

Demonstrative Pronouns and the Linguistic Encoding of Appraisal

Ivy Sichel and Martina Wiltschko

1. Introduction

It is well known that demonstratives in some languages can be used like pronouns, i.e., without an overt NP, and refer to humans, as in Hebrew (1) and German (2). We refer to such forms as d-pronouns.

(1) *zot(i) / ha-hi gvoha.*
Z.f.sg / the-H.f.sg tall.f.sg
'This one / that one is tall.'

(2) *Die ist gross.*
d-f.sg is tall
'This/that one is tall.'

What is less well known is the fact that in some contexts (like for example in (1-2)), the use of the d-pronoun triggers **negative appraisal**.¹ We call this the *N-effect*. Interestingly, the N-effect is only selectively triggered. For example, in (3) and (4), the use of the d-pronoun does not trigger the N-effect.

(3) *zot₁ im ha-nemaSim xoSevet Se-hi₁ gvoha*
Z.f.s₁ with the-freckles thinks that-she₁ tall
'The one with the freckles thinks that she's tall.'

(4) *Die mit den Sommersprossen glaubt, die ist gross.*
d-f.sg with the freckles believes d-f.sg is.3sg tall
'The one with the freckles thinks that she's tall.'

This raises two questions, which we address in this paper:

- i) **What is the distribution of the N-effect?**
- ii) **How is the N-effect encoded?**

As for its distribution (discussed in section 2), we show that the N-effect is restricted to i) contexts where the d-pronoun can be replaced by a **personal pronoun**; ii) **human** referents; and iii) contextually salient **unique** individuals, i.e., contexts in which the use of the d-pronoun is not **discriminating**. As for the second question (addressed in section 3), we argue that the N-effect arises because in non-discriminating contexts, the use of the d-pronoun forces the referent to be interpreted as a **non-participant**.

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¹ A related effect is reported for Spanish d-pronouns (Duranti 1984), and Romanian and Hungarian (Farkas, p.c.).

2. The distribution of the N-effect

In this section, we show that the N-effect arises only when the d-pronoun competes with a personal pronoun (2.1); when the referent is human (2.2.) and when the d-pronoun does not serve to discriminate reference (2.3). The last condition may be thought of as a subcase of (2.1), but for expository reasons we keep them apart.

2.1. The necessity of competition

The d-pronouns in (1) and (2) can be replaced with a personal pronoun as shown in (5) and (6).

(5) *zot(i) / hi gvoha.*
 Z.f.sg /pron.f.sg. tall.f.sg
 ‘This one / that one is tall.’

(6) *Die/sie ist gross.*
 d-f.sg/she is tall
 ‘This/that one is tall.’

In this subsection, we establish the significance of this alternation: the N-effect arises only in contexts in which the d-pronoun can be felicitously replaced with a personal pronoun. In other words, the N-effect is restricted to contexts of *competition*. To see this, consider again the examples in (3) and (4), which involve modification of the d-pronoun with a prepositional phrase. As shown in (7) and (8), the personal pronoun is ill-formed in this context, because such pronouns resist modification. In this context the N-effect does not arise.

(7) [_{DP} *zot₁ / *hi* [_{PP} *im ha-nemaSim*]] *xoSevet Se-hi₁ gvoha*
 [_{DP} Z.f.s₁ / *she [_{PP} with the-freckles] thinks that-she₁ tall
 ‘The one with the freckles thinks that she’s tall.’

(8) [_{DP} *Die / *sie* [_{PP} *mit den Sommersprossen*]] *glaubt, die ist gross.*
 d-f.sg / *she with the freckles believe.3sg d-f.sg is tall
 ‘The one with the freckles thinks that she’s tall.’

Similarly, if the d-pronoun is modified with a relative clause (9)-(10), a personal pronoun cannot be used and the N-effect does not arise.

(9) [_{DP} *zot₁ / *hi* [_{CP} *Se-yac’a im dani*]] *xoSevet Se-hi₁ gvoha*
 [_{DP} Z.f.s₁ / *she [_{CP} that-went.out with dani]] thinks that-she₁ tall
 ‘The one that went out with Dani thinks that she’s tall.’

(10) [_{DP} *Die / *sie* [_{CP} *die mit der Dani befreundet ist*]] *glaubt, die ist gross*
 d-f.sg she d-f.sg with the Dani friended is believes d-f.sg is tall
 ‘The one who is friends with Dani thinks she’s tall.’

Aside from the modificational contexts in (7)-(10) there are other contexts where d-pronouns are the only choice. Consider first German. German d-pronouns are formally identical to definite determiners and hence they have been analysed as instantiating definite determiners with an elided NP (Wiltschko 1998). This contrasts with personal pronouns which cannot be used as determiners. Therefore, the definite determiner use of the d-pronoun counts as a context where the d-pronoun does not compete with a personal pronoun. We thus predict that when they are used as definite determiners, the N-effect will not be triggered. This prediction is borne out.

- (11) a. **Die / sie** ist gross.
d-f.sg / she is tall
'this/that one is tall.'
- b. **{Die / *sie}** Frau ist gross.
d-f.sg / she woman is tall
'The woman is tall.'

Similarly, d-pronouns may be used as relative pronouns in German, whereas personal pronouns may not. Again, we correctly predict that when used as a relative pronoun, the d-pronoun will not trigger the N-effect.

- (12) *Die Frau, [{die / *sie} gross ist] ist ins Zimmer gekommen.*
The woman d.f.sg/she tall is is in.the room come
'The woman who is tall came into the room.'

Next we turn to Hebrew. The same generalization holds: in presentational contexts, Clefts, and as reciprocals d-pronouns do not compete with personal pronouns, and hence the N-effect does not arise (Yitzhaki 2015). Consider first presentational contexts, such as those in (13). The demonstrative pronouns (*this/that*) refer here to tropes (Moltmann 2013). In this context, personal pronouns are ill-formed, and the N-effect does not arise.

- (13) a. **{zot₁ / *hi}** dina₁
Z.f.s/she dina
'This/That/It is Dina.'
- b. **{ze₁ / *hu}** dani₁
Z.m.s/he dani
'This/That/It is Dani.'
- c. **{zot₁ / *hi}** [iSa yafa]₁
Z.f.s/she woman beautiful
'This/That is a beautiful woman.'

The same holds for Clefts: d-pronouns do not compete with personal pronouns, and the N-effect does not arise.

- (14) a. **{ze / *hu}** AVIV Se-ohev lir'ot hisardut
Z.m.s / he aviv that likes to-watch survivor
'It's Aviv that likes to watch 'Survivor'.'
- b. **{zot / *hi}** AVIVA Se-ohevet lir'ot hisardut
Z.m.s / she aviva that likes to-watch survivor
'It's Aviva that likes to watch 'Survivor'.'

Finally, Hebrew reciprocals may be formed with d-pronouns (Z P⁰ Z) but they do not trigger an N-effect (15)a. This seems to be part of the same generalization: the N-effect arises only if the d-pronoun competes with the personal pronoun, and Hebrew reciprocals cannot be composed from personal pronouns (*HP⁰ H) (15)b. Note that the only competing unit is the personal pronoun. In addition to the reciprocal form based on d-pronouns in (15a), there is another form based on numerals (15c), but this form doesn't compete with (15a).

- (15) a. dani₁ ve-dina₂ histaklu ze₁ al zot₂
dani₁ and-dina₂ look-3p-PAST d.p.m.s at d.p.f.s
'Dani and Dina looked at each other/one another.'
- b. *dani₁ ve-dina₂ histaklu hu₁ al hi
dani₁ and-dina₂ look-3p-PAST he₁ at she₂
- c. dani₁ ve-dina₂ histaklu exad₁ al ha-Sniya₂
dani₁ and-dina₂ look-3p-PAST one-ms at the-second-fs
'Dani and Dina looked at each other/ one another.'

2.2. *The necessity of humanness*

We have now seen that competition with personal pronouns is a necessary condition for the N-effect. A second restriction is reference to humans. The N-effect arises only if the d-pronoun refers to a human individual. For inanimate referents, no N-effect arises.

- (16) a. *zot gvoħa.*
 Z.f.sg tall.f.sg
 ‘This one / that one is tall.’
 Said of a person: there is an N-effect; said of a lamp: no N-effect
- b. *Die ist gross.*
 d-f.sg is tall
 ‘This one / that one is tall.’

The restriction to human referents suggests a characterization of the N-effect in terms of content which would remove, or deny, the humanness of the referent. If the referent does not denote a human individual, the removal, or denial, of humanness will have no effect, hence no N-effect is observed. We argue that this analysis of the N-effect in terms of “dehumanization” is not tenable. If dehumanization were at play, we would expect the use of d-pronouns to have the same impact as the use of a neuter pronoun (*es*), which typically refers to inanimate individuals. This, however, is not the case. Dehumanization via the use of a neuter pronoun creates a much stronger effect, since the speaker indicates that the referent is a thing, and when used with respect to a human individual, the implication is that the speaker considers the referent thing-like. This is very degrading. The d-pronoun does not trigger this *thing-like* interpretation; while still suggesting that the speaker views the referent somewhat negatively. We suggest below that this kind of under-specified negativity is to be thought of in terms of the notion of *discourse participant* and the structure of discourse participation.

2.3. *The necessity of discrimination*

The final restriction on the N-effect has to do with referential *discrimination*. Specifically, we show that d-pronouns trigger the N-effect only if they are not used to discriminate between referents. D-pronouns will be used without discrimination in contexts in which there is a contextually unique individual whose identification requires neither pointing or stress. In this context, the use of the d-pronoun introduces the N-effect, no matter whether the d-pronoun occurs in a matrix (17) or an embedded clause (18).

- (17) Context: A group of fans are watching the Eurovision Song Contest. Everyone’s favorite (Conchita Wurst) appears on screen.
- a. *zot od tafti’a et kulam*
 Z.f.s yet surprise-3fs d.o. everyone
 ‘This one will surprise everyone.’
- b. *Die wird jetzt olle überroschen.*
 d-f.sg will now all surprise
 ‘This one will surprise everyone.’
- (18) a. *Dani xoSev se-zot od tenaceax*
 Dani thinks that-D.f.s yet will.win
 ‘Dani thinks that this one might yet win’
- b. *Da Dani glaubt dass die gwinna wird.*
 d-m.sg Dany thinks that d-f.sg win will
 ‘Dani thinks that this one will win.’

The N-effect disappears if the use of the d-pronoun is discriminating. The d-pronoun will be used to discriminate when several potential referents are available and the d-pronoun is used to pick out one particular referent, as in (19).

- (19) Context: A group of fans are watching the Eurovision Song Contest. A bunch of contestants appear on screen, including Conchita. **Pointing at Chonchita**, one of the fans exclaims:
- Dani xoSev se-ZOT od tenceax*
Dani thinks that-D.f.s yet will.win
Dani thinks that THIS ONE might yet win.'
 - Da Dani glaubt dass DIE gwinna wird*
d-m.sg Dany thinks that d-f.sg win will
'Dani thinks that THIS ONE might win.'

The generalization that d-pronouns only induce the N-effect if they are not discriminating is further supported by the following observation. In environments with multiple antecedents, d-pronouns may have a disambiguating effect. In (20)-(21), for example, the use of the d-pronoun has to refer to the object and cannot pick out the subject (Ariel 1990, Reinhart 1995, Sichel 2001, Bosch & Umbach 2007, Hinterwimmer 2015). According to Hinterwimmer 2014, while personal pronouns are ambiguous, d-pronouns can only be resolved to antecedents that are not maximally salient in the preceding sentence.

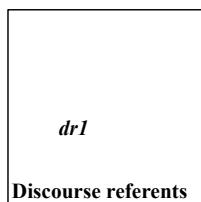
- (20) *buS₁ diber etmol im Sharon₂ ve-hu_{1/2}/ze₂ lo zaz milimeter*
bush, spoke yesterday with sharon and-he/Z.m.s not budge millimetre
'Bush spoke yesterday with Sharon and he/that one wouldn't budge an inch.'
- (21) *Die Anni hot da Maria gsogt dass's woehn geh soi.*
Det Anni has det Mary said that-she vote go should.
Und da Mo dea was gestan mit dea gredt hot ...
And det man rel.pron comp yesterday with d-pron spoken has...
... is si sicha dass die Maria d'Hillary woehn wiad.
... is refl certain that det Mary det Hillary vote will
'Annie told Mary that she should vote. And the man who talked with that.one yesterday is certain that Mary will vote for Hillary.'

While the use of a personal pronoun would be compatible with both antecedents, the use of the d-pronoun is a discriminating use. Therefore, relativized to discrimination, the d-pronoun is obligatory. The fact that in this context d-pronouns do not trigger the N-effect reduces therefore to absence of competition with personal pronouns.

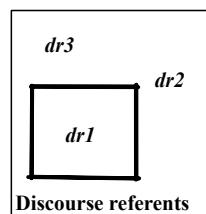
In sum, the N-effect arises only if the use of the d-pronoun is non-discriminating: i.e., if there is only one salient referent available, as illustrated in (22)a. If on the other hand the d-pronoun serves to pick out a particular referent among a set of possible referents as in (22)b, no N-effect arises.

- (22) The distribution of the N-effect

a. N-effect



b. No N-effect



We have shown that d-pronouns are associated with an N-effect, but only in particular contexts. In terms of their syntax, the N-effect is restricted to contexts where the d-pronoun can be replaced by a personal pronoun. In terms of reference, the N-effect of d-pronouns is restricted to contexts where the d-pronoun picks out a unique human referent. This is summarized in Table 1.

	N-effect	No N-effect
Syntax	Can be replaced by a personal pronoun	Cannot be replaced by a personal pronoun
Reference	Non-discriminating (unique) reference	Discriminating reference
	Human referent	Non-human referent

Table 1: The distribution of the N-effect

What is it about d-pronouns which makes them good tools for discrimination, or in other words, how are d-pronouns used to discriminate? There is no single, designated, way: We have shown that discriminating uses of d-pronouns may involve stress, or pointing (see (19)), or *anti-topicality* (D-pronouns avoid antecedents that are discourse topics (Bosch & Umbach 2006; see (20)-(21)). The locative distinction encoded in some demonstrative pronouns (*this* vs. *that*) may also serve to discriminate, but it is clearly not obligatory, as we see from the use of the German d-pronouns, which does not encode a locative distinction. Interestingly, however, not all of the features encoded in demonstratives can serve to discriminate. For example, the gender distinction encoded in German d-pronouns is not sufficient for discrimination. Consider the examples in (23). Despite the fact that the gender feature on the d-pronoun would discriminate between two potential referents (a tall man and a tall woman), the use of the d-pronoun still induces the N-effect, and this suggests that gender is not among the features that play a role in discrimination. It is an open question which features are associated with discrimination, and which features are not, and whether the set of discriminating features is universal.

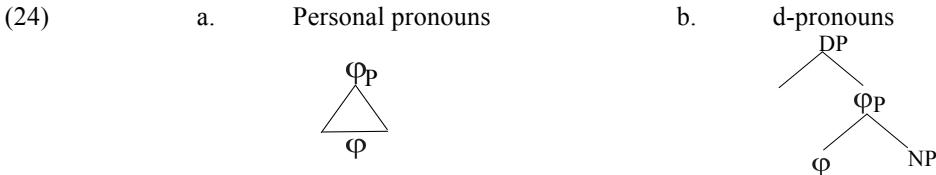
- (23) Context: Looking at a picture of a tall man and a tall woman:
 a. *Die ist gross.* b. *Der ist gross.*
 d-f.sg is tall d-m.sg is tall
 ‘This/that one is tall.’ ‘This/that one is tall.’

Having established the distribution of the N-effect, we now turn to a discussion of how the N-effect is encoded.

3. The linguistic encoding of appraisal

How does the N-effect arise? The first thing to note is that it cannot be part of the intrinsic meaning of a d-pronoun. If it were, we would not expect it to be restricted in the way it is. We have seen in section 2, that the distribution of the N-effect is partially conditioned by syntax and competition, hence it cannot be an intrinsic (lexical) property of the pronoun. We have also seen that the N-effect does not come about by way of dehumanizing the referent. The N-effect is much more subtle than, for example, using a neuter pronoun to refer to a human individual. We can also show that the N-effect does not derive from a specific use of spatial deixis as argued by Lakoff 1974 (cf. also Imai 2003, Potts and Schwarz 2010, Acton & Potts, 2014, Doran & Ward 2015 for extensions of this intuition for [demonstrative + NP]). On this approach, the binary locative coordinates such as *here* - *there* or *this* - *that* might be mapped onto the binary valuation *good* - *bad*, where *good* is derived from *close to the speaker*. We reject this possibility since the N-effect is not part of a binary opposition: there is no corresponding P(ositive)-effect. This would be surprising if *HERE* and *THERE* were mapped onto *good* and *bad*, and *bad* were triggered by *THERE*. To the best of our knowledge, a P-effect is never attested. Furthermore, the German d-pronoun triggers an N-effect without being part of a binary spatial opposition. Instead, the d-pronouns differ in form only based on phi-feature distinctions (gender, number) as well as case. This is unexpected if the N-effect were to derive from spatial deixis. Finally, in Hebrew, where a binary opposition is encoded, it is the proximate d-pronoun which carries the N-effect. Again, this is unexpected if the N-effect were to derive from mapping the distal demonstrative onto a negative evaluation. What we observe instead is that the choice between proximate/distal/monopartitioned d-pronouns varies arbitrarily across languages. In what follows we develop an analysis for the data we have discussed above.

Following Wiltschko 1998, we assume that personal pronouns and d-pronouns differ in terms of their syntax. Specifically, personal pronouns are PhiPs (24)a, while d-pronouns are DPs, which contain a PhiP (24)b (Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002).



As background for explaining their referential properties, we assume a distinction between the domain of *discourse referents* and the domain of *discourse participants*. The former are the individuals we talk about, i.e., the *objects of discourse*. The latter are the individuals we talk to and who talk to us, i.e., the *subjects of discourse*; in short, ‘speakers’. As illustrated in Figure 1, the two discourse relations (participant or referent) stand in a subset relation to each other: Individuals who can function as discourse participants can also function as discourse referents, but not vice versa; not all individuals who can function as discourse referents can also function as discourse participants. The relationship between these two categories is grammaticalized and structured: the superset system of reference tracking is encoded via DEFINITENESS, and covers the domain of discourse referents. The subset system of participant tracking is encoded via PERSON and covers the domain of discourse participants. As for the syntax-reference mapping, we assume that reference tracking and DEFINITENESS are associated with the DP layer, while participant tracking and PERSON are associated with the PhiP layer.

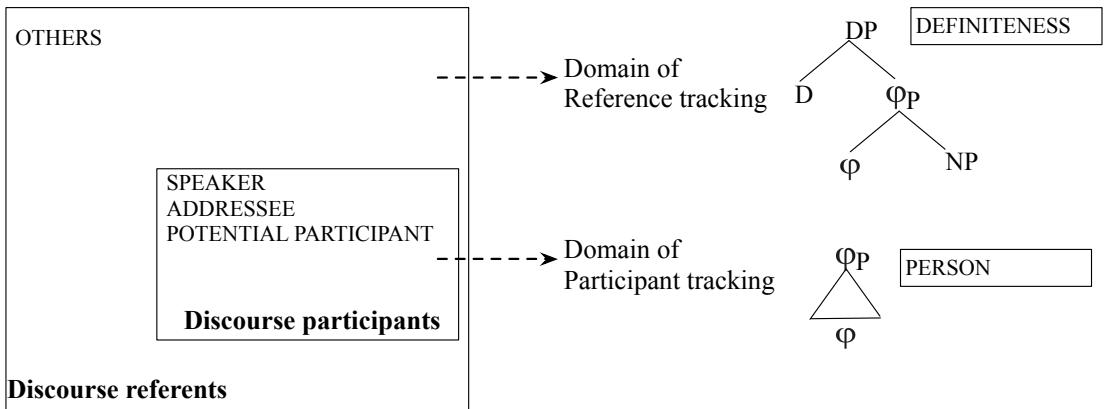


Figure 1: The syntax-reference mapping

With these ingredients in place, the N-effect can be analyzed in terms of *competition* (in the sense of Patel-Grosz & Grosz 2017), where competition is defined structurally, in terms of *structural economy* (in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke 1999): everything else being equal, the smallest structure compatible with the communicative intent is preferred.

- (25) Competition:
The choice of a d-pronoun over a personal pronoun has to be justified

First, consider that discrimination establishes a new discourse object and hence is a core realization of **reference tracking**. Hence, when discrimination is involved, d-pronouns are justified, and no N-effect arises. If on the other hand the individual is uniquely salient (there is no other potential referent available), and a Phi-Pronoun is likewise available, the principle in (25) dictates a preference for phi-P, the system of participant tracking is invoked. By using the d-pronoun instead, the speaker indicates that the individual talked about is only somebody to talk about (a discourse object), but not someone to talk to (a discourse subject). For salient human individuals, this will have the effect of negative appraisal: a potential discourse participant is demoted to merely being a discourse referent, in other words, someone we talk *about* but not someone we talk *to* or someone who could talk to us. This is the content of the N-effect.

4. Conclusion

We have shown that D-pronouns can be divided into two classes:

- i) non-stressed d-pronouns**, used for reference to a salient unique individual. If they are used when personal pronouns could also be used, they are associated with a negative appraisal of the referent.
- ii) stressed d-pronouns** are used to discriminate among multiple potential objects of discourse. In their discriminating use, d-pronouns are never associated with negative appraisal of the referent.

This division is observed independently of whether the system encodes a binary locative distinction or not. In this paper, we have discussed Hebrew and German d-pronouns. The former encode binary spatial deixis, realized in distinct forms (proximate and distal) whereas the latter have only one form, and do not encode spatial deixis. The pronominal paradigms of the two languages in discussion are summarized in tables 2 and 3.

	m.s	f.s	m.pl	f.pl
proximal	<i>ze</i>	<i>zo/zot/zoti</i>	<i>ele/elu</i>	<i>ele/elu</i>
	<i>ZE</i>	<i>ZO/ZOT/ZOTI</i>	<i>ELE/ELU</i>	<i>ELE/ELU</i>
distal	<i>ha-hu</i>	<i>ha-hi</i>	<i>he-hem</i>	<i>ha-hen</i>
	<i>HA-HU</i>	<i>HA-HI</i>	<i>HE-HEM</i>	<i>HA-HEN</i>
Personal pronoun	<i>hu</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>hem</i>	<i>hen</i>

Table 2: Hebrew pronominal paradigms

	m.s	f.s	n.s	pl
d-pronouns	<i>der</i>	<i>die</i>	<i>das</i>	<i>die</i>
Stressed d-pronouns	<i>DER</i>	<i>DIE</i>	<i>DAS</i>	<i>DIE</i>
Personal pronouns	<i>er</i>	<i>sie</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>sie</i>

Table 3: German pronominal paradigms

We have further shown that the choice of a d-pronoun over a personal pronoun **has to be justified**. This follows from structural economy, which dictates that a DP projection is more costly than a PhiP projection and needs to be motivated. Where personal pronouns are ruled out categorically no justification is necessary and no N-effect arises. Another way to justify the use of the d-pronoun is via what we have called the *discriminating use*, when the d-pronoun serves to pick out a particular individual, including uses which have been traditionally characterized as deictic (i.e. pointing, or via a locative distinction), and uses which have been characterized as anaphoric (selection among multiple antecedents). But when the context includes only one salient individual and a personal pronoun is available, hence preferred, the use of the d-pronoun triggers the N-effect.

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