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Situational semantics of demonstratives and the definiteness cycle

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OUTLINE

Introduction

Evidence from Germanic

Analysis

Testing on historical French

HOW DO DEFINITES EMERGE?

The most common source: demonstratives[1]

As a starting point, (Lyons, 1999, 331):

► *This process can be described in terms of loss of lexico-semantic features:*

► *it is essentially the feature [+Dem] which is affected*

► *it is ... common ... for articles to have no deictic content, so that their creation involves loss of deictic features as well as [+Dem]*

► *It is likely ... that in many such cases there has been an intermediate stage at which the demonstrative concerned has already lost its deictic feature to become a general, deictically unmarked demonstrative.*

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[1]Other sources: verbs and classifiers.

THE HYPOTHESIZED INTERMEDIATE STAGE

- ▶ demonstrative [proximal/distal]
- ▶ demonstrative (deictically unmarked)
- ▶ definite determiner

DEICTICALLY UNMARKED DEMONSTRATIVES

Ex. <u>French *ce*-paradigm</u>:

(1)   Une femme que je n' ai   pas reconnue   est entrée dans
       a   woman that I neg have neg recognized is entered in
       la salle. **Cette**   femme portait un panier de fleurs.
       the room CE.F.SG woman carried a   basket of flowers
       "A woman that I didn't recognize entered the room. The
       woman/that woman carried a basket of flowers."

As opposed to stressed deictic demonstratives or a definite article:

- ► #cette femme-là (distal)
- ► #cette femme-ci (proximal)
- ► #la femme (definite)

(2)   Vois-tu **cette**   femme-**là**   ? C' est ma cousine.
       see-you CE.F.SG woman-DIST Q this is my cousin
       "Do you see that woman (over there)? This is my cousin."

QUESTIONS

► How does the passage from (deictically) marked to unmarked demonstratives happen?

► What is the difference, if any, in addition to the contrast wrt the deictic features?

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CASE STUDY: FRENCH

Modern French *ce* comes in place of:

- ▶ proximal *cil* (< *ecce illu(m)*)
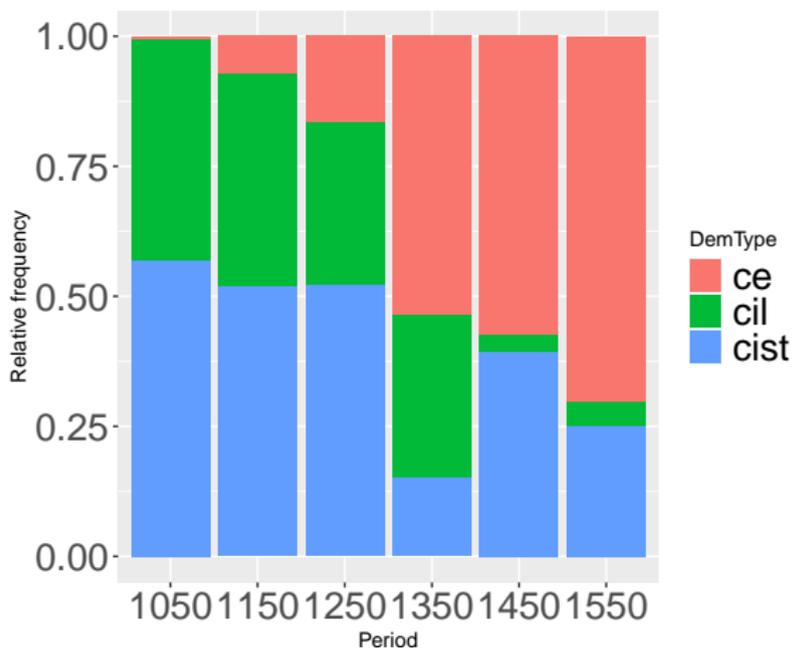
- ▶ distal *cist* (< *ecce ist(um)*)

Diachronically, we **expect** that proximal/distal neutralization manifests itself as an increasing relative frequency of *ce* and a decreasing relative frequency of *cist* and *cil*.

CASE STUDY: FRENCH

(3) Ad une spede li   roueret toilir lo chief. La domnizelle
     at a sword to.her ordered cut   the head the girl
     celle   kose non contredist
     CIL.F.SG thing neg object
     "He ordered to behead her with a sword. The girl did not put
     up resistance to this act."   (0900-EULALI-BFM-P,.22)

CASE STUDY: FRENCH

11208 NPs with an adnominal demonstrative (*cist*, *cil*, *ce*) in 50 texts ranging from 842 to 1572 (treebank Kroch and Santorini (2021)).

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CASE STUDY: FRENCH

Question: Is the presence/absence of deictic features the only difference between *cist*/*cil* and *ce*? More generally, between deictically marked and deictically unmarked demonstratives?

► Based on evidence from Germanic, we propose that the difference is more substantial (pace Lyons 1999).

► Propose different semantics.

► Corroborate the proposal by checking its predictions in the French corpus.

OUTLINE

DEMONSTRATIVES VS. STRONG DEFINITES

In Germanic varieties, unmarked demonstratives seem to correspond to the so called *strong definite articles* (in terms of Schwarz (2009)).

(4) Peetje hee jister   an kü slaachtet.   Jo   saai, **det** kü
     Peetje has yesterday a   cow slaughtered. may says det cow
     wiar äi sünj.
     was not healthy
     "Peetje slaughtered a cow yesterday. They say the/that cow
     was not healthy."   FEHRING FRISIAN, Ebert (1970, 107)

These are homophonous with deictically used demonstratives, except that the latter (uses?) are stressed.

(5) Deest dü mi ans **dèt** búk auer?
     give you me part dèt book over
     "Can you hand me the/that book?"   FEHRING FRISIAN, Ebert (1970, 103)

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DEMONSTRATIVES VS. STRONG DEFINITES

Another question: Is it *just* stress?

DEMONSTRATIVES VS. STRONG DEFINITES

Comparing the distribution of demonstratives in English and strong definite articles in Germanic varieties wrt different Common Grounds (CG).

- ▶ I. is CG underspecified with respect to the NP extension;
- ▶ II. CG entails that the intended extension is smaller than the NP extension (≈ anti-uniqueness);
- ▶ III. NPs with relative clauses;
- ▶ IV. NPs with proper names

I. CG IS UNDERSPECIFIED

Frisian: A strong definite is strongly preferred to a weak definite:

(6) Peetje hee jister **an kü** slaachtet. Jo saai,
     Peetje has yesterday a cow slaughtered. may says
     det kü wiar äi sünj.
     DEF.STRONG cow was not healthy
     "Peetje slaughtered a cow yesterday. They say the/that cow
     was not healthy."   FEHRING FRISIAN, Ebert (1970, 107)

English: A demonstrative is not preferred to a definite:

(7) A woman$_i$ entered from stage left. **The/that** woman$_i$ was
     carrying a basket of flowers.   Wolter (2003), adapted from Roberts
     (2002)

I. CG IS UNDERSPECIFIED

As a control, article-less Ukrainian patterns with English: a demonstrative is not preferred to a zero article.

(6)   Poruč zi   mnoju jihav hlopčyk. **(Toj) hlopčyk** meni skazav,
      near with me   rode boy   (that) boy   me told
      ščo vin ne rozumije   rosijsku.
      that he neg understands Russian
      "Next to me rode a boy. That/the boy told me that he does not
      understand Russian."   UKRAINIAN

II. INTENDED EXTENSION IS SMALLER THAN $[\![NP]\!]^s$

Frisian: a stressed (strong/distal demonstrative) form is strongly preferred to a weak definite.

(7)   Deest dü mi ans **dèt**/#at   búk auer?
      give you me part DEF.STRONG/DEF.WEAK book over
      "Can you hand me the/that book?" (in sight of multiple
      books)   FEHRING FRISIAN, Ebert (1970, 103)

English: a demonstrative is strongly preferred to a definite.

(8)   A woman$_i$ entered from stage left. Another woman$_j$ entered
      from stage right. **That**/**#the woman$_j$** was carrying a basket of
      flowers.   Wolter (2003), adapted from Roberts (2002)

II. INTENDED EXTENSION IS SMALLER THAN $[\![NP]\!]^s$

As a control, article-less Ukrainian patterns the same: a demonstrative is strongly preferred to a zero article.

(9) U kav'jarn'u uvijšla žinočka i zamovyla espresso. Potim
     in café   entered woman and ordered expresso then
     zajšla šče odna. **#(Ts'a)** žinka ne stala ničogo
     came more one this   woman neg become nothing
     zamovljaty
     to.order

"A woman entered the coffee house and ordered an espresso.
Then another one came in. This woman did not order
anything."   UKRAINIAN

III. NPS WITH RELATIVE CLAUSES

Frisian: A strong definite is strongly preferred to a weak definite
(Schwarz 2009, Wiltschko 2012 a.o.).

(10)   Rooluf hee **det**   klook wechsleden, wat hi faan san
      Roluf has DEF.STRONG watch lost   that he from his
      uatlaatj   fingen hee.
      grandfather received has
      "Roluf lost the watch that he had received from his
      grandfather."   FEHRING FRISIAN (Ebert, 1970, 137)

English: A demonstrative is not preferred to a definite. If used, it
gives rise to an "affective" interpretation.

(11)   What's wrong with Bill? Oh, the/**that** woman he went out
      with last night was nasty to him. (Based on Hawkins 1978)

IV. NPS WITH PROPER NAMES

Frisian: A strong definite is strongly dispreferred to a weak definite (if at all).

(12) A   Türkaï
      DEF.WEAK Turkey
      "The (country of) Turkey"

English: A demonstrative is strongly dispreferred to a definite (if at all). If used, it gives rise to an "affective" interpretation. On "affective" interpretation, a demonstrative possible with any proper name.

(13) You don't deserve to be discouraged and lied to by a con
      artist. Which is what **this** Arthur Agatston is.   (Potts and
      Schwarz, 2010, 5)

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IV. NPs with proper names

As a control, article-less Ukrainian patterns with English: a demonstrative is strongly dispreferred to a zero; if used, gives rise to an "affective" interpretation with any proper name.

(14) Ščto meni bulo za te, ščo ja posluhav **tu** Lusju!
      what to.me was for that comp I listened   that Lucie
      "Boy did I get punished for listening to this Lucie!"
      UKRAINIAN

PATTERNING SUMMARY

Patterning is conditioned on whether the Common Ground (in Stalnaker's sense) entails that the extension of the nominal predicate (plus its adjectival modifiers) is a singleton.

	ANTECEDENT		NP WITH A REL	PROPER N
CG	$|[\![NP]\!]^s|>1$	underspec		
Fris. strong	must stressed	must	must	(may stressed, affect.?)
Eng. dem	must	may	may, affect.	may, affect.
Ukr. dem	must	may	may, affect.	may, affect.

Simplifying: (deictic) demonstratives are used when there is more than one candidate vs. strong definites when there is an anaphorically introduced (single) referent.

OUTLINE

SOURCE OF THE CONTRASTS

We relate the patterning contrasts to different mechanisms of reference. In a nutshell:

► Demonstratives: bring a situation into prominence (and pick out an individual with the NP property from it);

► Strong definites: pick out the closest discourse situation (and pick out an individual with the NP property from it).

BRINGING A SITUATION INTO PROMINENCE

Deictic demonstrative:

(15) $[\![dem_{dist}]\!] = \lambda S . \lambda P . \lambda x. P(x)(f_{dist}(S))$
       property of individuals to have the nominal property in the unique situation
       pointed at by the Speaker which the Speaker considers not to be part of their
       situation

▶ S – set of situations $< s, t >$ (syntactically pronoun over sets of situations)

▶ P – property of individuals $< e, < s, t >>$ (syntactically NP)

▶ **f_{deic} – prominence-based choice function that picks out a situation out of a set of situations (via ostentation/intonation)** $<< s, t >, s >$;

   ▶ proximal f: picks the most prominent (=pointed at) situation out of a set of
     situations that the *Speaker considers to be part of their situation*
     (Marchello-Nizia 2006, 116)

   ▶ distal f: picks the most prominent (=pointed at) situation out of a set of
     situations that the *Speaker considers not to be part of their situation*
     (Marchello-Nizia 2006, 116)

In the absence of ostentation, the most prominent situation is by default the closest
discourse situation.

PICKING AN INDIVIDUAL FROM THE CLOSEST APPROPRIATE DISCOURSE SITUATION

Unmarked demonstrative/strong definite.

(16) $[\![strong]\!] = \lambda P . \lambda x : \exists s[P(x)(s) \& \forall s'[P(x)(s') \to t(s) > t(s')]] \lambda x .$
$\exists s[P(x)(s) \& \forall s'[P(x)(s') \to t(s) > t(s')]]$
property of individuals to have the nominal property in the
situation which is temporally closer to the speech situation
than any other situation with an individuals having the
nominal property ($\approx$ the most recently introduced suitable
referent)

- ▶ P – property of individuals $< e, < s, t >>$ (syntactically NP)
- ▶ s – situation (a pair of space and time coordinates)

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REFLECTING ON THE PATTERNS
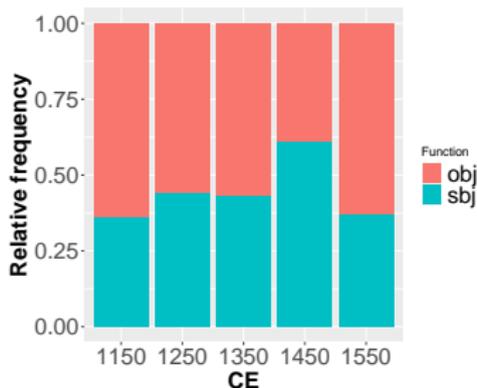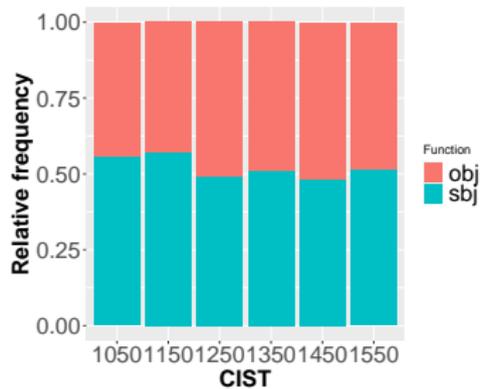
deictic demonstrative vs. **unmarked demonstrative**:
prominence-based choice function over situations vs. closest
(discourse) situation

- ▶ Bringing one situation into prominence among many is used in
  case *multiple individuals* have the nominal property or in order to
  attract a special attention (including "affective" effects).

- ▶ Evoking the closest discourse situation is employed to refer to a
  recently introduced referent, not known to be unique with
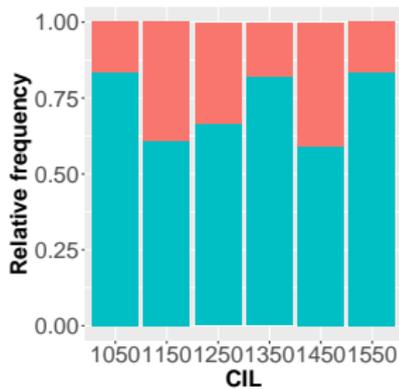 respect to the NP property.

DIACHRONY

deictic demonstrative → **unmarked demonstrative**:
prominence-based choice function over situations → closest (discourse) situation
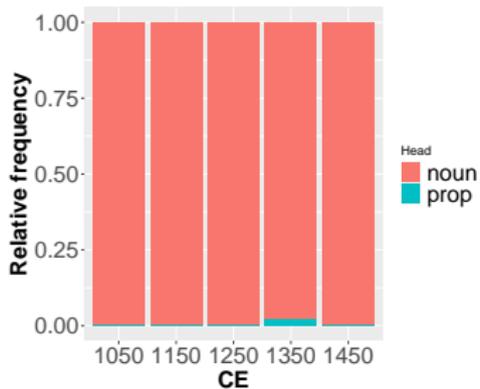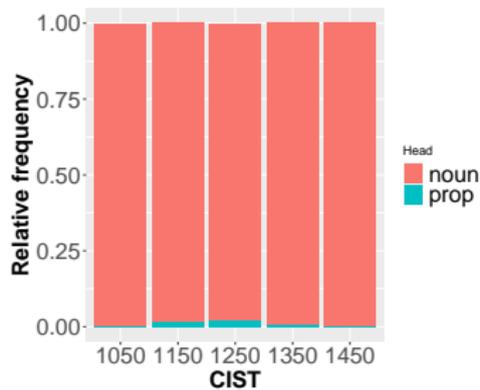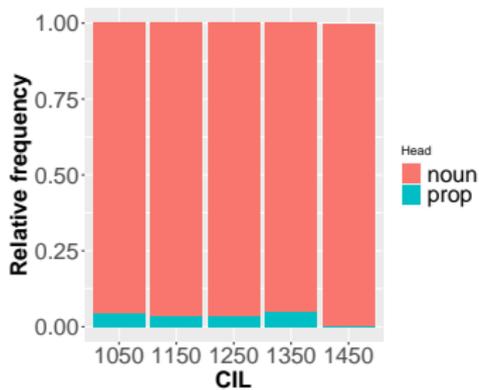Expectations:

- Since a deictic demonstrative brings a situation into prominence, it is expected that such DPs will be topics.

    - Prediction A: deictic demonstrative occur more frequently in subject position than unmarked.

- A deictic demonstrative give rise to "affective" effects, including with proper names; unmarked not.

    - Prediction A: deictic demonstrative occur more frequently with proper names than unmarked.

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PREDICTION A: SUBJECT POSITION

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PREDICTION B: WITH PROPER NAMES

CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Tracked the passage from deictic to unmarked demonstratives in historical French.

- ▶ Analyzed it in light of the Germanic contrast between (deictic) demonstratives and strong definites.

- ▶ Showed the analysis to make (some) right predictions for the historical data.

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