas)

 te-M.PL.NOM   who would   wish have book

'those (the ones) who wish to have the book'

c'. delawac   te/ itë ki dela tu-w prefeturo[6]

  employee   *te*/that who works in prefecture

 'An/The employee of the prefecture'

b) *te* as an article-like element, which does not seem to have its strong counterpart.

(8) Itä bila   bö   **ta (*itä)** starajša ïša.[7]   (Steenwijk 1992)

   that aux.3SG.F more *te*-F.SG.NOM   older house

   'That was the oldest house.'

Although such distinction does no justice to the uniform description of the phenomenon under investigation, nevertheless, due to huge variability and uncertainty with judgments, I will take it as my point of departure. Therefore, in the remainder of this paper I will focus on the NEs with the presence of at least one adjectival modifier, recognizing it as a clue of the more article-like nature of *te*.

1.1. Uniqueness of adjective-noun *complex*

As pointed out in the introduction, the appearance of *te* is banned from associative anaphoric use (see Hawkins (1978)) – this clearly leads to the conclusion that in this case *te* retains its deictic semantic feature. Such interpretative reflex prevents it from being used in context illustrated by (9) ((4) is repeated as (9)) and compared with the Italian translation (10)).[8]

(9) Wnedëjo si   šla   na ženetka. (*Te) Novyć   jë   bil karje vesel.

   sunday aux.1SG went to wedding . *te* spouse aux.3SG was very cheerful

   'On Sunday I went to a wedding. The bridegroom was very cheerful.'

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[6] Here, *te* introduces a restrictive relative clause.

[7] My informants excluded the presence of the strong counterpart in front of *starajša jiša* 'old house' due to the presence of yet another demonstrative at the beginning of the sentence.

[8] The grammaticalization of the definite article involves loss of deictic features in demonstratives (see Giusti (2001) and the references therein for the make-up of the semantic features of demonstratives *vs*. articles).

(10)   Domenica sono stata ad un matrimonio. Lo sposo era molto allegro.

If we further look at Italian, a language with the genuine definite article, by adding an adjectival modifier to the noun *sposo* 'bridegroom', we obtain (11), i.e., the second clause still presupposes the existence of a unique referent in the universe of discourse. The adjective *giovane* 'young' has appositive meaning, as it is always the case in Italian when adjectives occur prenominally.[9]

(11)   Domenica sono andata ad un matrimonio. Il giovane sposo era molto allegro.

Given the conjecture of the previous section whereby the adjectives may reveal the article nature of *te* in Resian, replicating the Italian example in (11) should yield the identical result in Resian. However, the prediction does not materialize in (12). What we have instead is that although the adjective requires the mandatory presence of *te*, in that case it is presupposed that more than one bridegroom exist, out of whom only one is the bearer of the property denoted by the adjective.

(12)   a. Wnedějo si   šla na ženetka. *(Te) mladi novyć jë   bil karje vesel.
         sunday aux.1SG went on wedding *te* young spouse aux.3SG very cheerful
         'On Sunday I went to a wedding. The young spouse was very cheerful.'

The Italian example in (11), with the same meaning, is achievable exclusively through an appositive relative clause.[10]

(13)   b. Wnedějo si šla na ženetka. Novyć, ki jë   bil mlot,   jë   bil karje
            sunday aux.1SG went on wedding spouse who aux.3SG young-INDEF was very
           vesel.
           cheerful
         'On Sunday I went to a wedding. The bridegroom, who was young, was very cheerful.'

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[9] In Italian it is possible to presuppose the existence of more than one bridegroom by placing the adjective in post-nominal position, where it receives restrictive meaning (see Cinque (2010) for interpretative and structural differences between restrictive and nonrestrictive adjectives)

[10] Paola Benincà (p.c) informs me that this is also the case with the Paduan dialect.

For this reason, using *te* in contexts where the referent denoted by the noun itself is logically one only produces odd results.

(14)   A: Ki delaš izde w Rezija?
         what do.2SG here in Resia

         B: # Si pyršel nalest taa   stara   oća   me   lope.
         aux.1SG came see *te*-M.SG.ACC old-M.SG.ACC father-M.SG.ACC my-F.SG.GEN
         fiancée -F.SG.GEN

         A:What do you do here in Resia?

         B: I came to see my fiancée's old father.

However, with the modified generics the use of *te* is obligatory. Note again that unmodified singular generics *ćelular* 'cell phone' (15a) and *ištut* 'istituto' (15c) are not introduced by *te*.

(15)   a) Ćelular   jë   prajal *(to)   modernasto kulturo.
         cell phone aux   changed   *te*-F.SG.ACC modern culture
         'The mobile phone has changed modern society'

         b) Pojütro   se   pije *(te) bili kafe.
         morning one drink *te*   white coffee
         'In the morning people drink white coffee'

         c) Ištut   za *(to)   slovinsko   kultüro
         Institute for *te*-F.SG.ACC slovene   culture

     Based on example (13) we may draw a hasty conclusion that *te* signals the presence of restrictive adjectives that, according to Cinque (2010), have a reduced relative clause as a source. However, the three adjectives in (15) do not share interpretative properties of restrictive adjectives. This does not mean that they may not occur as predicates of restrictive relative clauses, but in this usage they are actually comparable with 'direct' modification adjectives (see Cinque (2010) based on Sproat and Shih (1991)) and can be categorized as classificatory (15a-b) and nationality (15c) adjectives. In Italian these adjectives are merged

prenominally, are lower than restrictive adjectives and hence closer to the noun, and end up being postnominal as a result of obligatory phrasal (NP) movement past them.

1.2. Te *and indefinite contexts*

This subsection explores whether the use of *te* is insensitive to definiteness requirements. If we assume that in Resian *te* is prompted by the presence of adjectives, then it should occur independently from the pragmatic status of the referent denoted by the noun.[11] This indeed is the case with the 'adjectival' non-fledged article *ta* in colloquial Slovenian (see Marušič and Žaucer, to appear). The Slovenian adjectival article may occur in indefinite contexts, if preceded by an indefinite determiner, where it contributes not to a definiteness status of the referent itself but to the type of referent denoted by the adjective. Based on this, Marušič and Žaucer (2008) claim that in nominal expressions with *ta* the quantification of the DP is not necessarily dependent on the quantification of the adjective.

However, in neither of the below contexts was it possible to elicit the use of *te* − it seems banned from prototypically indefinite contexts, both specific and nonspecific. The indefinite nominal expressions in English are underscored whereas their Resian equivalents are excerpted from the relevant translations and reported under the English dialogues.

[-definite, +specific][12]

(16)   Lorenzo: How was your trip?

Maria: Fine, I met an Italian friend/an old friend of mine, but you don't
know him.

Resian: naa laškaa amïga

one-M.SG.ACC Italian friend

'a/one Italian friend'

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[11] This situation is reminiscent of Serbo-Croatian long (definite) and short (indefinite) adjectives, since short (indefinite) adjectives do not occur obligatorily with indefinite referents and *vice versa*. At the same time, these adjectives may contribute to the reference status of the entire DP. Unfortunately, the distribution and semantic import of short/long adjectives is far from being well understood both in traditional grammars and in more recent formal descriptions of the phenomenon.

[12] The examples are modelled after Ionin, Ko and Wexler (2004).

naa   staraa mia amiga[13]

one-M.SG.ACC old my   friend

'a/one old my friend'

[-definite, -specific]

(17)   Student: I am new in this school. This is my first day.

Teacher: Welcome! Are you going to be at the school party tonight?

Student: Yes. I'd like to get to know my classmates. I am hoping to find

a good friend/an Italian friend! I don't like being all alone.

Resian: naa   laškaa amïga

one-M.SG.ACC Italian friend

'a/one Italian friend'

naa   dobraa amïga

one-M.SG.ACC good friend

'a/one good friend'

Moreover, Resian *te* cannot precede indefinite (short) adjectives, whose occurrence is typically limited to predicative position in this dialect, both primary (18a) and secondary predicates (18b), just as in most Slavic languages.[14] The two examples are taken from Steenwijk (1992).

(18)   a. […]da krü bódi (*te) mijak.

that bread be *te* soft-INDEF

'that bread be soft'

b. Prít ni   so   mestili   ziz mišalnikom ma   so   ostajale (*te) cële

before they aux beat   with ladle   but aux stayed *te* whole

kartufule.

potatoes

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[13] The only meaning that the adjective *old* achieves in Resian is the intersective one. The nonintersective meaning of *old* is not possible (differently from Serbo-Croatian, English or Italian).

[14] This divide is typical for most Slavic languages. However, in Serbo-Croatian, or at least in some of its variants the attributive use of short adjectival form is possible.

'Before they used to beat with the ladle but the potatoes would remain whole'

Unlike colloquial Slovenian adjectival articles, the Resian *te* is neither possible with quantifiers.

(19) nidan (*te) stari langeč

     no   *te* old   language

    'no old language'

(20) wsaki (*te)   valiki krej

    every *te*   big part

    'every big part'

In short, the above examples demonstrate that *te* is excluded from prototypically indefinite contexts and is not independent from the quantification of the overall nominal expression.

2. The internal structure of NEs with *te*

While disregarding differences in interpretation as a result of various rearrangements inside nominal expressions, in this section I will consider the potential position of *te* with respect to other elements in NEs. Most notably, any order other than the basic one *te*-adj-noun implies that *te* is carried away or stranded together with the adjective. In (19b) the order is noun-*te*-adjective, whereas *te*-noun-adjective is ungrammatical (19c).

(19)   a) to   visokö oknö

        te-N.SG.NOM high   window

        b) oknö to visokö[15]

        c) *to oknö visoko

         'the high window'

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[15] It is not excluded that this order is result of a divergent underlying structure, the one reminiscent of Romanian noun-cel-adj or Latin noun-ille-adj configurations, involving adposition of the second DP (see Marchis & Alexiadou (2009) for a recent account of Romanian *cel* constructions).

In the examples with possessives, all three options are grammatical: poss-*te*-adj-noun (20a); *te*-adj-poss-noun (20b); poss-noun-*te*-adj (20c). Again, it is not possible to split *te* and the adjective, as in (20), where the order *te*-poss-adj-noun induces ungrammaticality.

(20)   a) nji ta   maja   lisica
              her *te*-F.SG.NOM small fox
          b) ta maja nji lisica
          c) nji lisica ta maja
          d) *ta nji maja lisica
             'her little fox'

The only element that allows for *te* to be separated from the adjective is the degree adverb *bö* 'more' or *najbojë* 'best' used in analytic comparatives and superlatives.

(21)   a) bö ta   starajša ïša
              more *te*-F.SG.NOM older house
          b) ta bö starajša iša
             'the oldest house'

(22)   a) najbojë **te**   wridne   rozajanske romoninja
              best   *te*-N.PL.NOM important Resian   variety
          b) **te** najbojë wridne rozajanske romoninja
             'the most important Resian varieties'

Te is normally found below possessives, and under possessives it may even become optional. Recall, however, that together with the adjective it can precede possessives (cf. (20b)).

(23)   (a) Njaa (te) starajše sin (an) beše   ta-w   poje. [16]   (Steenwijk 1992)
              he-GEN *te* older son   he-CL was there-in   field
             'His older son was in the field.'

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[16] Third person possessives corresponds to the genitive forms of personal pronouns. Unlike Resian, both Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian have a form derived from the genitive singular by adding possessive suffix –ov (a/i/e).

b) to jë moi (te) pyrvi   din škule.

   it is   my   *te*   first   day school-GEN

 'It is my first day of school.'

c) Sandrina (te) mlajši sin

   Sandro-GEN   younger son

 'Sandro's younger son'

If there are multiple modifications, *te* cannot be iterated on adjectives, though the order among adjectives seems not to be rigid at all (like in Serbo-Croatian). In (24a) and (24b) both thematic adjective *German* and manner (or subject-oriented) adjective *horrible* (cf. Cinque 1994) appear in either order as long as *te* precedes the highest among the adjectives - the ungrammaticality of (24c), (24d) and (24a) is induced by the wrong placement of *te*.

(24)   a) ta   strašna niška okupacjon

            te-F.SG.NOM horrible German occupation

        b) ta niška strašna okupacjon

        c) *ta niška ta strašna okupacjon

        d)*strašna ta niška okupacjon

        e) *niška ta strašna okupacjon

           'the horrible German occupation'

Finally, *te* becomes mandatory if a noun is elided, even in the presence of possessive elements.

(25)   a. naši *(ti)   stari

            our   *te*-M.PL.NOM old

        b. *ti naši stari

        c. *ti stari naši

           'our old people'

Compare in this respect the behavior of an article language, Italian, and article-less language, Serbo-Croatian. Here, Resian patterns with neither of the two languages.

(26) a. Italian: i nostri anziani (article – possessive – adjective)

b. Serbo-Croatian: naši stari (possessive – (long-form) adjective)

3. Towards a better understanding of *te*

Based on these data, I would like to raise several questions and sketch out a preliminary analysis. The first one concerns the exact collocation of *te* within nominal expressions. In this respect, I will consider once again only the NEs with the article-like *te* signaled by the presence of at least one adjectival modifier, leaving a unifying account of the two *te*s for future analysis based on more extensive data. As a reference point I will use extraction possibilities displayed by nominal expressions in Italian, a language with the genuine definite article sitting in the head D position (for a first extensive account of extraction from Italian NPs in a pre-DP framework, see Cinque (1980) and Giorgi e Longobardi (1990)).

(26)　　a) Di chi hai la foto sulla tua scrivania?　(Giusti 1997)

b) *Di chi hai questa foto sulla tua scrivania?

c) Ho la sua foto di Marco sulla mia scrivania.

　*Di chi hai la sua foto sulla tua scrivania?

In (26a) it is possible to extract the theme/possessor out of NE through SpecDP, which is vacant and serves as an escape hatch for the extraction from nominals. If we assume, in line with Giusti (1997, 2002), that demonstratives occupy SpecDP the ungrammaticality of (26b) follows. Though SpecDP is not occupied in (26c), there is an intervener (*sua*).

The Resian dialect appears to allow for adjectival Left Branch Extraction (focus movement of prenominal adjectives).

(27)　　(NO)　　BILO　　si　kupila　mokinja [, në (no) černjalö]

oneACC　whiteACC　aux1sg　bought　car　　　not　one　red

'I bought a WHITE car [, not the red one]'

(28)   TAA NAJMLOJŠA   si   vidla sina [, në   taa najstarajša]

$te_{ACC.M.Sg}$ youngest$_{ACC.M.Sg}$ aux$_{1Sg}$ seen son not $te_{ACC.M.Sg}$ oldest

'I saw (his) YOUNGEST son [, not the oldest one]'

In order to account for these data we may equally adopt two alternative explanations: either the one that draws on the presupposition that there is a DP layer in Resian NEs, or the one that denies the DP layer since no overt articles sit in D. According to the first view (in the spirit of Giusti (1997)) SpecDP is empty and serves as an escape hatch for XP movement whereas D is null. In line with the second view, if there is no DP layer altogether, then the extraction is possible since NPs are not phases. This account is given in Bošković (2008): extraction from NPs does not obey two principles that prevent extraction (of adjectives) from DPs. The first principle is Phase Impenetrability Condition, which means movement out of a phase must proceed via its Specifier (Chomsky (2000)), while the second bans movement that is too short and does not cross at least one phrasal boundary (Abels (2003)). Independently of the two analysis above, what these data show is that *te* is not in D, given that otherwise we would have the extraction of a non-constituent (28). I thus propose that *te* is placed lower in the nominal functional structure (possibly in DemP) and that it is phrasal (XP).

The second question concerns the plausibility of taking *te* as part of the adjectival extended projection in the spirit of Marušič and Žaucer's (to appear) account of colloquial Slovenian *ta*. There are several reasons that may point to a similar conclusion, such as the fact that it cannot precede a bare noun, that it appears only in front of adjective-noun complex, that it is compatible only with long (definite) adjectives, and that it can be split from the adjective by degree morphemes and adverbs used to form analytic comparatives and superlatives. Finally, as shown by the extraction possibilities in Resian NEs, *te* does not seem to sit in the DP layer ((maybe) unless true demonstrative). However, I do not believe that the above properties suffice for drawing such a conclusion. As we saw in Section 1, *te* is not compatible with indefinites, which is unexpected under an adjectival extended projection account. Then, *te* retains a very strong semantic link with the demonstrative *te* - in any event, it is not devoid of substantive content and plays a role in establishing the overall reference of the nominal expression. This is particularly evident with nominalized adjectives, where it signals that the noun has been elided (just like in true article languages like English or Italian and unlike Serbo-Croatian). Furthermore, Resian *te* is not compatible with strong demonstratives; rather, they seem to be in complementary distribution though their structural

position may be different, with the Resian demonstrative *itë* (and its weak counterpart *te)* being placed higher in the structure of the nominal extended projection. And finally, *te* cannot be split from the adjective by degree words *except for* the degree morphemes and adverbs used to form analytic comparatives and superlatives.

Due to all these structural and interpretative properties of *te*, I would like to propose that *te* is part of the extended nominal projection, XP placed in a specifier of a functional projection lower than the DP layer, and that its semantic contribution is to determine the reference of adjective-noun complex.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented novel data concerning nominal expressions containing weak demonstrative/article-like element *te* in the Slovene dialect of Resia. My point of departure was the claim that Resian has reached a high stage in the grammaticalization of the definite article (Heine&Kuteva (2006), a.o.). However, the data suggest that the Resian article-like element *te* differs in several respects from the definite article found in article languages, like Italian, for instance. The most remarkable difference concerns its distribution, which is limited to adjectives and excluded with bare nouns. Based on the meaning contribution of *te*, I have ruled out the possibility that it constitutes functional structure of adjectives. I have proposed instead that it is contained within nominal extended projection. Nevertheless, the paper has not provided an answer as to why the projection containing *te* gets activated only if there is an adjectival modifier.

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