

Identification, Person Orientation and Deictic Reference

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1. Introduction

It is widely recognized that all natural languages have deictics. Typical examples in English are pronominals (*this, that, I, you*, etc.), locative adverbials (*here, there*, etc.) and time adverbials (*now, then*, etc.) The reference of a deictic element is determined in relation to a specific speaker and addressee and a specific time and place of utterance. There have been a large number of studies done on deixis, both in descriptive and theoretical frameworks, but surprisingly there appears to be no agreement in the literature concerning its definition and domain. I will recognize the basic communicative function of deictics as (1), following Hanks (1989).¹

- (1) The basic communicative function of deictics is to individuate or single out objects of reference or address in terms of their relation to the current interactive context in which the utterance occurs.

In this paper, I will focus on referential usages of a small class of primary spatial deictics, which in most languages make up a closed paradigmatic set. In English we find *this* and *that* (and their plurals *these* and *those*), in French *ceci* and *cela* (and their variations), in Japanese, *ko-*, *so-* and *a-* (each with a series of conjugates), in Latin *hic*, *iste* and *ille*, etc. Their forms and wide distribution in everyday discourse are well attested but relatively little in depth description of actual usage has been done, and the scope of available descriptive framework is limited. My aim here is to identify the kinds of information encoded in these forms from a cross-linguistic perspective and to try to provide a unified account for seemingly incongruous usages of a single form in different types of verbal communication.

2. Identificational Function

The semantics and pragmatics of deictic pronominals *this* and *that* in English are often compared with those of definite NPs and personal pronoun *it*. We can find the following types of observations and comments in the literature.

- (2) a. The deictics single out and set off their 'noun phrases'. (Bolinger (1972))
b. Anaphora with *this/that* tends to be quite a bit more definite and "referential" than with *it*.
c. The deictics are semantically more "loaded" than pronoun *it*.
d. The deictics single out a particular referent and indicate that no other than this/that one.
e. A deictic form has an independent referring function, which is lacking in definite NP or pronominals.

The property pointed out in various pre-theoretical terms in (2) is exemplified in the following usages:

- (3) a. I like *that*.
b. I like *it*.
- (4) A : We should have champagne and caviar at the party after CLS.
B : *That's/*It's* a good idea. (Channon, 1980; also (4))

- (5) Fred doesn't want to go, and *that's*/**it's* the problem.
 (6) [The Queen said:] 'Curtsey while you're thinking what to say. It saves time.' Alice wondered a little at *this*, but she was too much in awe of the Queen to disbelieve *it*/**that*. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976)

In uttering (3a), the speaker tries to call the addressee's attention to the referent of *that*. The same speaker would use (3b) if the referent is already the focus of attention in the speech situation. What we notice here is the difference in the degree of identificational force of the two pronominals. In (4) and (5), *that* successfully refers to the proposition expressed in the immediate linguistic context, but the reference would be infelicitous with *it*: the speaker in both cases calls the addressee's attention to the content of the previous statement. Similarly, in (6), reference to the propositional content of the queen's utterance is made first by *this*, and later, when it is in focus, *it* but not *that* is felicitous. The facts in (3)-(6) suggest that the use of deictics is limited to a context where there is a shift in focus.

In a series of recent papers Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski (1989, 1993, 1996) proposed six cognitive statuses relevant for explicating the form of referring expressions (as well as other linguistic phenomena) in natural language discourse. These statuses are implicationaly related in the givenness hierarchy shown in (7). (The relevant English and Japanese forms are given.)²

(7) The Givenness Hierarchy

in focus	>	activated	>	familiar	>	uniquely identifiable	>	referential	>	type identifiable
{it}		$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{that} \\ \textit{this} \\ \textit{this N} \end{array} \right\}$		{that N}		{the}		{indefinite <i>this</i> N}		{a N}
{∅}		$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{kore} \\ \textit{sore} \\ \textit{are} \\ \textit{kono N} \\ \textit{sono N} \end{array} \right\}$		{ano N}		{∅N}		{∅N}		{∅N}

A main premise of their work is that different determiners and pronominal forms signal different cognitive statuses (information about location in memory and attention state.) The different forms thus serve as processing signals which assist the addressee in restricting the set of possible referents.

According to the GHZ framework, however, English deictic forms are divided up into three different categories and Japanese ones into two. For example, determiner *that* and pronominal *that* gives different signals to the addressee, to search long-term memory for a familiar referent (in the case of determiner *that*) and to signal the referent's presence in the immediate discourse context (in the case of pronominal *that*). Their following argument will not assist us in clarifying the discourse function of deictics under discussion here:

- (8) Use of pronominal *this* and *that* in referring to previous statements is just a special case of focus shift since the focus of attention at the point after a statement is made is typically not the event or state of affairs described by that statement but rather the entity which is the topic of the statement.

(Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski, 1989: 95)

The problem is that in various linguistic theories, different statuses have been assimilated under a single notion 'focus', and there is a widespread confusion in the literature concerning the notion. Here, I will subscribe to the notion of 'identificational focus,' independently developed by Kiss (1998) in discussion of syntactic and semantic properties of Hungarian sentences with structural focus and the corresponding English cleft constructions. An identificational focus represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements and is distinguished from a mere information focus which carries new information. For the purpose of this paper, I will posit the following informal definition of the function of identificational focus:

- (9) The function of identificational focus: An identificational focus represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements to which the speaker calls the addressee's attention.

Using (9), I will define the distinctive characteristic of deictics as (10):

- (10) Deictics of various languages mark identificational focus.

In what follows, I will examine the inherent properties of each deictic form.

3. Person Orientation and the Proximal/Distal Opposition

According to Russell (1940: 114), deixis is egocentric and "this" is equivalent to "what I now notice." Thus, association with the speaker and the immediate extralinguistic context is the core of spatio-temporal deixis. Probably the primary criterion distinguishing the use of *this/that* is the way the speaker feels himself to be associated with the concept being referred to. Using "this" associates the speaker and the concept in some way; using "that" typically separates the speaker and the concept, and often identifies the addressee with the concept (cf. Gensler 1977).

Lakoff (1974) observed three major uses of *this* and *that*: spatio-temporal deixis, discourse deixis and emotional deixis. We consider the spatio-temporal use of deictics as exemplifying the 'basic' type, with the others to be derived from it by a process of metaphorization or abstraction. The following instances are all linked to the achievement of 'closeness,' like spatio-temporal *this*, in a rather extended sense:

- (11) a. *This* is exactly what the doctor told me to do.
 b. A : (After a roundabout proposal) Anyway, it's a suggestion.
 B : You know, *this* sounds like a really good idea. (Gensler, 1977)
 c. Clinton made his long-awaited announcement yesterday. *This* statement confirmed the speculations of many observers.

There does exist an apparent discrepancy between external world use and discourse anaphoric use, to which I will return in Section 5 below.

As we noted at the beginning of this section, deictics are necessarily associated with person orientation. 'Closeness' associated with proximal deictic forms is grounded with the speaker/writer. Thus, the referent of English *this* needs to be included in the speaker's context space. This condition is illustrated in example (12)

- (12) A : Have you seen the neighbor's new dog?
 B : Yes, and *that* dog kept me awake all night.
 B' : ??Yes, and *this* dog kept me awake all night. (Gundel, et al. 1989)

In other words, deictics subcategorize the relations between the referent and the speaker/writer. In the next section, I will look at parametric variations in lexicalization of this "close/near self" vs. "distal/near other" distinction.

4. Parametric Variation

Each language has its own way of expressing the basic deictic relations. We will look at a few of them in the following subsections.

4.1. The English system

The proximal/distant dichotomy is reflected in a straightforward manner in the English vocabulary:

- (13) proximal (to the speaker) — *this*
 distal (from the speaker) — *that*

By virtue of the egocentric nature of deixis, those which are conceptualized as proximal are close to the speaker. Everything else is distal, some of which may well, but not necessarily, be close to the addressee.

As I have briefly touched upon above, the basic distinction illustrated in (12) is subject to psychological and metaphorical extension in discourse and/or emotional use. I will return to this later.

4.2. The Japanese system

It is often pointed out that Japanese is a 'person oriented' language. The following (13) and (14) illustrate the two conventional views on Japanese three-way distinction of space deixis:

- (14) near speaker—————*ko*-series
 near addressee—————*so*-series
 far from speaker & addressee——*a*-series
- (15) close——*ko*-series
 mid——*so*-series
 distal——*a*-series

In these views, the three series of deictics are taken to have three distinct indexical grounds. Kuroda (1979), however, doubted this notion and argued for the primary distinction of two conceptual spheres: speaker-grounded versus addressee-grounded. His theory is that proximal/distal distinction is relevant only in the speaker-grounded sphere, and that *so*-series is used only when the speaker is conscious of the presence of an addressee. Following Kuroda, I will posit the basic Japanese deixis system as (16):

- (16) { speaker-grounded { proximal——*ko*-series
 { distal——*a*-series
 { addressee-grounded——*so*-series

4.3. The Korean system

Korean also has a three-way distinction but, unlike Japanese, its system is fairly straightforward and transparent.

- (17) proximal (speaker-grounded)—————*i*-series
 { addressee-grounded—————*ku*-series
 { distal { outside the speech participants' sphere——*ce*-series

4.4. Latin and Spanish

Latin and Spanish are also known for their three-way distinction of deictic sphere. The standard view is illustrated in the following:

- (18) Latin
 related to speaker——*hic*
 close to addressee——*iste*
 out yonder——*ille*
- (19) Spanish
 related to speaker——*éste*
 close to addressee——*ése*
 out yonder——*aquél*

In the absence of sufficient knowledge of the two languages, I have no basis for an argument for or against the conventional view that Latin *iste* and Spanish *ése* are intermediate spatial deictics. But the fact that the so-called intermediate forms are often associated with a contemptuous force may lead to a reconsideration of the systems.

5. Space, Discourse, and to Emotion

A clear linguistic link seems to exist between spatial deixis to discourse and to emotional deixis. Hence, the rules that correctly predict the spatial uses of *this* and *that* should somehow also serve to account for their discourse and emotional uses.

Let us start by examining the following properties of discourse deixis.

- (20) a. *That* may be used to refer to an object in prior discourse, and in many cases rather more naturally than *this*.
 b. *This* can but *that* cannot be used for subsequent-discourse deixis.

We may be able to account for the facts in (20) by extending the basic properties of *this* and *that* illustrated in (13) above, from physical world to mental world. Ideas and propositions in prior discourse are the common property of all the speech participants and usually no longer confined to the speaker sphere, hence encoded by *that*. Whatever belongs to subsequent discourse, on the other hand, is still in the speaker's head, hence not accessible by anybody else, licensing the use of *this* but not *that*.

The following examples illustrate the fact that the distance is measured in terms of the speaker's mental attitude.

- (21) a. *This* is exactly what we need. (Said by company VP to chief scientist about the latter's new proposal; the VP gets himself into the act with "this.")
 b. *That's* exactly what we need. (VP assigns credit where credit is due, ascribing the proposal to the scientist.)
 c. *That's* a crazy pipedream. (same context)
 d. ?*This* is a crazy pipedream.

(21d) is awkward due to the presence of two opposing attitudinal items: *this* signals the speaker's subjective involvement which is semantically incompatible with the disdainful *a crazy pipedream*.

Lord and Dahlgren (1997) surveyed anaphora phenomena in a corpus of news articles from the Wall Street Journal newspaper, representative of a genre of expository written English. Among their findings are the following facts about the choice of deictic anaphors:

- (22) a. The choice of deictic type (proximal/distal) is a function of global topicality: 75% of proximal deictics had topical referents, but only 14% of distal deictics did so. When the antecedents for proximal deictic anaphor was a clausal sequence or a discourse segment, the referent was topical in all instances. (cf. Lord et al., 1997: 343)
 b. Distal deictics (*that*, *those*) were more likely to have antecedents in the same discourse segment than were proximal deictics (*this*, *these*). (cf. Lord et al., 1997: 340)

The topicality correlation evidenced in (22a) for proximal deictics results in proximal anaphors being farther from their antecedents, a situation which might be regarded as counter-intuitive. Similarly, the physical proximity of distal deictics and their antecedents requires explanation.

What is at issue here is the notion of 'distance.' The physical distance between an antecedent and an anaphor does not correspond to the psychological distance between the speaker/ writer and the referent. Topical notion is expected to be at the speaker/writer's center of attention, requiring proximal reference. Peripheral events and participants, on the other hand, are not salient elements in the discourse: they are not closely related to the central concern of the discourse.

Lord and Dahlgren (1997) also noted the following two discourse phenomena.

- (23) Most deictic pronominals in discourse have abstract referents. In some instances it appears that they may help define the previous segment. Thus, proximal deictics frequently begin a new segment providing background information related to the topic: e.g. *This is taking place while television watching in general is on the rise*.

(24) The demonstrative pronoun typically occurs with a verb that was evaluative, as in:

*That means.... That indicates..., That isn't necessarily alarming...,
That could cause..., That seems easy enough...*

or explanatory, as in:

That's because..., That depends on..., That occurs when...

The tendency expressed in (23) is clearly topicality related. In connection with (24), we may also note that in spoken technical exchange, *that* often occurs in “why” or “how” sentences. These facts may be taken to be indicative of the speaker-grounded property of deictic reference.

One interesting consequence of the association-with-speaker dimension, pointed out by Gensler (1977), has to do with tense usage. If the concept referred to anaphorically is inherently anchored in time, then there often is a tendency to use “this” with tenses that overlap the present (present and present perfect), and “that” with other tenses.

- (25) a. *That is/This is/That was/?This* was very nice of you.
 b. *This/*That* has been most enlightening.
 c. But *this/*that* could go on for days! (the present discussion)
 d. Ah, *that/*this* was long ago.

Here, the referents of *this* are conceived as being ‘here’ and ‘now’, but the referents of *that* are conceptually distinct from the speech situation. The felicity of *that* in (25a) with present tense results from the addressee’s relation to the referent. This point will be discussed in the next section.

6. Explanation of Pragmatic Effects

The psychological closeness discussed in the previous section is linked to the speaker/writer’s emotional involvement in the subject-matter of his/her utterance/writing. In this section, I will briefly survey instances of various types of emotional deixis.

It is often pointed out that an emotion such as approbation, praise, censure, pleasure, displeasure, etc. is expressed in the following uses of *this/that*

- (26) a. *this* appropriate remark of Mr. Smith’s
 b. *that* really beautiful speech of your wife’s
 c. *that* ugly remark of her father’s (Curme, 1931: 77)

The use of the proximal deictic in (26a) is treated as an instance of the speaker’s evaluative stance toward the other’s remark. However, as discussed by Ando (1986), the noun phrases in question are equipped with appropriate adjectives and are evaluative on their own right. It is not correct to state that deictics are encoded with evaluative meanings. Then what is the function of the deictics here?

We may turn here to Hanks (1984, 1989), who observed that among the heterogeneous functions of a deictic is a relational function, which specifies the relation between the object of reference and the speaker. The identificational function that we posed as an inherent property of deictic reference in Section 2 above, may be linked to this relational function. The following hypothesis may be posited in this connection:

- (27) The deictic signals the speaker’s conceptual (physical, mental, or emotional) relations to the referent.

Returning back to (26), (26a) and (26c) are readily accountable as instances of the speaker’s emotional involvement and distancing to the referent, respectively. Some complication arises when we try to explain (26b) in the same vein. Here, distancing *that* concatenates with a praising adjectival phrase *really beautiful*. It is necessary to discern three possible factors involved in the choice of deictic type: (i) the speaker’s emotional relation to the referent, (ii) the addressee’s relation to it and (iii) the temporal distance between the speech time and the time the speech in question was made. For lack of context, we have no way to tell exactly what lay behind the choice of the distal deictic in (26b). Still, it is a case of the interpersonal factor

and the temporal factor having precedence over the emotional factor. It is suspected that this is the reason why while its spatio-temporal uses of *that* are very nearly opposite those of *this*, its emotive uses are surprisingly close.

In the following examples there are no evaluative adjectivals involved:

- (28) a. *That* left front tire is pretty worn. (by a garage mechanic)
 b. *Your* left front tire is pretty worn. (by a highway patrolman) (Lakoff, 1974: 351)

These are curious semantically, since the distance marker *that* in (28a) seems to establish emotional closeness between speaker and addressee, whereas the personal pronoun in (28b) signals detachment. As we have seen above, identificational function of deixis often creates in the addressee a sense of participation. Deictics, including distal ones, function as means of giving vividness of description and achieving camaraderie.

Let us turn to a slightly different phenomenon, and look at some instances of the so-called phatic communion.

- (29) (Looking at a camera in the addressee's hands)
 a. Is *this* your new camera?
 b. Is *that* your new camera? (KI, also 30)³
 (30) (Pointing to the addressee's fat belly:)
 a. What's *this*?
 b. What's *that*?

The use of *this* in (29a) and (30a) signals the speaker's emotional involvement in the subject-matter of his utterance. The use of *that* in (29b) and (30b), on the other hand, conveys objective distancing or a disapproving mental attitude toward it.

The metaphorical extension of English proximal/distal deixis discussed in this paper may be illustrated as follows:

- (31) Metaphorical extension of deictic reference
- | | | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------|---|-------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| form | spatio-temporal use | | discourse anaphoric use | | emotional use |
| <i>this</i> | proximal | → | center of attention | → | { approbation
vividness |
| <i>that</i> | distal | → | peripheral | → | { familiarity
censure |

7. English-Japanese Comparison

In this section, I briefly touch upon the correspondence of the English two-way distinction and the Japanese three-way distinction. Intuitively, English *this* is expected to correspond to Japanese *ko*-series, and *that* to Japanese *so*- or *a*- series. However, as the following excerpt from the Washington Post newspaper and its Japanese translation illustrate, there is some fundamental differences between the two systems.

- (32) a. ...the possibility that the long-dominant party could finally lose its governing majority. Some analysts say *this* could happen...
 b. ...choki seiken o nitatte-kita seito ga, tsuini seikenyoto-no-za o oriru kanosei ga detekita...
 long governing party NM at last governmental party AC step down possibility born
 So naru kanosei ga...
 that possibility NM (WP)

Here, the proposition coded by the proximal deictic in English is marked by an addressee-grounded deictic in Japanese. Replacement with *ko* would result in unacceptability: cf. **ko* naru kanosei. Evidently, the Japanese speaker-grounded proximal deictic, unlike English *this*, is not applicable to an irrealis context.

Let us consider the following pair of expressions with temporally distal deictics *ano koro* and *sono koro*, which are both translated literally as *in those days*.

- (33) a. 1920nendai, *ano koro* wa minna mazushikatta..
 1920's times TP all were-young
 'In 1920's we were all poor'
 b. 1920nendai, *sono koro* wa minna mazushikatta..
 'In 1920's you/they were all poor'

The meaning difference between the *a*- version and *so*- version derives from their difference in person orientation. The referential ambiguity of (33b) will be contextually resolved.

It is not difficult to find a host of other cases where English *this* corresponds to Japanese *so*- or *a*-series (rather than *ko*-series) in naturally occurring discourses. Similarly quite often English *that* corresponds to *ko*-series (rather than *so*- or *a*-series). Further comparison of the two deictic systems will be expected to reveal the inherent properties of each deictic form and the overall system, but it lies outside the scope of the present paper.

8. Conclusion

For any deictic element, it may not be possible to state a set of invariant features that remain constant across all of its uses. In this paper, I have focused on the basic functions of spatio-temporal deictics and discussed the mechanism of their metaphorical extension into discourse and emotional use. I hope the identificational aspect and the person-oriented dimension of proximal/distal distinction outlined here, will lead to more adequate cross-linguistic analyses of deictic reference.

Notes

- 1 Based on his comparative research on deixis, Hanks differentiated the kinds of information encoded in standard deictic forms and discussed their functional heterogeneity.
- 2 The Givenness Hierarchy is an implicational scale, with statuses ordered from most restrictive (in focus) to least restrictive (type identifiable), with respect to the set of possible referents they include. Each status on the hierarchy is necessary and sufficient for appropriate use of a different pronominal or determiner form.
- 3 Examples marked by KI and WP are citations from the following.
 KI: Imai, K. 1995. *Eigo no tsukai-kata*. Tokyo: Taishukan.
 WP: *Views of Japan from The Washington Post Newsroom*. 1996. Tokyo: Kodansha.

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