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**‘How Far from *Origo*?’
or What the Distance Means for Nivkh Demonstrative
Reference**

Abstract

Demonstratives represent the most numerous and elaborated subclass of Nivkh spatial deictic expressions, whose interpretation involves different points of reference, i.e. a speaker or various landmarks. After discussing general features of speaker-anchored demonstratives, the article concentrates on the semantic and pragmatic properties of object demonstrative pronouns. The semantic analysis, which is based on the traditional spatial conception of deixis, reveals that pronouns under discussion form a rather straightforward distance-oriented system. I shall show that the distance to the deictic center is the basic parameter determining the reference of given pronouns both in situational and non-situational uses.

1. Introduction

It is my pleasure and honour to present this article to Professor Fred Karlsson on his 60th anniversary, drawing attention to a typologically remarkable example of a multi-term and multifunctional deictic system.

Spatial deictic systems usually exploit a rather small inventory of possible semantic (chiefly distance) contrasts. Nivkh (Paleosiberian, isolate) belongs to rare languages that have an elaborated and complex deictic system for the expression of spatial reference. Being distance-oriented (cf. Anderson and Keenan 1985: 282), the system is organized around different deictic centers, or *origos* (cf. Bühler 1982 [1934]: 13–20), represented either by a speaker or by various landmarks, and is encoded predominantly by demonstratives. I am going to focus on a particular group of speaker-anchored demonstratives that indicate cross-linguistically rather uncommon five-way distinction of distance relative to the speaker.

A Man of Measure

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While Nivkh deictic system has been investigated quite thoroughly (cf. Panfilov 1962, Krejnovich 1979), there is still no general agreement either about the set of forms used in different varieties or their semantic peculiarities. Moreover, little is known about different pragmatic uses of Nivkh demonstratives. The major goal of this article is to specify the semantic and pragmatic properties of object demonstrative pronouns attested in the East Sakhalin (hereafter ES) and Amur (hereafter A) varieties. The data comes from the literature on the subject and from the corpus collected during my fieldwork on Sakhalin Island in 1989, 1991, and 2000.

2. Speaker-anchored demonstratives

Demonstratives can be simply defined as grammatical words (or, occasionally, clitics or affixes) which can have a pointing (or deictic) reference (cf. Dixon 2003: 61). Himmelmann (1996: 210) suggests the following criterion for the identification of demonstratives: “the element must be in a paradigmatic relation to elements which (...) locate the entity referred to on a distance scale: as proximal, distal, etc.” In Nivkh, deictically contrastive words which according to this definition may be qualified as demonstratives belong to five morphosyntactic categories suggested in Diessel (1999: 4): (i) demonstrative pronouns (cf. examples below), (ii) demonstrative determiners (e.g. ES *tuj* ‘this (proximal)’, *huj* ‘that (close)’, *eγγ* ‘that (medial)’, *aγγ* ‘that (remote)’, *aiγγ* ‘that (distal)’, *kuγ* ‘that (invisible)’, etc.), (iii) demonstrative verbs (e.g. ES *təmđi-* ‘be like this’, *həmđi-* ‘be like that’), (iv) demonstrative adverbs (e.g. ES *təmđiguř* ‘in this way’, *həmđiguř* ‘in that way’, etc.), and (v) demonstrative identifiers (e.g. ES *tuñi* ‘here is’, *huñi* ‘there is’). The distinction is based on morphological properties, syntactic functions and specific forms of demonstratives. Most demonstrative pronouns and determiners are built on the same roots, whereas demonstrative adverbs are typically derived from demonstrative verbs. Demonstrative pronouns are principally used independently in argument positions of verbs and exhibit nominal morphological features, i.e. inflect for number and case in the same way as nouns. In some rare cases these pronouns can be used adnominally, i.e. function as determiners.

Semantically, demonstrative pronouns may be further divided into five semantic subclasses: (i) object pronouns, referring to persons or things (e.g. ES *tud* ‘this one’, *hud* ‘that one’, etc.), (ii) locational (e.g. ES *tus* ‘this place (proximal)’, *hus* ‘that place (close)’, *eγs* ‘that place (medial)’, etc.), (iii)

qualitative (e.g. ES *təmḍid* ‘like this (by quality)’, *həmḍid* ‘like that (by quality)’), (iv) quantitative (e.g. ES *tun̄s* ‘like this (by quantity)’, *hun̄s* ‘like that (by quantity)’), and (v) dimensional (e.g. ES *tun* ‘like this (by size)’), pronouns. While the semantics of object and locational demonstratives is basically limited to deictic features, the last three subclasses provide also some additional information about the referent, such as its quality, quantity, or size. The semantic contrast is indicated through different demonstrative roots, which have common initials encoding the distance of the referent to the speaker. The most differentiated distance contrast is found in the group of object demonstrative pronouns, which is in the focus of the present study.







3. Object demonstrative pronouns

Demonstratives are known to be used in a range of domains. Four major usage types of demonstratives are established cross-linguistically: exophoric (situational), discourse, anaphoric, and recognitional (cf. Himmelmann 1996: 218–243). According to my data, Nivkh object demonstrative pronouns can serve only exophoric and anaphoric functions. Those are consecutively discussed in the following sections.

3.1 Exophoric use

When used exophorically, demonstratives serve a language-internal function: they focus the hearer’s attention on entities in the speech situation and are characterized by the following three features that distinguish them from all other uses: (i) they involve the speaker as the deictic center; (ii) they indicate a deictic contrast on a distance scale, and (iii) they are often accompanied by a pointing gesture (cf. Diessel 1999: 94).

All Nivkh object demonstrative pronouns can be used in the exophoric function. The semantic basis of the system is a five-term (ES) or four-term (A) contrast along the primary dimension of distance to the speaker. The speaker has a clear conception of surrounding space, which is divided into easily identifiable areas: once the referent (e.g. ‘dog’) is located in an area, it can be referred to by the corresponding pronoun (the forms in each set come from different subdialects):

		\rightarrow		\rightarrow		\rightarrow		\rightarrow		\rightarrow	
			‘proximal’		‘close’		‘medial’		‘remote’		‘distal’
ES	<i>tud</i>				<i>hud</i>		<i>eyd</i>		<i>ayd</i>		<i>aiyd</i>
	<i>tunt</i>				<i>hunt</i>		<i>ehəd</i>		<i>ahud</i>		<i>aixnt</i>
	<i>tənt</i>				<i>hənt</i>		<i>ehənt</i>		<i>aud</i>		
A	<i>təḏ</i>				<i>həḏ</i>				<i>aḏ</i>		<i>aēhəḏ</i>
									<i>ahəḏ</i>		

The use of these pronouns is often accompanied by gestures, glances or intonation functioning in a ‘gestural’ way: demonstratives indicating more distant referents are pronounced with the prolonged intonation, e.g. *a-a-a-ud* ‘that one (far away)’.

Superimposed on distance distinction is the semantic dimension of visibility/invisibility to the speaker. All these pronouns may encode only visible referents, while entities out of sight are referred to by the pronoun ES *kud/kunt*, A *kuḏ*. With respect to this ‘invisible’ pronoun the distance distinction is irrelevant—a referent may occur in any distance to the speaker.

As a whole, there is a set of six terms in ES and five terms in A (the last one lacks the ‘medial’ pronoun). As one can see, the pronouns comprise two components: (i) a deictic root which is different for each pronoun, e.g. ES *tu-*, *hu-*, *ey-*, *ay-*, *aiy-*, and (ii) the suffix ES *-d/-nt*, A *-ḏ*,¹ which is common for all pronouns.

The ‘proximal’ pronoun ES *tud/tunt/tənt*, A *təḏ* encodes a referent which is close enough to be reached by the speaker, visible and usually known to him:

- (1) ES *tud-ux mu iv-d*
 this-ABL boat be-IND
 ‘This one has a boat.’

The ‘close’ pronoun ES *hud/hunt/hənt*, A *həḏ* indicates a referent at a moderate distance from the speaker, visible, and often (but not necessarily) unknown. Referring to a person, the speaker may intentionally use a demonstrative pronoun instead of a personal one. Thereby the speaker communicates that he is not familiar with the person(s) he is talking about:

¹ The same suffix is a nominalizer on verbs and also the most commonly occurring predicate marker, interpreted as indicative.

- (2) ES *hud-yun-doχ* *ʔ'o—roz-d²*
 that-PL-DAT fish—give.out-IND
 'I gave out fish to those ones.'

It appears, however, that the distance contrast between 'proximal' and 'close' pronouns is eliminated in favor of the last one, when the pronoun is used in a contrastive function:

- (3) ES *hud-yun—ajm-d* *hud-yun—ayzu-d*
 that-PL—know-IND that-PL—do.not.know-IND
 'I know these ones. I do not know those ones.'

Moreover, the situational spatial opposition between 'proximal' and 'close' pronouns loses its importance when the pronouns are used to address somebody. For instance, appealing to a wife, husband, or person of the same ages, who appears to be "psychologically close" to the speaker, the last one uses the vocative form of the 'proximal' pronoun, cf. (4). By using the 'close' pronoun (which is situationally more distant) the speaker addresses an unknown person or emphasizes a slighting attitude to the addressee, cf. (5). In both cases the situational distance from the speaker is not a decisive factor, since either addressee may be in the same near-to-speaker area. The spatial factor comes back into the picture, when the addressee is in the far-to-speaker area. In that case the vocative form of the 'remote' pronoun is used, cf. (6).

- (4) ES *tud-ā* *oz-ja*
 this-VOC get.up-IMP:2SG
 'This, get up!'

- (5) A *həq-a* *ʔ'i* *oğla—t'o-r* *p'rə-lo?*
 that-VOC you child—bring:CONV:man:2SG come-INTER
 'That, did you bring a child?' (Panfilov 1962: 243)

- (6) A *aq-a* *ñəŋ-doχ* *p'rə-ja*
 that-VOC we-DAT come-IMP:2SG
 'That (distant), come to us!' (Saveljeva & Taksami 1970: 28)

The semantic distinction between the 'medial' pronoun ES *eyd/ehəd/ehənt*, 'remote' pronoun ES *ayd/ahud/aud*, A *aq*, and 'distal' pronoun ES

² In the examples, the units of polysynthetic complexes are separated by a dash, while morphemes are divided by a hyphen.

aiyd/aixnt, A *ahəḍ/aēhəḍ*³ seems to be purely spatial, cf. (7–8). In all cases the referent remains visible. These far-from-speaker forms are used much less frequently than near-to-speaker forms.

- (7) ES *eyd ñ-iy-m-ve*
that I-give-IMP:2PL
'Give me that!'

- (8) A *aḍ-řəkə vi-nəte*
that-DEST go-IMP:1DU
'Let us go up to that one.' (Saveljeva & Taksami 1970: 28)

The 'invisible' pronoun ES *kud/kunt*, A *kuḍ* indicates referents out of sight. The referent may be invisible because it is far away, cf. (9), or because the speaker doesn't simply see it around, as in (10), where an entity the speaker is looking for is virtually located somewhere nearby but is hidden from the speaker.

- (9) A *ñəŋ nəx kuḍ-řəkə vi-nə-ḍ-ra*
we tomorrow that-DEST go-FUT-IND-FOC
'We'll go to that one tomorrow.' (Saveljeva & Taksami 1970: 122)

- (10) ES *kud jaŋko*
that where
'Where is that?'

3.2 Anaphoric use

When used anaphorically, demonstratives serve a language-internal function: they are used to track participants of the preceding discourse (cf. Diessel 1999: 96). Only two of six pronouns discussed above, i.e. 'close' and 'invisible', can be used in anaphoric function. The choice between them depends on the distance to the antecedent in the discourse.

The most frequent pronoun ES *hud/hunt/hənt*, A *həḍ* 'that one (close)' refers to a non-topical participant⁴ recently mentioned in the preceding discourse. It is an 'immediate' (in other words 'short-distance') anaphoric pronoun, whose antecedent is typically located in the previous clause or

³ This pronoun is cited only in Krejnovich (1979: 305) without any phrase examples, though.

⁴ The topical participant is tracked by a reflexive pronoun.

phrase, cf. (11). The pronoun may encode a human (although the latter is usually tracked by the 3rd person pronoun); however, normally it refers to a non-human object and is the only way to refer back to a non-human referent.

- (11) A *amək* *p'-ōla—dau-jnə-ra* *həq*
 mother REFL-child—teach-MOD-COORD:3SG that

p'-rəu-jger-ra

REFL-teach-do.not.want-COORD:3SG

'Mother wanted to teach her child, [but] he did not want to study.'

(Nedjalkov & Otaina 1981: 192)

Another less frequent pronoun ES *kud*, *kunt*, A *kud* 'that one (invisible)' encodes the referent formerly mentioned in the preceding discourse (Panfilov 1962, Krejnovich 1979). It is therefore a 'delayed' ('long-distance') anaphoric pronoun, whose antecedent may be located in a significant distance to it. The pronoun 'reactivates' the old discourse referent (cf. Lichtenberk 1996) and brings it back into the focus of attention.

The use of 'immediate' and 'delayed' anaphoras is illustrated by example (12), where the speaker employs adnominal forms of object demonstrative pronouns. The example represents a part of a tale, which among other participants involves two women, i.e. *umgu_i* and *umgu_j*. The first woman, *umgu_i*, is mentioned once in the beginning of the story. The following narrative comprises 66 phrases without a single reference to her. Then the story-teller introduces another woman, *umgu_j*, into the story and soon (after one phrase) refers back to her using the 'immediate' anaphora *hə* 'that'. Later the first woman, *umgu_i*, reappears in the tale. Since she was mentioned before a long time ago, the speaker refers back to her by means of the 'delayed' anaphora *ku* 'that'.

- (12) A ...*pal—erq* *tulks-uin* *umgu_i—ñaqř* *hum-d* ... [66 phrases]
 forest—side dais-LOC woman—one be-ind

vi-r

go-CONV:man:3SG

umgu_j—ηəŋk—vo-r

woman—hair—take-CONV:man:3SG

irlə-r

pull-CONV:man:3SG

t'ejadox *volu-ror*

backwards throw.down-CONV:TEMP:3SG

joř-ř *ř'i*

ask-IND you

p'ətək—viñ-lo *hoğonan* *həj—umgu* *it-t...*
REFL-grandfather—feel.sorry-INTER then that—woman say-IND

[3 phrases] *p'u-ŋan* *kuj—umgu—ajma-ŋan...*
go.out-CONV:TEMP that—woman—see-CONV:TEMP

'There was one woman_i on the dais from the forest side. [...] Going, taking woman's_j hair, pulling, after throwing [her] on [her] back, [he] asked: "Do you feel sorry for your grandfather?" Then that_i woman said. [...] Going out, when he saw that_i woman...' (Panfilov 1965: 223–24)

3.3 The choice of a pronoun according to its function

The following examples (13–14) taken from the same text illustrate how different (exophoric or anaphoric) functions determine the choice between 'proximal' and 'close' pronouns:

(13) A *hoğor* *mer—ŋafq* *ul—mi-x*
then we:INCL—friend bosom—in-ABL

i-ŋojaq—yuz-r *it-t* *atak-a*
he-egg—take.out-CONV:MAN:3SG say-IND grandfather-VOC

təq—ajma-ja *təq* *siq-ŋa?*
this—look-IMP:2SG this what-INTER

'Then our friend taking his egg from [his] bosom says: "Grandfather! Look at this! What is this?"' (Panfilov 1965: 224)

(14) A *aŋik* *ñ-imə-đ—oxt* *ul—mi-in* *hum-đ*
old.woman I-give-NOM—drug bosom—in-LOC be-IND

həq—yuz-t *iñ-nəkta*
that—take.out-CONV:MAN:1SG eat-IMP:1SG

'The drug given to me by the old woman is in [my] bosom. Taking that out let me eat [it].' (Panfilov 1965: 229)

In both cases the entities referred to ('egg' and 'drug') are located in the same place, i.e. in the speaker's bosom. This is definitely the speaker's proximal area, that is why in (13), where the speaker directly points at the object ('egg') and shows it to the hearer, he uses (exophorically) the 'proximal' pronoun *təq*. However, in (14), the speaker doesn't draw the hearer's attention to the object ('drug') he is talking about, but with the help of the anaphoric pronoun refers back to the antecedent mentioned in the preceding phrase. In such a case, the distance of the object to the

speaker turns out to be irrelevant. What is relevant is that the anaphoric pronoun is close to the antecedent, which motivates the speaker's choice of the 'immediate' anaphora, i.e. the 'close' pronoun *həq*.

4. Conclusion

This article has discussed semantic properties of Nivkh object demonstrative pronouns and their use in the exophoric and anaphoric functions. The analysis of exophoric use is based on the traditional spatial conception of deixis. It shows that the given group of Nivkh demonstratives forms a rather straightforward distance-oriented system, exhibiting a nice counterexample to the predominant view that “there are never really more than three [distance categories]” in deictic systems of language (cf. Fillmore 1982: 48–49). On the other hand, the semantic description of individual demonstratives involves also some pragmatic factors, whose importance has been recently emphasized in several studies (cf. Laury 1997, Enfield 2003, Marchello-Nizia 2005). The system of reference tracking, which exploits demonstratives in question, can also be understood, perhaps metaphorically, as a deictic system—the choice of one or another anaphoric pronoun is determined by the distance (and in a certain sense by visibility/invisibility) to its antecedent, which performs the role of a deictic center.

Hence, in order to use Nivkh demonstratives in either function properly, one should first of all figure out an answer to the question that makes up the title of this article: “How far from *origo*?”

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