

Demonstratives as heads (in some languages)

Introduction: Despite significant cross-linguistic variation, demonstratives are usually analyzed as phrasal elements that occupy a specifier in the extended projection of the noun, often identified as SpecDP (Giusti 2015 a.o.). In this talk, I present data from original fieldwork on Kipsigis (Nilotic; Kenya), and I argue that: i) demonstratives should be analyzed as D heads, and not as specifiers, in this language, and ii) the proximal demonstrative is base-generated on a head lower than the medial and distal demonstrative, highlighting the non-uniform syntax of demonstratives, even within the same language. I then discuss implications of the analysis for the typology of demonstratives, showing that other languages that have demonstratives that are D heads (e.g. Mandarin; Jenks 2018) exhibit many similarities to Kipsigis. Demonstratives as heads: Kipsigis does not have a definite article, and bare nouns can usually be interpreted as either definite or indefinite, depending on the context (Kouneli 2019). What I call ‘bare’ nouns are morphologically complex, with the root being followed by at least a thematic suffix and a morpheme called secondary suffix (1). The latter has evolved from a specificity marker, but is no longer associated with any particular meaning and has properties of nominal markers. It is, however, in complementary distribution with demonstratives (2), which is why it is analyzed as a D head by Kouneli (2019) (this will be slightly revised in this talk). The DP is strictly noun-initial, with no element ever preceding the noun.

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| (1) là:k-wà- ft (là:kwé:t)
child-TH-SEC
‘a/the child’ | (2) là:k-wà:- nì
child-TH-DEM.PROX
‘this child’ |
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The language has three demonstratives, which indicate distance from the speaker: proximal, medial, and distal. These demonstratives all behave as affixes, as indicated by the following properties: i) they form a prosodic constituent with the noun, ii) they attach to the form of the noun that does not include the secondary suffix (2), which is otherwise not a well-formed word in the language, and iii) they trigger vowel lengthening of the thematic suffix (compare (1) to (2)); such lengthening regularly happens when a CV affix appears inside another affix, but never across word boundaries. Furthermore, the demonstrative morphemes can never scope over both conjuncts in a coordination (3), which is a property of bound determiners cross-linguistically (Simonenko 2014).

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| (3) ɲo:gi:k ak pe:le:tʃa:n
dogs and elephants-DEM.MED.PL
‘dogs and those elephants’, #those [dogs and elephants] | (4) ina:-ni
3SG-DEM.PROX
‘this one (over here)’ |
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Affixal demonstratives are rare cross-linguistically (Diessel 1999), but all the above properties receive a straightforward explanation if Kipsigis demonstratives spell out D heads (e.g. in theories where phonological wordhood corresponds to complex heads in the syntax; Bobaljik 2012 a.o.). An additional argument for the head status of demonstratives comes from their ability to co-occur with pronouns (4), which has been shown to be a property of demonstratives that occupy a D head (Jenks 2018).

The proximal demonstrative occupies a lower head: Despite the uniform behavior of demonstratives with respect to the properties described above, the proximal demonstrative differs from the medial/distal ones in its behavior with respect to vowel harmony. More specifically, the language has a system of dominant ATR harmony, where a [+ATR] vowel anywhere in the word causes all other vowels to become [+ATR] (Hall et al. 1974 a.o.). While the proximal demonstrative is always in the harmony domain of the noun, the medial and distal ones never harmonize. The language also has complex temporal demonstratives, where an affix attaches to a noun that has proximal demonstrative (which in this case does not have spatial deixis semantics and is used as a definite article). These demonstratives indicate when an individual was last relevant in discourse. These are also outside of the harmony domain of the noun, as shown by the mismatch in the value of ATR vowels in (5).

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| (5) là:k-wà:- nì-kíjè
child-TH-DEM.PROX-DEM.PST
‘that child from long ago’ | (6) là:gó:k-à:p Kíbê:t (sómòk)
children-POSS Kibeet three
‘Kibeet’s (three) children’ |
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This phonological difference with respect to harmony correlates with a syntactic difference in the possible size of possessives in the construction in (6). The possessee is followed by the possessive

clitic $-à:p$, which is followed by the possessor. Nothing can intervene between the possessee- $à:p$ complex and the possessor: any modifier must follow the possessor. As shown in (7), the possessive $-à:p$ can only attach to a bare noun or a noun + prox. dem. (in which case, it has the allomorph $-è:p$); the medial, distal and temporal demonstratives are ungrammatical, as is any bigger phrase.

- (7) a. $lɑ:gó:(k)-tʃù-è:p$ Kiplàngàt children-PROX.DEM.PL-POSS Kiplangát
'these children of Kiplangát'
- b. $*lɑ:gó:(k)-tʃù:n-è:p$ Kiplàngàt children-PROX.DEM.PL-POSS Kiplangát
'those children of Kiplangát'

Both the phonological and syntactic differences between proximal and medial/distal demonstratives point towards the former being in a lower domain (=closer to the noun) than the latter.

The analysis: I adopt the assumptions of Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993). I argue that all demonstratives in Kipsigis are heads, which explains the properties that they have in common. In order to explain their differences (=ATR harmony and behavior in possession), I argue that the Kipsigis DP has two D layers: a *d* layer (following Cinque's 2010 terminology) and a D layer, merged in this order. This is in line with work arguing for an articulated D layer (e.g. Roehrs 2009, Marchis & Alexiadou 2013). The proximal demonstrative (as well as the secondary suffix, see (1)) spell out *d*, while other demonstratives spell out D. I assume that the domain of vowel harmony for Kipsigis nouns is *dP*, with anything merged above it not harmonizing. I follow Fenger (2020) a.o. in assuming that a phonological word may have sub-domains. This means that the medial/distal demonstrative form a phonological word with the noun (e.g. they form a prosodic domain and cause lengthening of the previous affixes), but belong to different domains with respect to harmony. As for the possession facts, I argue that Poss always selects for *dP*, but not for DP. This is in line with Kouneli (2019), who argues that all modification in Kipsigis targets DPs (here *dPs* in light of the articulated structure). Head Movement (HM) of the noun to D accounts for a phrase like (7-a). The fact that the possessive and the demonstrative are adjacent in a complex head (after HM) also accounts for the allomorphy that we see ($-è:p$ vs. $-a:p$ in the general case), following work like Bobaljik (2012). I also assume that a medial/distal/temporal demonstrative D cannot select for Poss (this would result in POSS-DEM.MED/DIST combinations, which are unattested).

Discussion: The analysis highlights that demonstratives are not phrasal in all languages. Other languages which have been argued to have D heads are, for example, Thai (Jenks 2015) and Mandarin (Jenks 2018). Interestingly, these are also languages that lack definite articles, just like Kipsigis. In these languages, the demonstrative is sometimes used to express (anaphoric) definiteness, which is also an option in Kipsigis (data not shown here). It is therefore possible that languages with such systems represent an intermediate stage in the well-known grammaticalization path from demonstratives to articles: demonstratives in specifier position first become D heads before becoming articles. Another commonality between Mandarin and Kipsigis is the widespread use of high modifiers (in the sense of Cinque 2010) and the presence of a linker element (*de* in Mandarin, *ne* in Kipsigis) in nominal modification. Furthermore, Jenks (2018) argues that the demonstrative loses its spatial semantics in the context of high modifiers in Mandarin, which is also the case in a pattern of demonstrative spreading in Kipsigis described in Kouneli (2019). It is an open question whether these similarities follow from the presence of head demonstratives. Finally, Jenks & Konate (2022) argue that demonstratives in Mandarin have a silent index feature in their specifier, but are open to the possibility that this index is a DP adjunct. I show that Kipsigis supports this latter option, since SpecDP is occupied by other elements in the aforementioned pattern of demonstrative spreading.

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