# Demonstrative Shift and Proximal Markedness

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Demonstrative pronouns (*this, that*) making exophoric reference appear to be present in every language (Diessel, 1999), and are involved in myriad grammaticalization clines along which they may shift (Greenberg, 1976; Heim, 1982; Diessel, 1999; Enfield, 2003; Konig, 2019; Sampson, 2021). In their transition from deictic, exophoric pronouns to copulas, 3rd person pronouns, determiners, and complementizers, there are midway points of grammaticalization. Each of the clines are unidirectional (Wolter, 2006; van Gelderen, 2010), but the determination of which cline to travel seems to rely upon the

syntactic positioning of the exophoric term. While most discussion of grammaticalization pathways for demonstratives involve step-by-step movement along these trajectories, we have found little attention paid to understanding why the distal demonstrative is commonly, although not always, the demonstrative that grammaticalizes along these paths, as opposed to the proximal. Here, we suggest that there is an explicit contrast of markedness of the proximal demonstrative in English relative to the unmarked use of the distal demonstrative, which drives the grammaticalization of the distal demonstrative, and support this claim with a quantitative study of grammaticality judgments. In the end, we propose a logical form for the demonstrative which reflects this markedness and connect to related work.
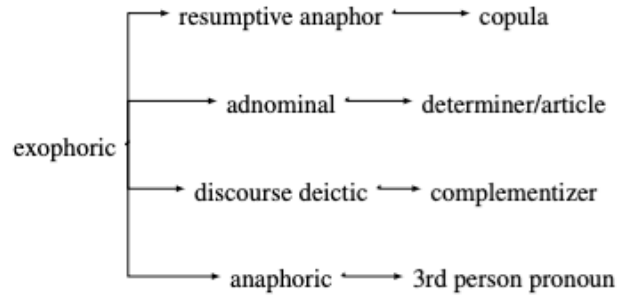
Data collection methodology: 70 self-identifying native English speakers were recruited via Prolific Academic to participate in a survey consisting of 18 questions presented through Qualtrics software. Each question consisted of a 4 second video prompt that showed a speaker standing on one end of a long table. There were four items of the same category on the table: two near the speaker and two far from the speaker. The speaker pointed at one item and then another item while stating a sentence of the format "I prefer DEMONSTRATIVE NP to DEMONSTRATIVE NP" and pointing accompanying each demonstrative DP, such as: *I like to wear [that shoe](pointing near) more than [that shoe](pointing far)*. The sentences varied between all commutations of demonstratives (proximal/distal) and locations (close, far), plus two training trials. The nominal objects used were cups, bowls, books, glasses, shoes, and pens. The participants were prompted to rate each sentence after watching the video clip on a sliding scale marked on each pole as 'Least Acceptable' to 'Most Acceptable.' Participants who completed the survey in less than four minutes were excluded from the data analysis.

Proximal pronouns are marked compared to distal demonstratives in English. Survey results confirmed that distal demonstratives are more acceptable to reference near locations to the speaker than proximal demonstratives are for far locations. While judgments for the distal and the proximal in their 'matching' contexts were almost identical, there was a significant drop in grammaticality judgment for the proximal mismatch, as compared to the distal mismatch. (See table and accompanying figure on page 2.) These data show a potential link between markedness and availability for grammaticalization toward functional items. Enfield (2003) broaches the topic in Lao demonstrative pronouns, which feature a less marked proximal form and a marked distal form (location specified for 'not-here' contexts). He claims the analysis could be extended into an English-type system for determining a similar markedness relation. **A logical form of demonstrative pronouns that considers the semantic complexity of the proximal**

compared to the distal demonstrative would support diachronic semantic bleaching of the demonstrative from a strong exophoric pronoun to its various later roles.

Pronoun	Location	Average Rating	Standard Error
That	Far	73.29	2.61
This	Near	71.60	2.61
That	Near	61.78	2.61
This	Far	53.05	2.61
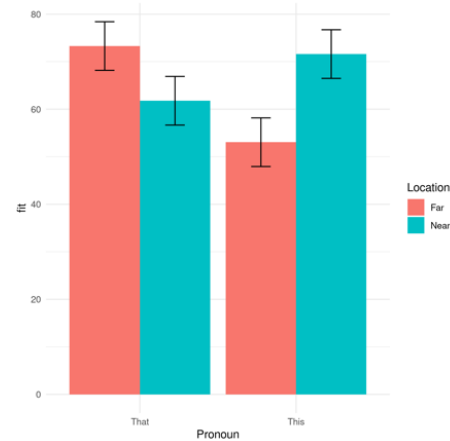
As such, we propose treating the proximal as marked relative to distal, i.e. in all respects equivalent to the distal demonstrative (encoding speaker location, deixis, etc.) with an additional restriction of proximity:

$$[[this]] = \lambda P.\iota x P_{w0}(x) \wedge at_{w0}(x)(l_n) \wedge speaker\ pointing\ at_{w0}(l_n) \wedge close_{w0}(l_n)$$

$$[[that]] = \lambda P.\iota x P_{w0}(x) \wedge at_{w0}(x)(l_n) \wedge speaker\ pointing\ at_{w0}(l_n)$$

This definition contrasts with logical forms previously presented (Elbourne, 2005; Ahn, 2019; Wolter, 2006), which do not account for the location feature as such, but instead include [+ distal] and [+ proximal] features or do not explicitly include the location in the demonstrative definition. We situate the hypothesized demonstrative bleaching from the perspective of other work which considers elements such as aspect marking and the overlapping definitions of the Spanish perfective and progressive verbal forms to account for the potential for one form to broaden its reference into the territory of the other form with enough semantic and referential correspondence (Fuchs, 2019). In our case, the exophoric demonstrative that can refer to more items, regardless of location with respect to the speaker, would then be more readily available for reanalysis as functional items with a larger set of possible referents in the world. Our work also speaks more broadly to synchronic preferences presenting evidence for diachronic patterns, as in Zhang, Piñango, and Deo (2019)'s study of the shift from spatial locative to possessive relations in verbs: they state that 'the convergence of synchronic and diachronic linguistic patterns...hypothesize[s] that the process of change not only operates in real-time over underlying conceptual foundations but also is actively driven by individuals' context-sensitivity during comprehension.'

In a larger typology of demonstratives, it will be fruitful to determine other aspects within the logical forms that may account for additional patterns of semantic bleaching patterns in the world's languages. For example, many languages have three or more demonstratives, with only one of these grammaticalizing. Additionally, there is also evidence that some languages use the proximal demonstrative to fill these functional tasks (Enfield, 2003) – could this be due to underlyingly different denotations? A full understanding of demonstratives' logical form would allow for language specific contrasts of markedness within the various demonstratives but would maintain the building blocks of the logical form to account for universals of grammaticalization paths.

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