Testing Proximal/Distal Demonstratives and their Grammaticalization Paths

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Overview

Greenberg's "Cycle of the Definite Article"

1. Demonstrative with deictic force
2. Loss of deixis and acquisition of anaphoric value
3. Loss of definiteness
4. Nominal marker, compulsory in any NP

Greenberg, 1978

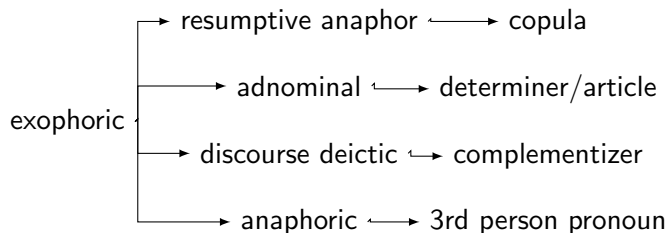# Greenberg's "Cycle of the Definite Article"

1. point + demonstrative
2. pronoun to definite article
3. both definite and indefinite specific reference
4. nominal marker

Greenberg, 1978

Step 1: Demonstrative with Deixis

- ▶ At least two demonstratives in every language (Diessel, 1999)
  - ▶ Deictically contrastive in location
- ▶ Some languages have distance neutral demonstratives
  - ▶ c.f. Old French *cist*
- ▶ Deictic center can be person oriented or distance oriented (near me, near you, etc.)
- ▶ Through loss of deixis, the demonstrative can follow along at least four paths

Paths of Grammaticalization

exophoric
- resumptive anaphor ⟷ copula
- adnominal ⟷ determiner/article
- discourse deictic ↪ complementizer
- anaphoric ⟷ 3rd person pronoun

Adapted from Diessel, 1999

Which path to follow?

Syntactic positioning largly determines the path

- ▶ copula from original topic-comment construction to form a subject-predicate reanalysis of structures
- ▶ article from adnominal position
- ▶ complementizer from pronominal use in reference to proposition
- ▶ pronoun from pronominal with coreference to prior NP

Are the paths unidirectional?

Katz (1996) follows the "cycle" of the demonstrative-to-copula shift to show that it is a loop

(1) a. ki la-šeleg jomar hewe 'arec
for to-snow say be earth
"For to snow he says "be on earth"" (Job 37:6)

(2) a. w-'im bikli   barzel hikkahu
and-if with-instrument-of iron   struck-him
wajjamo roceax   hu
and-died murderer he
"And if he struck him with an instrument and he died, then he is a murderer." (Numbers 35:16)

Are the paths unidirectional?

(3)   a.   Pnina nora   xamuda
             Pnina awfully cute.F
             'Pnina is awfully cute'

(4)   a.   Ha-báyit   shelHa zot   dogma
             the-house.MASC your   that.FEM example.FEM
             tova
             good.FEM
             'your house is a good example'

Are the paths unidirectional?

- To be a cycle is not to be a full circle
- Better described as a 'redistribution' and 'recruitment' (Deo, 2015)
- Studying these diachronic trends can help us understand the logical form of a lexical element, which facilitates or hinders certain paths of semantic bleaching and reanalysis

Which demonstrative grammaticalizes?

Most, but not all, grammaticalization is from the distal demonstrative

Hypothesis: languages have demonstrative(s) marked for distance and one more generally used/unmarked for distance.

The reason English grammaticalizes from the distal is not inherent to the distal, but instead because the distal can be used in more contexts than the proximal.

Experimental Design

- ▶ Grammaticality judgment test of contrastive demonstratives
- ▶ 2 parallel surveys, each with 35 participants and 18 questions
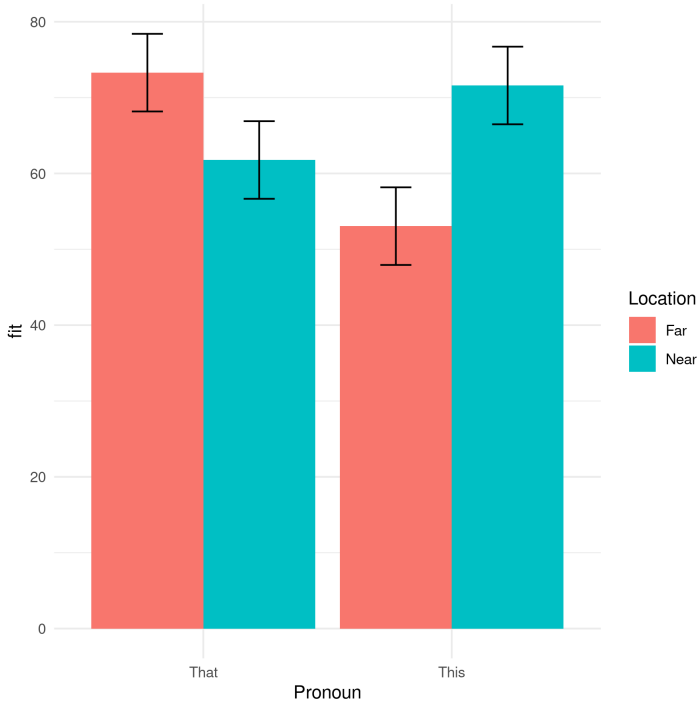- ▶ Each survey with a combination of distal, proximal, and combined pronouns
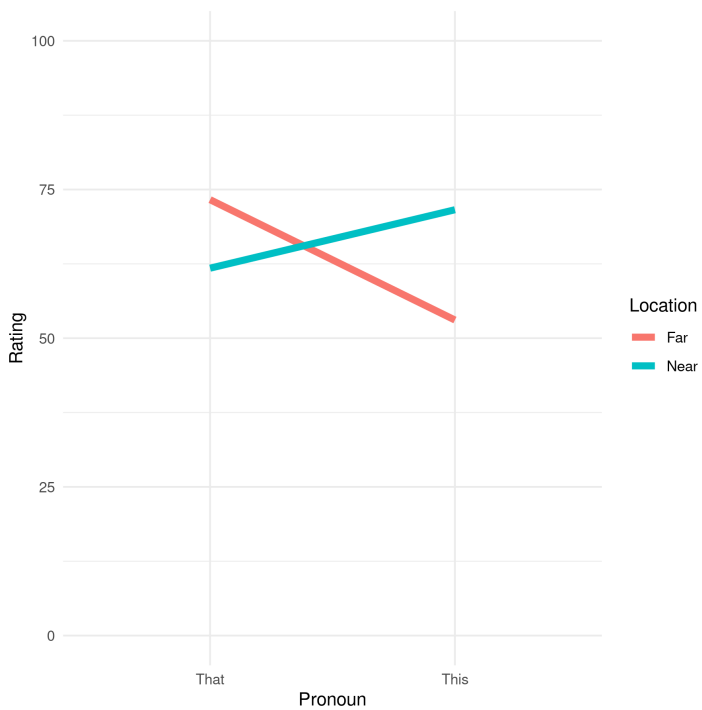
Experimental Design

Results

Pronoun	Location	Average	Lower	Upper
That	Far	73.29	68.17	78.41
This	Far	53.05	47.94	58.17
That	Near	61.78	56.66	66.89
This	Near	71.60	66.48	76.72

Table: Scores

Conclusions

- "That" is the less marked demonstrative in English
- It is more likely that the less marked demonstrative grammaticalizes into functional lexical items
- The path that demonstrative follows is based on its synactic positioning

Next Step

- Extend the survey to more languages with different demonstrative systems than English
  - Turkish and Arabic (tripartite systems)
  - Uyghur (proximal used as article)
  - Romance language (support distal data)

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