

The syntax of *demonstratives*. A parametric analysis.

Cristina Guardiano

Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia

cristina.guardiano@unimore.it

Summary

This contribution will propose an interpretation of the crosslinguistic syntactic behavior of *demonstrative* elements within the nominal domain (DP), in a parametric perspective. On the basis of empirical evidence coming from a sample of Indo-European and non Indo-European languages (Longobardi and Guardiano 2008), I will show that the different configurations at-tested are predictable on the basis of the settings of four syntactic parameters (and their interaction with other properties), which determine: the positions of the demonstrative in the DP, its interpretation according to such positions, its co-occurrence with the (definite) article. The universal DP-structure that I assume has been sketched and defined within the general framework of the ‘DP hypothesis’ (see for instance Bernstein 2001, Longobardi 2001, Longobardi and Guardiano 2008).

Introduction

Starting from the statement that ‘all languages have *demonstratives*’, I will propose a crosslinguistic definition of the category, based on the following criteria:

a) *Semantic features*. Demonstrative elements have been traditionally, and rather uncontroversially, associated to the ‘definiteness sphere’. Indeed, they signal that their referents:

- i) are available or deducible from the extralinguistic context (*deixis*);
- ii) have already been mentioned in the discourse, or are in some way known from the linguistic context (*locality*).

b) *Syntactic positions*. The languages of the database will be classified in a number of different ‘types’, according to two criteria:

- i) the position of the demonstrative with respect to the noun, adjectives, genitives and complements of the noun;
- ii) its co-occurrence with the definite article.

c) *Minimal comparison with other DP-constituents*. The semantic and syntactic properties of demonstratives will be minimally compared with two elements that are typically related to the ‘definiteness/person’ area, and to the D position:

- i) the definite article;
- ii) the third person pronoun.

Basic position and movement

Following some recent literature, I will argue that the ‘universal’ position where demonstratives are generated is in a ‘low area’ of the DP (where other ‘definiteness’ elements are presumably generated):

D Gen1 Adjs Dem Gen2 NP

The different configurations available crosslinguistically will be commented in details.

First, in certain languages the demonstrative remains in its basic position: in these cases it can be either crossed over by the noun (in languages where the noun raises to higher projections of the DP), or not. This depends on ‘external’ properties of noun-movement that are independent of the syntax of demonstratives.

Second, in other languages the demonstrative surfaces (either always or sometimes) in the ‘left area’ of the DP, i.e. in the ‘D-area’ (usually to the left of D, i.e. presumably in Spec DP). I suggest that this is due to the fact that it needs to check its two basic properties (*deixis* and *locality*). When *deixis* is *strong*, the demonstrative needs to move to the D-area in order to be

interpreted as deictic. When *only deixis* is *strong*, the demonstrative remains *in situ* if it doesn't have deictic interpretation. When even *locality* is *strong*, the demonstrative *always* moves to the D-area. No languages are attested where the demonstrative remains *in situ only* when it is deictic (i.e. there are no languages where *locality* is *strong* but *deixis* is not); thus, an implication seems to hold between the two properties: we can predict that *locality* is not *strong*, if we know that *deixis* is not *strong* (this is signaled by a 0 in the table).

Third, in certain languages the demonstrative surfaces at the very end of the DP. This means that it doesn't remain *in situ* (because in that case it would be followed by other constituents that don't move, like the 'low structural genitive' or prepositional complements). I will try to suggest that in these cases the demonstrative, after moving to the D-area, is then crossed over by the whole DP, that moves to its left.

I will show that even 'D-final languages', like Basque or Wolof, can be analyzed within this framework.

Demonstratives and definite articles

Finally, I will consider a further phenomenon: the fact that demonstratives, in certain languages, can (or must) co-occur with the (definite) article. This will be described as the consequence of a further property: the demonstrative (when it is in the D area) can either license the third person feature in D (in this case D remains empty, i.e. no definite article, that acts as the *default* third person operator – Longobardi 2008 –, is visible), or not: thus, if the demonstrative is *person-licensing*, it never co-occurs with the article (in the D-area).

Parametric grid

	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.	VII.	VIII
(1) ± Strong deixis	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
(2) ± Strong locality +1	+	+	+	-	?	0	-	+
(3) ± DP over Dem +1, -NP over D	-	+	-	-	?	0	-	0
(4) ± Person licensing Dem +1	+	+	-	-	-	0	+	+
	It	Heb	Hun	Grk	Ar	Ir / Wel	Sp / Rum	Bas/Wo

References

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