‘DO YOU KNOW SO AND SO’: TWO TYPES OF YES/NO INTERROGATIVES IN POLICE INTERROGATIONS

MARIJANA CEROVIĆ[1]

Abstract. This paper studies two interactional practices carried out by two forms of Serbo-Croatian yes/no interrogatives in the context of police interrogations. These are yes/no interrogatives which contain the verb *to know* and have the form of ‘do you know X’. The paper sets off from the default yes/no interrogative made by means of a particle *li*, and then focuses on two variants of the default interrogative: (a) the one from which the *li* particle is omitted (*non-li* interrogative), and (b) the non-*li* interrogative form to which a personal pronoun ‘you’ is added (*non-li+ti* interrogative). There is some indication that the grammatical forms studied in this paper are utilised as vehicles for different social actions: while the first form functions as a request for confirmation, the second one functions as a preliminary. The interactional and epistemic implications of each of the two interrogatives are studied.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis, police interviews, yes/no interrogatives, epistemics, particle *li.*

SOME FORMS OF YES/NO INTERROGATIVES

One of the main ways of forming interrogatives in Serbo-Croatian is placing the interrogative clitic *li* after the tensed verb, heard by listeners as information-seeking[2]. Rudin et al. (1999) describe the formation of yes/no *li* interrogatives in Bulgarian and Macedonian as inserting *li* into a declarative sentence. This means that in neither of these languages is there an overt subject-auxiliary inversion in the majority of cases and the clitic *li* becomes the only syntactic device by which the speaker signals to the interlocutor an interrogative mode. Discussing the pragmatic quality of *li* forms, Rakić (1985) refers to these interrogatives as ‘informative questions’, as *li* gives these utterances a certain neutrality: by using them the interlocutor simply seeks to be informed. If an information-seeking criterion were a valid criterion for describing questions and questioning, *li* forms could be treated as ‘true questions’ as they seem to be asking for information without any kind of harmful presuppositions on the part of the speaker.

[1] Faculty of Philosophy, Danila Bojovica bb, 81400 Niksic, Montenegro, cmarijana_2000@yahoo.com.

This research was made possible by the Dorothy Hodgkin Graduate Award Scheme, UK.

[2] From my own sense of the language, but also from the judgments of other native speakers, it seems that interrogatives which contain a clitic *li* are heard as claiming no knowledge on the part of the speaker and requesting information.

RRL, **LIX**, *1*, p. 43–61, Bucureşti, 2014

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

Here is a grammatical formula of *li* interrogative:

Example 1: V(infl.) + *li* + C?[3]

Descriptive grammarians consider *li* interrogatives as grammatically correct. However, a significant feature of this type of interrogative is that in spoken interaction it can occur in a number of variations, characterized by the relevant presence or absence of the clitic *li*, and/or additional element – second person singular pronoun *ti* (you). Contrary to the descriptive grammarians who usually do not attend to these variations, this paper focuses on the two variants of *li* interrogative which are most frequently encountered in my data[4].

The first variant of *li* interrogative is characterized by the omission of the particle *li* and consists of an inflected verb + complement, for the reason of which I will refer to it as *non-li* interrogative. Example 2 below is an illustration of this structural type which shows that this type of interrogative does not contain any particles, but only an inflected verb and a complement.

Example 2: V(infl.) + C?

The second interrogative variant is also characterized by the absence of the particle *li*. It essentially consists of a bare inflected verb like *non-li* interrogatives, but in addition to that, it contains a second person singular pronoun *ti*, placed post-verbally. This is why from now on I will refer to this variant as *non-li + ti(you)* interrogative. Example 3 illustrates this variant, showing the inflected verb, which is then followed by the second person singular pronoun *ti*(you) and the complement.

Example 3: V(infl.) + *ti* + C?

It is obvious that the three interrogative structures presented above have slightly different grammatical forms. Although they may incorporate the same propositional content, the question arises as to why these different forms exist. The question of interactional implications of these different forms is then the main focus of this paper.

THE MATTER OF EPISTEMICS

Apart from studying the grammatical form of the two variants of *li* interrogative, I further focus on the variants of *li* interrogative which contain a verb *to know* and the fact that there are multiple forms available to inquire about what somebody knows. As one will

[3] Here's an example of *li* interrogative taken from a real life situation in which *li* was pronounced as 'i':

ZNAš i ↑KO >BI MOgao< Ovo: ,(0.3)°zapa:°liti¿

2. SG KNOw qp.↑WHO>WOULD Can < This: ,(0.3)°burn:°down¿

Do you know who might have started the fire?

[4] Three variants of *li* interrogative occur in my data, however, the frequency of the third one is too low to be included in the analysis.

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

note further on in this paper speakers may ask a simple question-like 'do you know (name)' in different ways on different occasions. Analyzing the sequences in which these forms occur, it becomes clear that they are used for different purposes.

When communicating, interlocutors are constantly concerned with managing the levels of their own and co-participants' knowledge. Stivers, Mondada and Steensig (2011) suggest that if we are to understand how speakers manage issues of agreement, affiliation and alignment, we must understand the social norms surrounding epistemic access, primacy and responsibilities. Heritage (2012) makes a distinction between epistemic status and epistemic stance, in which epistemic status is the actual state of interlocutors' knowledge relative to each other (K+ or K-). Epistemic stance, on the other hand, concerns how speakers position themselves in terms of epistemic status in and through the design of turns at talk. Heritage explains that requests for information, for instance, are actions in which resources for communicating epistemic stance are aligned with the real world relative epistemic status of the parties within the action. That is, by asking for information, the requester positions himself/herself in an unknowing (K-) position and the recipient in a knowing (K+) one.

Therefore, the matter of epistemics and information exchange is very important when it comes to the interrogatives I address here, as they contain the verb *to know* and explicitly enquire about the interlocutor's knowledge, while at the same time embodying different stances about their own and the interlocutor's knowledge.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data used in this study are police interviews with suspects and witnesses. There are 24 interviews ranging in length from 2.28 to 61.01 minutes, the total length of the recordings being 6 hours and 51 minutes.

The method I am applying is Conversation Analysis (CA). CA is based around four primary concepts. For more information on Conversation Analysis see Sacks (1992), Heritage (1984), Drew (2003), Drew (2005), Arminen (2005), Sidnell (2010), Heritage and Clayman (2010) and so on.

CHECKING RECIPIENT'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

Previously I have pointed out a fairly standard form of yes/no interrogatives, characterized by the presence of a clitic *li* and seem to be asking for information. As I noted in the introduction, there are variations on this form, the first of which is the same interrogative structure from which the particle *li* has been omitted (*non-li* interrogatives). This variant of *li* interrogative will be the main focus of this section.

The phenomenon of omitting the interrogative particle has been noted in other languages which are historically and structurally close to Serbo-Croatian. Mišeska-Tomić (2012) found a correspondence between the syntactic features of Macedonian *li* interrogatives and *non-li* interrogatives. She explains that interrogatives without an overt marker are actually *li* interrogatives from which the clitic *li* has been deleted. In the sense of syntax, the same seems to be true of corresponding Serbo-Croatian interrogatives in my

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

data; *non-li* interrogatives seem to be a truncated version of *li* yes/no interrogatives. When it comes to the semantics of these interrogatives, Rudin et al. (1999) report that their informants detected subtle difference in meaning between *li* and *non-li* Macedonian interrogatives. Citing Englund (1979) they suggest that *non-li* is most likely to appear in confirmative questions (those which expect or desire a positive answer) whereas *li* is most likely to occur in rejective questions and neutral informative questions. In Serbo-Croatian too, there is an expectation for a positive response built in the *non-li* interrogatives. The very fact that *li* gets to be omitted, takes away the 'information-seeking' and 'no knowledge' mode and gives way to presuppositions to be built in. Below are two examples of *non-li* questions.

In extract 4, I am focusing on lines 22-25, more precisely, on the form of interrogatives containing the verb *znaš* ((you)know) + complement. Note that these utterances are characterized by an absence of the clitic *li* and an overt personal pronoun; the second person singular is marked via verbal morphology.

Extract 4 comes from an interview with a suspect in a theft case. The theft took place in a factory located in a suburban area. The suspect is one of the factory fitters.

Extract 4

01 Dt3: >kako se zove onAj što si ga < z:->
>how refl. call thAt what 2.SG aux. him< c:->
What is the name of that one that you c-

02 >reko mu da se < ja:vi:?
>told him that 2SG refl. < co:ntacts:?
told him to contact you?

03 ((click))

04 (1.0)

05 Dt1: koji¿
which one¿
which one?

(eight lines omitted)

14 Dt2: s AUdijem PLAvi:m onaj
with Audi BLu:e that
That one with the blue Audi

15 (0.1)

16 Dt1: a:: PE>tko<¿=
oh PE>tko<¿
Oh, Petko?

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

17 Sus: =m hhh

18 Dt3: PEtko, prezime?
PEtko, surname?
Petko, surname?

19 (0.1)

20 Dt1: >Binić.<
>Binic.<

21 (.)

22 Dt3: >zna:š TOga<?=
>2. SG kno:w THat<?=
Do you know that one?

23 Sus: =zna:m toga:h.
=1.SGkno:w that:h.
I know that one

24 (.)

25 Dt3: ZNA:š PEtka Bini[ća.]
2.SG KNO:W PEtko Bini[c.]
Do you know Petko Binic?

26 Sus: [zna:m]
[1.SG kno:w]
I know

27 Dt3: KA>ko se < poznajete?
HO>w refl. < 2.PL know?
How do you know each other?

28 (0.4)

29 Sus: h ovahhkoh >iz viđenja < #po Barandi#
h like thhhis >from seeing< #around Baranda#
Just from seeing him around Baranda

Prior to this extract Dt2 inquires about the suspect's acquaintance with another person who may be involved in the case, and by doing so, he initiates a new topic. The detective is obviously trying to establish a possible link between the two suspects. The suspect denies knowing the mentioned person, and after Dt4's probing, it becomes clear that Dt2 named the individual wrongly. Dt3 and Dt1 are then trying to come up with the

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

right name of the person they are actually asking the suspect about (lines 01- 15). Dt1 finally identifies the party as Petko Binic, lines 16-20.

As the identification has been made and the referent determined, Dt3 addresses Sus by asking 'znaš toga?' in line 22. It is worth noting here that the transition to this turn is almost immediate: there is only a short silence in line 21. The second *znaš* form in line 25 is also preceded by a micro pause. As can be noted the topic of Petko Binic was established prior to the line 22 and the *znaš* form signals that the 'Petko' topic is still on. Another device which does the same job is the indexical 'toga'- 'that one' in line 22 which topically links the turn in line 23 to previously mentioned Petko and to the wrongly named individual prior to turn 01. The fact that *znaš* forms in lines 22 and 25 are not sharply delimited from the previous talk goes along with both their sequential position and their relation to the current topic. As one can note, the two forms occur further down the sequence and they refer back to the previously introduced ones.

Non-li interrogatives have their own epistemic value. While *li* interrogatives express a neutral information-seeking mode with very little presupposed, *znaš* interrogatives are epistemically less neutral. They claim more knowledge on the part of the speaker, or to be more precise, they express speakers' expectations regarding the response at hand. As a consequence of their epistemic load, these interrogatives cannot be purely information-seeking, but their role could be described as seeking confirmation of a speaker's assumptions. By choosing the *non-li* form 'znaš toga' in line 22, the detective conveys to the suspect his epistemic standing. There are two major presuppositions of the detective that become salient in this case: 1) the detective assumes that the suspect has a certain kind of knowledge about Petko Binic (this is sometimes supported by the prosodic features of these utterances: the fact that there is no overt interrogative marker enables the speaker to articulate 'znaš' the way it would be articulated in statements, so that the verb form, which is heard first, can sometimes be heard as stating 'you know') , and 2) he also has the expectation that he would receive an affirmative response. The demonstrative 'toga' line 22, meaning 'that one' is used to make a contrast between Petko and the previously wrongly named individual (something to the effect 'if you do not know the former mistakenly named individual, you would know the latter'). This demonstrative may also imply certain Dt3's distancing from the referent and indicating Dt3's inferior knowledge. This indicates that a single short turn can have a number of epistemic layers.

It is now worth looking at how interlocutors respond to *non-li* forms. As the role of the *non-li* interrogative forms can be summarized as asking for confirmation of the speaker's assumption concerning the addressee's state of knowledge, it is expected that these responses would be more conforming, i.e. they would be responded to by either confirming or disconfirming the interlocutor's assumptions/own state of knowledge. This is exactly what happens in the two occurrences of *non-li* interrogatives in extract 4. In line 22 the *non-li* form, expresses that Dt3 assumes that the suspect has some knowledge about Petko Binic and asks for a confirmation/disconfirmation of his assumption/suspect's knowledge. In line 23 the suspect produces a matching activity: he responds with a verb repeat 'znam' and confirms both the detective's assumptions and his own state of knowledge. The turn does not get to be expanded past the confirmation. Guimares (2007) notes that verb repeats are standard positive conforming responses in Brazilian Portuguese. In the case of *do you know* interrogatives in Serbo-Croatian, verb repeats seem to be a standard way of doing confirmation. This is evidenced by the response to the second *non-li*

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

interrogative in line 26: another verb repeat ‘znam’- ‘I know’, as well as by other examples included in this section.

Extract 5 features another example of *non-li* interrogatives. I focus here on the turn in line 14 in which Dt1 asks the suspect ‘do you know that you called him?’. This example is similar in format to the example in extract 4: the interrogative is formed solely by a verb inflected for the second person singular + complement. In the first case, however, the format was *(you) know + object*, whereas, in this case, the format is *(you) know + that clause*.

Extract 5

01	Dt1:	°a:ha:° ((click)) jesi ga- KA si ga DOBIo? °a:ha:° ((click)) did 2SG him-WHEN 2.SG aux. him 2.SG GOt? *Aha, did you- when did you get him?*
02		(0.3) (clicking))(0.4)
03	Sus:	[.hhh]neh znah:m ni to sa ta[Čno.] [.hhh]noth 1.SG knoh:w nor that now ex[ACtly.]
04		[(clicking)] [((clicking))] *I don’t know precisely that too*
05		(.)
06	Dt1:	[ne zna:š [tačno] [not 2.SG kno:w[exactly] *You don’t know exactly*
07		[((clickin[g))] ((clicking))]
08	Sus:	[koli]ko je bi:lo,] [how mu]ch aux. wa:s,] *what time it was*
09		((click))(0.3)
10		š:e:s:: (.) £pe: še:s sa:ti £, ne zna:m bogo°mi° s:i:x:: (.) £five: si:x hou:rs £,not 1.SG kno:w God °me° *six, five, six, I don’t know by God*
11		(2.5)
12	Sus:	.hhh (.) °ne zna:m ° tačno, .hhh (.) °not 1.SG kno:w° exactly, *I don’t know exactly*
13		(1.1)

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

14	Dt1:	>NA:š DA si ↑ga < ZVao.
		>2.SG KNO:w THAT 2.SG aux.↑him< CAlled.
		Do you know that you called him?
15		(.)
16	Sus:	°sna:hhm°
		°1.SG kno:hhw°
		I know
17		(0.5)
18	Dt1:	dao si IZJA↑vu: .hhh (0.1) da si
		gave 2.SG aux. STA↑temet: .hhh (0.1) that 2.SG aux.
		You gave a statement that you
19		ga ZVA:o:, (0.5) PRIje nego SI , <s:ki:dao špulnu,>
		him CAL:ed:,(0.5) BEFore but 2.SG aux.,<r:emo:ved spool, >
		had called him before you removed the spool

Extract 5 is also taken from an interview with a suspect in the factory theft case, but with a different interviewee. Dt1 is trying to check the veracity of information recorded in one of the previous interviews with the same suspect. He is checking the information connected to the time of the call the suspect made to his godfather. The suspect is being evasive; he claims lack of knowledge and inability to recollect the exact time the event took place. In line 01 Dt1 makes another attempt asking when the call went through, to which the suspect responds in more or less the same way. This is then followed by (1.1) dispreferring pause in line 13 and the detective's inquiry about the suspect's awareness of his own actions.

Similar to the previously discussed *non-li* examples from extract 4, Dt1's inquiry: 'do you know that you called him?*'* in line 14 occurs well into the sequence from the initial introduction of 'call to the godfather'. This inserted sequence still deals with the 'godfather topic', and topically connects back to it and to the alleged call which took place at a certain time relevant for the investigation. The connectedness to the prior talk is also signalled by the case marked 'ga'- 'him' which refers back to the godfather. The absence of *li* (the (1.1) pause in line 13 marks Dt1's dispreference) and the Dt1's compressing of the utterance are the devices that make the turn blend in and be seen as the continuation of the prior talk.

'Do you know that you called him' in line 14 has got a number of presuppositions built in. First of all, this is a response to the suspect's insistence upon claiming no knowledge and his inability to remember. Additionally, the detective reveals his epistemic stance by using the *non-li* interrogative 'Do you know that you called him', which, first of all, presupposes that the call in question did happen. This is also supported by the fact that Dt1 and the suspect have previously discussed the time the call was made. Another presupposition incorporated in the utterance is that Dt1 assumes the suspect is aware of the call. This is also slightly suggested by the stretch and even intonation on 'NA:š' which, as it is heard first, sounds as a statement of the addressee's state of knowledge- 'you know'. It is

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

only later in the turn that the intonation turns the utterance into an inquiry. Looking at the structure of this complex clause, one can note that the answer is required by the 'znaš' part, whereas the content of the 'that' clause conveys the information that is 'given' and taken as true. That is, Dt1's *non-li do you know* form makes confirmation/disconfirmation relevant next, while there is an expectation for confirmation built into this turn.

When it comes to how the *non-li* interrogative from line 14 gets to be treated, one can note that the response to it in line 16 is of the same form as the two responses supplied to *non-li* interrogatives in extract 4. The verb repeat 'znam'- '(I) know', is simply the suspect's confirmation of his awareness of the proposition embedded in the 'that' clause. As in the previous example, the suspect performs a matching activity: as a response to the confirmation-seeking activity performed by the detective in line 14, in line 16 the suspect confirms the detective's assumptions about his state of knowledge and about the call to the godfather. After the confirmation has been received in line 16, one can note an expansion of the sequence. The confirmation is a minimal affirmative answer which enables Dt1 to continue the interrogation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Many other examples of 'do you know' *non-li* interrogatives from my data exhibit some common interactional features with the above discussed examples. They all occur well into the sequence and they are anaphoric by nature. Epistemically these examples suggest a degree of the speaker's familiarity with the interlocutor's state of knowledge. Sometimes the *non-li* forms are even heard as a speaker's statements about an interlocutor's knowledge, ability etc. However, *non-li* interrogatives, containing a verb *to know* function as confirmation-seeking inquiries about the interlocutor's presumed state of knowledge, and they show a preference or expectation for an affirmative response. How these presumptions are made on the part of the speaker is another matter. Studying same polarity confirmation-seeking questions, Heinemann (2008) suggests that speakers use the co-participant's prior turns-at-talk to convey their predisposition to an answer of the same polarity as that of the question and they accomplish this conduciveness by framing their question in accordance with their state of knowledge. This is probably how speakers create their assumptions about the other's state of knowledge expressed through *znaš* interrogatives. And one can also note that the interlocutor's responses to the *non-li* interrogatives are prevailingly confirmations achieved by verb repeats. The fact that in most cases examined in this section the detectives did get an affirmative response may suggest that speakers would make assessments of others' knowledge only when they have safe grounds for doing it.

PRESEQUENCES CLAIMING SUPERIOR KNOWLEDGE

So far I have looked at the *non-li* interrogative, a variant of the default *li* form. The *li* interrogative form seems to be the most open form of question, claiming no knowledge and seeking information. The *non-li* interrogative, on the other hand, is claiming some knowledge, in so far as it is offering this to be confirmed by the recipient. In this section, I am moving onto another variant of *li* interrogative, in which epistemic claims are even greater.

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

The third interrogative format is also characterized by an absence of the interrogative particle *li*, but differs from the pure truncated version by a post-verbal placement, usually stressed, of the second person singular personal pronoun *ti* (you). This gives these utterances a more interrogative-like form, as the position of *ti* in statements is pre-verbal and post-verbal placement creates an inversion, one of the devices for signalling interrogative form. Function-wise, these forms also differ from the previously-discussed forms and their sequential development is quite unique. Whereas *li* interrogatives are heard as information-seeking forms and *non-li* ones as confirmation-seeking, *non-li + ti* interrogatives function as presequences. This means that they are not vehicles for the main activity of the sequence, but they prepare the ground for the activity to come. In this way, they resemble the phenomenon observed by Schegloff (1988). Schegloff notes that interrogatives of the type 'do you know who's going to that meeting' are normally not interpreted by the recipients as information-seeking, even when intended by the speaker to be such. Instead, recipients usually understand them as pre-announcements or pre-tellings, and that their role is to forward (or block) the sequence into their core action by an appropriate response. *Znaš ti* interrogatives exhibit a sequential development similar to *do you know* presequences singled out by Schegloff (1988), but for the fact that both the speaker and the listener understand these forms as preliminaries.

The turn I am focusing on in extract 6 is the one in lines 10-11. Note the absence of the interrogative particle *li*, and the post-verbal placement of the stressed pronoun *ti* (you).

Extract 6 is taken from an interview with a man suspected of committing multiple petty thefts. The detectives are here trying to get the suspect's confession for the thefts he committed both alone and in cooperation with others.

Extract 6

01 Dt1: >a ti niJESI bio sa nji:m tad< kad je ova:j( )
>and you nOT aux. were with hi:m then<when aux. thi:s( )
and you weren't with him when this one-

02 ((click))
03 (0.4)

04 Dt1: >on je izja↑vio < da si bio?=
>he aux. decla↑red< that 2.SG were?=
He gave a statement that you were

05 Sus: =pa je- ZNA:m. pa juče sam ja: dao izjavu,
=well ye- 1.SG KNO:w. well yesterday aux.I: gave statement,
Well ye- I know, well, I gave a statement yesterday

06 da nije:sam bio.
that not 1.SG aux. was.
that I wasn't there

07 (0.3)

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

08 niJE:sam.
noT: 1.SG
I wasn't

09 (6.4) ((background talk))

10 Dt1: zna:>š ↓ti OVOG< MiLI:ća¿- #ovo:g# >što ima<
kno:>w ↓you THIS< MiLI:c.¿- #thi:s# >what has<
Do you know this Milic, this one who has

11 ku[ću.]
ho[use.]
the house

12 Sus: [sn]a:m oVA:ko:,
[1.SGkn]o:w lI:KE this:,
I know who he is

13 (0.2)

14 s:- dolaS:i kod mo:g stri:ca pon-baš TA:J ↑DA:n,
u:- 2.SG coM:es by m:y un:cle som-exactly THA:T ↑DA:y,
he comes to my uncle's, exactly that day

15 hhh>sam ga VIDIo,<(.) kod MO:g stRI:ca,
hhh>1.SGaux.him SAw, <(.) by My: uN:cle,
I saw him at my uncle's,

16 i on[veli:,]
and he[says:,]
and he says

17 Dt1: [koJI da]:n.
[whICH da]:y.
On which day?

18 (0.2)

19 Sus: pRIJe: (0.1) možda, >mjesec< DA:na: (.) °#tako#°
EFORe:(0.1) maybe, >month < DA:ys: (.) °#like that#°
Maybe a month ago, something like that

20 (.)ono, (0.1)>pošto mi < -(0.1) BRA:t >mi je žiVIo<
(.)that,(0.1)>since to me < -(0.1) BROTHE:r >to me aux. liVEd<
well, since my- my brother lived

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

21 kod nje°ga°.=
by h°im°.=
at his place

22 Dt1: =do:bro?
=go:od?
Good

23 Sus: i on doŠo: s nji:m nešto da >porazgovaraju<,
and he caMe: with hi:m something that > 3.PL talk<,
and he came to talk to him about something,

24 #ta ja: zna:(m)#, .hh i piTA me da ne ZNA:š,
#what I: kno:(w)#,.hh and 2.SG asKS me that not 2.SG KNO:w,
what do I know, and he asks me would you know

25 ko >mi je Obio< kuću.
who >me aux. Broke< house.
who broke into my house?

26 (0.2)

27 °ja° veli:m, šta MEne PI:ta:š, (.) neMA: PRA:va,
°I ° sa:y, what Me 2.SG AS:k, (.) nOT: 3.SG HAS RI:ght,
I say why do you ask me? no one has the right

28 >da me pi:ta< niko. (0.1) >on veli<, PA NE ka:že:m ja:
>to me a:sk< no one.(0.1) >he says<, WELL NOT sa:y I:
to ask me that. he says, well, I don't say

29 da si TI:, (.) >nego da NIje ko< O TI:h
that aux. YOU:,(.) >but that Not aux. who< OF THE:se
that it is you, but could it be some

30 TVOji:h drugo:va.(0.3) >°h ja ighh° < ne zNA:m
YOU:r frie:nds. (0.3) >°h I themhh°<not 1.SG kNO:w
of your friends I don't know them

31 VaLE, ne dru:ži:m se ni s KI:m, zNA:š i
VaLE, not 1.SG ha:ng out refl. nor with A:ny, 2.SG kNO:w too
Vale, I am not friends with anybody, you know

32 sa:m >da ti NIkad tamo< NIjesam do:ša:.
al:one >that you NEver there< Not 1.SG aux. ca:me:.
yourself that I never came there

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

33 (4.9)

34 Sus: š[:ta ja znam (to)]
w[:what I know(that)]
What do I know?

35 Dt1: [>a on o:đe kaže,]da si ti prodo te
[>and he he:re says,]that aux. you sold those
And he says here that you sold some of those

36 n-njegove neke< stva:ri, i to po:suđe,=
s-his some< thi:ngs, and those di:shes,=
things of his, those dishes

In lines 1-9 the suspect and Dt1 are rounding up the previous agenda item, which is determining the suspect's connection to another perpetrator and his involvement in the alleged joint-theft. In line 09 there is a (6.4) pause, which boundaries off the previous 'joint-theft' topic and a new item. In line 10 Dt1 initiates a new topic with 'znaš ti ovog Milića?'- Dt1 inquires about Milic, a party who had reported that his house was broken into and thus initiates the topic of 'house theft'. As can be noted, the 'znaš ti' form, occurs at the beginning of a new sequence and in the package with the position it occupies, it initiates a new topic. As *non-li+ti* form does not contain the clitic *li*, it indicates that it is not asking for information. It automatically loses the 'not knowing' aspect, and is open to presuppositions. Paired up with a personal pronoun *ti*, the *non-li* format gets a special epistemic weight, so that it is able to hint that there is another project on the way, but it is not until later in the sequence that this project is done.

It is interesting to see how the *non-li+ti* form in the above example is treated by the suspect. By applying this form, the detective seems to be asking for a confirmation of a connection between the suspect and the damaged party Milic. The form the detective supplies here (no *li* and second person singular personal pronoun *ti*) signals that the detective already knows something about the matter, which is evidenced further by lines 35-36. It is thereby revealed that not only does the detective know that the suspect and Milic are familiar with each other, but also that Milic has given a statement that the suspect had sold some of his belongings. The demonstrative 'ovog', meaning 'this one' in line 10 indicates that there has been some prior talk about the individual. However, the repair Dt1 makes in the same turn from 'do you know this Milic?', into 'this one who has the house', implies that there is a possibility that a first name reference would not be enough for the suspect to identify Milic, and that the suspect may not know Milic after all. This may be done strategically, but this creates an epistemic mismatch claimed by the *non-li+ti* form and the repair in line 10. Either way, the suspect understands this detective's turn as a preliminary to some other business and this proves to be the right kind of interpretation. As one can note, the detective confronts the suspect with the damaged party's statement in lines 35-36 and the question from lines 10-11 is a preliminary to this. Foreseeing that there is some kind of project behind the 'do you know this Milic?', the suspect first answers this and qualifies knowing the selected individual 'onako', which accounts for their relationship

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

as superficial and knowing each other only 'by sight'. By doing this, the suspect is already gearing up for his defence. Then, from line 14 on he does the defensive work, explaining his relationship with the damaged party and denying his involvement in the theft (lines 14-16, 19-21, 23-34).

Comparing the response to 'znaš ti ovog Milića?', and 'znaš Petka Binića?',one can note that although these two utterances, at first glance, seem to be expressing the same content, i.e. asking about the familiarity with a person, each of them is responded to in a different manner. 'znaš ti ovog Milića?' gets a much more elaborate response (note for instance that the response to 'znaš Petka Binića?' is simply 'znam' – '(I)know'), which reveals the suspect's defensiveness and resistance towards the detective's anticipated project. In spite of this blocking work, the detective still delivers the already set main action - he reveals a part of the statement given by the damaged party, thus confronting the suspect with the other party's version of the event. By using the record, the detective contests the suspect's denied participation in the crime, and attempts to incriminate him.

The question is how these forms get to be heard as presequences and as announcing the main business to come? It is possible that the personal pronoun *ti* gives a special epistemic value to these utterances. *Ti* seems to be creating an epistemic contrast between the speaker and the addressee, in the case of extract 6, there is a claimed contrast between Dt2's and the suspect's knowledge. By applying the *znaš ti* form, Dt2 inquires about the suspect's acquaintance with Milic, but also claims to possess himself certain knowledge about the mentioned party and more information about the case Milic had reported. The source of knowledge (Pomerantz, 1984) is not stated overtly, but is presupposed by the speaker and drawn inferentially by the listener. This might be based on the fact that detectives gain knowledge while doing the background investigation. The detective's professional identity is thus invoked (Raymond and Heritage, 2006) and he claims more right to knowledge (Heritage and Raymond, 2005) and epistemic authority over the questioned party.

This type of interrogative, which claims the epistemic authority of the questioner, can be an effective device for putting pressure onto the questioned party. As such, the epistemically dominant *znaš ti* may be securing a truthful answer. In this case, it could be a device which forces the suspect to confirm his connection with Milic (provided in line 12). *Znaš ti* interrogatives can, therefore, be seen as 'loaded questions' or utterances produced with an aim of accomplishing a specific action.

Extract 7 below features a similar example to the one previously discussed. It is the turn in line 11 I am focusing on here – 'a znaš ti šta šmrčeš.'– 'and do you know what you sniff' of the same V + 2nd person singular pronoun format as the example in lines 10-11, extract 6. Extract 7 is taken from an interview with a person who has admitted having committed theft in the neighbourhood. The questioned party is also a drug user, and the topic of conversation in extract 7 is his drug abuse. The interview is the 'official' one, and the written record is being composed along with the questioning.

Extract 7

01 (1.2) ((door squeaking + music + typing))

02 Dt1: [a >CUješ ovo <, je:si li:-]
[and >2.SG LIsten this,< 2.sg aux. qp.-]

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

03 [((typing))]
Listen to this, are you

04 (0.1)((buzz))

05 Dt1: [jesi li NA I:glu? = ili šmrčeš.]
2.sg aux. qp. ON NE:edle?= or 2.SHsniff.]
06 [((buzz)) ((rattling))]
are you on needle or you sniff?

07 (.)

08 Sus: [šmrčem]
[1.SG sniff]
09 [((rattle))]
I sniff

10 (.)

11 Dt1: a >ZNAš ti < šTA šmrčeš.
and >KNOw you< wHAT 2.SG sniff.
and do you know what you sniff?

12 (0.5)

13 Dt1: >a to ti sVE IZlazi < od toga. =>budi SIguran<.
>but that you aLL COMes out < from that.=>be SUre<.
but, you get all that from it, be sure

14 =ZNAm ja:>dosta ovi (ljudi)<
=KNOw I: >lot of these (people)<
I know a lot of these (people)

15 (.)

16 SVA>šta vam< STAvljaju[čovječe,]
EVER>ything you< 3.PL Put [man,]
17 [((typing))]
They give you all kinds of stuff, man

In line 02 Dt1 starts his turn with – 'a čuješ ovo' - 'listen to this', where both the disjunctive 'a' and 'listen to this' indicate an initiation of a new topic. By using these tokens, the detective also draws the suspect's attention to some possibly delicate topic which is to follow. The delicateness of the issue is also reflected in the repair in line 01 'jesi li:-', especially the stretched *li* and (0.1) pause which follows it. The detective finally packages his turn in line 05 into an alternative *li* question, indicating information-seeking, but at the same time leaving the suspect to choose between the two options 'sniffing' and 'needle'. In line 08, the suspect opts for the 'sniffing' option.

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

Then, in line 11 the detective issues a *znaš ti* form. In comparison to the *znaš ti* example in extract 6, this turn is not completely topically disconnected from the previous information-seeking sequence: it is and-prefaced and linked to the prior talk. However, in line 11 there are disjunction markers that indicate a slight independence from the previous turn. Dt1 starts the turn with 'a' marker, which usually indicates disjunction from the previous talk and initiation of a new issue. Matsumoto (1999:254) claims that: 'it is through the use of *and* that linkage, continuation, and coherence between the successive questions are achieved'. Although the topic is not completely different, and the interlocutors are still focusing on drugs and the suspect's drug abuse, there is a slight shift in the action performed by Dt1. Whereas in lines 02-09 the detective was eliciting information, the turns in lines 11-17 are doing something different - reproaching and informing the interlocutor. The function of 'znaš ti' turn in line 11 must then be seen as heralding and forwarding the action to come, which in the case is encouraging the suspect not to take drugs any more.

In this extract too, the *znaš ti* format indicates Dt1's epistemic authority over the suspect. *Ti*, meaning *you* stands in contrast with an unspoken *I*, the contrast implying a greater insight into the topic on the part of the questioner. By using the *znaš ti* form, Dt1 here claims that he knows better than the suspect himself what kind of substance the suspect uses. This claimed imbalance of knowledge, and claimed epistemic superiority of the detective is also revealed in the absence of a reply and no attempt to reply on the part of the suspect. The *znaš ti* interrogative, in this case, represents what Quirk et al. (1985) call rhetorical questions; although there is a (0.5) gap in line 12, a slot for the suspect's possible response, there is no attempt on the part of the suspect to reply. After a (0.5) pause in line 12, in which, technically, the suspect may have started responding, Dt1 starts a new turn and reveals his knowledge: the drugs the suspect is taking cause health problems, and from his own experience (working in the police) the detective knows that 'they', possibly meaning the drug dealers, sell impure substances to the users. Why this example, unlike the example in extract 6, comes to be understood by the interlocutor as a rhetorical question is another matter that is worth looking into.

What matters here is that *znaš ti* form in extract 7 develops sequentially in a similar way as the example in extract 6. In both cases the *znaš ti* turn has the role of being a preliminary. Both examples function as 'questions' with a purpose; also, they both claim epistemic authority on the part of the speaker, and on the basis of this, they announce that there is some more activity to follow. Some differences emerge only in the development of the core activity. Whereas in extract 6 the detective tries incriminating the suspect following the suspect's confirmation, in extract 7 the main activity of the sequence develops in a different direction. By claiming his superior knowledge in line 11, Dt1 announces an action to follow. Following this preliminary, Dt1 displays his knowledge (lines 13-17) and at the same time performs the main activity, i.e. informing the suspect and through it warning/reproaching him.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Other examples of *znaš ti* interrogatives exhibit some similarities to the features of the examples already examined (extracts 6 and 7). First of all, they are all in sequence initial position, they either introduce a new topic or indicate some kind of shift in the action

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

they are forwarding. Each of the examples has an inflected verb *to know* + 2nd person singular pronoun format, which gives these turns similar pragmatic presuppositions. This combination stresses an epistemic superiority of the speaker, signalling that the speaker has got more to say, and is understood by the interlocutors as a preliminary. The main activity takes place further down the sequence.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have examined two different forms of 'do you know' polar interrogatives which are an important type of 'question' in police interrogation settings. Their format involves presence/absence of the interrogative particle *li*, and the presence/absence of the second person singular pronoun *ti*, the use of which can be optional as in Serbo-Croatian the person is obligatorily marked via verbal morphology. Serbo-Croatian grammarians usually state that yes/no interrogatives are constructed by the insertion of the clitic *li* into a declarative or by fronting the declarative with the fusion of the particles *da li* (see Mrazović and Vukadinović, 1993; Klajn, 2005). These grammar books do not mention the possibility of the clitic *li* being omitted nor any difference in meaning which the presence/absence of the second person personal pronoun brings in. My data set suggests that, in actual interaction, the three structural types of yes/no interrogatives are characterized by a specific set of interactional features and each form is then utilized by the speakers as a vehicle for a specific action. While *li* interrogatives tend to introduce new topics and ask for information*, non-li* interrogatives link back to the previously initiated topic and do the activity of asking for confirmation. *Non-li* + *ti* interrogatives can also be topic initial, but they act as presequences and they announce the main activity, which gets to be realized further into the sequence. These formats also differ by the epistemic positions of the speaker they incorporate. By means of the information-seeking *li* form the speaker necessarily claims he/she is in K- position. Since *li* is absent from a *non-li* interrogative, this removes the K- component from this form, and by using it the speaker claims to possess a certain insight into the matter inquired about. This is also achieved by the fact that this form very much resembles declarative form, and by means of this, it incorporates an expectation for a confirmative response of the speaker's presumption. *Non-li* + *ti* interrogatives create an effect of speaker's epistemic authority: while asking about the listener's knowledge, they claim knowledge on the part of the speaker and by means of this epistemic contrast they get to be conducive. The epistemic authority is created by the absence of *li* which claims K- position, and the contrast created between the personal pronoun *ti* and the unspoken *ja* (I).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arminen, I., 2005, *Institutional Interaction: Studies of Talk at Work*, Aldershot, Ashgate.

Drew, P., 2003, "Conversation analysis", in: J. Smith (ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods,* London, Sage, 132−158.

Drew, P., 2005, "Conversation analysis", in: K. L. Fitch, R. E. Sanders (eds), *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction,* Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum, 71−102.

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

Englund, B., 1979, "The functions of yes/no-questions (on basis of Bulgarian and Macedonian material)", in: B. Englund *et al.* (eds), *Papers in Slavonic Linguistics* 1, Stockholm, Stockholms universitet, Institutionen for slaviska och baltiska sprak, 16−26.
Guimareas, E., 2007, *Talking about violence: women reporting abuse in Brazil,* Ph.D. Thesis, University of York.
Heinemann, T., 2008, "Questions of accountability: Yes-no interrogatives that are unanswerable", *Discourse Studies,* 10, 55–71.
Heritage, J., 1984, *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
Heritage, J., 2012, "Epistemics in action: action formation and territories of knowledge", *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45, 1, 1–29.
Heritage, J., S. Clayman, 2010, *Talk in action: Interactions, Identities and Institutions,* Maldon, MA, Wiley-Blackwell.
Heritage, J., G. Raymond, 2005, "The terms of agreement: indexing epistemic authority and subordination in talk-in-interaction", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 68, 15–38.
Klajn, I., 2005, *Gramatika Srpskog Jezika,* Zavod za udžbenike, Beograd.
Matsumoto, K., 1999, "And-prefaced questions in institutional discourse", *Linguistics,* 37, 2, 251–274.
Mišeska-Tomić, O., 2012, A Grammar of Macedonian, Bloomington, IN, Slavica Publishers, Indiana University.
Mrazović, P., Z. Vukadinović, 1990, *Gramatika srspkohrvatskog jezika za strance*, Novi Sad, Dobra vest.
Pomerantz, A., 1984, "Giving a source or basis: the practice in conversation of telling 'how I know'", *Journal of Pragmatics,* 8, 607–625.
Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, J. Svartvik, 1985, *A comprehensive grammar of the English language,* London, Longman.
Rakić, S., 1984, "Serbo-Croatian yes/no questions and speech acts", *Journal of Pragmatics,* 8, 693–713.
Raymond, G., J. Heritage, 2006, "The epistemics of social relationships: owning grandchildren", *Language in Society,* 35, 5, 677-705.
Rudin, C., C. Kramer, L. Billings, M. Baerman, 1999, "Macedonian and Bulgarian li questions: Beyond syntax", *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory,* 17, 541–586.
Sacks, H., 1992, *Lectures on conversation,* volumes 1 and 2, edited by Gail Jefferson with introductions by Emanuel A. Schegloff, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
Schegloff, E. A., 1988, "Presequences and indirection: applying speech act theory to ordinary conversation", *Journal of Pragmatics,* 12, 55–62.
Schegloff, E. A., 2007, *Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis,* vol 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Sidnell, J., 2010, *Conversation Analysis: An Introduction,* Singapore, Wiley-Blackwell.
Stivers, T., L. Mondada, J. Steensig (eds), 2012, *The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

TRANSCRIPTION KEY

[ ]	**square brackets**	overlapping talk
=	**equals sign**	no discernible interval between turns (also used to show that the same person continues speaking across an intervening line displaying overlapping talk
<	**''greater than'' sign**	''jump started'' talk with loud onset
(0.5)	**time in parentheses**	intervals within or between talk (measured in tenths of a second)
(.)	**period in parentheses**	discernable pause or gap, too short to measure

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)

Characteristics of speech delivery:

.	**period**	closing intonation
,	**comma**	slightly upward ‘‘continuing’‘ intonation
?	**question mark**	rising intonation question
¿	**inverted question mark**	rising intonation weaker than that indicated by a question mark
!	**exclamation mark**	animated tone
-	**hyphen/dash**	abrupt cut off of sound
:	**colon**	extension of preceding sound -- the more colons the greater the extension
↑↓	**up or down arrow**	marked rise or fall in intonation immediately following the arrow
here	**underlining**	emphasized relative to surrounding talk
HERE	**upper case**	louder relative to surrounding talk
°here°	**degree signs**	softer relative to surrounding talk
>this<		speeded up or compressed relative to surrounding talk
<this>		slower or elongated relative to surrounding talk
hhh		audible outbreath (no. of ‘‘h’‘s indicates length)
.hhh		audible inbreath (no. of ‘‘h’‘s indicates length)
(h)		audible aspirations in speech (e.g., laughter particles)
hah/heh/hih/hoh/huh		all variants of laughter
( )	**empty single parentheses**	transcriber unable to hear word
(bring)	**word(s) in single parentheses**	transcriber uncertain of hearing
((coughs))	**word(s) in double parentheses**	transcriber’‘s comments on, or description of, sound: other audible sounds are represented as closely as possible in standard orthography, e.g.,’‘tcht’‘ for tongue click; ‘‘mcht’‘ for a lip parting sound

BDD-A423 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.83 (2026-09-07 00:30:24 UTC)