

The role of demonstrative determiners in spatial conceptualization – pitting demonstrative pronouns against demonstrative adverbs

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Research on demonstratives has increased over several years but the focus has been mostly on demonstrative pronouns (DemPron), leaving demonstrative adverbs (DemAdv) relatively scant research attention. The studies that have included DemAdvs show that DemAdvs can convey more precise distance marking than DemProns (Meira & Guirardello-Damian 2018), and are used to conceptualize the referent more as a ground than as a figure (Laury 1996). This evidence suggests that there are differences between the functions of DemAdvs and DemProns and these have not yet been thoroughly investigated. The aim of this study is to pinpoint the differences between Estonian DemPron and DemAdv in NP constructions that can be interpreted as location (example below).

<i>Selle-s/seal</i>	<i>korvi-s</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>punane</i>
This-DEM.PRON.INE / there.DEM.ADV.LOC	basket-INE	be.PRS.3SG	red.NOM

õun
apple.NOM

Literal translation: 'In this/In there basket is a red apple' ('There is a red apple in the basket')

In Estonian, both demonstrative pronoun NP (DemPronNP) and demonstrative adverb NP (DemAdvNP) constructions are possible and common. Moreover, both constructions can be used to indicate location. However, DemAdvNP constructions are more strongly connected to the spatial interpretation of the referring noun than DemPronNP constructions (Taremaa et al. 2021). In addition, in spatial usage, the DemAdvs are more strongly connected to expressing relative distance than DemProns (Reile et al. 2019). Thus, we hypothesize that a noun modified by a DemAdv (e.g., *seal korvis* 'in there basket') is more likely to be interpreted as a location than when the noun is modified by a DemPron (e.g., *selles korvis* 'in this basket') even if spatial conceptualization is possible in both constructions.

To test our hypothesis, we conducted a web-based rating task with NPs in inessive case form. The participants were asked to rate on a scale of 0–100 whether the phrase in a sentence refers to a location. The nouns in the test sentences were modified either by a DemPron *selles* or DemAdv *seal* and in filler sentences by an adjective. Altogether, 270 sentences (90 test and 180 filler sentences) were shown to and rated by the participants (N=106) one by one. In addition to DemAdvNP or DemPronNP construction, the ratings were tested for the influence of two semantic properties of nouns – the size of the referent, which have been shown to affect the choice between distal and proximal DemProns (Rocca, Tylén & Wallentin 2019), and noun concreteness, a strong factor to distinguish between DemPron and DemAdv modifiers (Taremaa et al. 2021).

Preliminary results show that the demonstratives have no effect on the ratings – regardless of the demonstrative type (DemAdv or DemPron), the phrases were rated equally high to be referring to a location. However, the size and concreteness of the referent have a statistically significant effect: i) small referents got lower ratings than large referents, and ii) more concrete referents got higher ratings than less concrete ones. These results confound with previous studies that show the importance of referents' size on demonstrative choice and indicate that the demonstrative modifier is only one of the possible parameters that contribute to location conceptualization.

References

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