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Special Session
Fieldwork Methodology

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Foreword

This monograph contains a number of the talks given at the 41st Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, held in Berkeley, California, February 7-8, 2015. The conference included a General Session and the Special Session *Fieldwork Methodology*. The 41st Annual Meeting was planned and run by the second-year graduate students of the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley: Kenny Baclawski, Anna Jurgensen, Spencer Lamoureux, Hannah Sande, and Alison Zerbe.

The original submissions of the papers in this volume were reviewed for style by Anna Jurgensen and Hannah Sande. Resubmitted papers were edited as necessary by Anna Jurgensen and Kenny Baclawski, and then compiled into the final monograph by Anna Jurgensen. The final monograph was reviewed by Spencer Lamoureux. The endeavor was supported by Alison Zerbe's management of the Berkeley Linguistic Society's funds for publications.

The BLS 41 Executive Committee
July 2015

Proximal Demonstratives in Predicate NPs

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Discussions of demonstratives have focused almost exclusively on examples in which demonstrative NPs are used to refer to specific entities. In this paper, however, we investigate a use of English demonstrative NPs in which the demonstrative NP receives a property-denoting interpretation and not a referential one, as shown in the naturally-occurring examples in (1):

- (1) a. Megan bought me the scariest thing alive!! It's this hamster and it makes noise and its voice activated and its cheeks light up and it moves around and follows commands!!!! [corpus]
- b. Look, the dealers are the popular kids, but they're not normal popular. They're these crunchy granola dudes that have convinced everyone that they're cool. [corpus]
- c. She [Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan] said "no" each time to a series of questions from Congress members that went something like: Have you ever hunted? Does anybody in your family hunt? Do any of your friends hunt? "It was pretty pathetic, really," Kagan joked. "I'm this Jewish girl from New York City, and this is really not what we did on the weekends." [corpus]

In (1a)-(1c), the demonstrative NPs are not used by the speaker to refer to any particular entities; rather, they are being used to predicate a property of the referent. We argue that in this use the demonstrative NP classifies the referent with respect to a discourse-new property and, moreover, that this use of the demonstrative indicates that the speaker is conveying additional information about the referent beyond mere category membership. We will first set out the features of this use, showing how it is distinct from other uses of demonstratives, and then turn to review the data that supports our analysis.

In the examples in (1), the speaker is attributing the properties of 'being-a-hamster', 'being-crunchy-granola-dudes...', and 'being-a-nice-Jewish-girl-from-NYC' to the respective referents and is not referring to any particular individuals with the demonstrative NPs. The property-denoting interpretation is, however, restricted only to the proximal demonstrative form and the distal form is disallowed on the intended interpretation, as shown in (2):

- (2) a. Griselda is the wife of one of Kevin's law school classmates and she is awesome. She's {#that/this} amazing little spitfire, full of so much life and energy... [corpus]
- b. I was on tour with the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and they brought along a vegan chef. Everyone thinks they're {#those/these} insane party animals. But after the show, we'd hang out, meditate a little and then have really great vegan food together. [corpus]

* This paper is an expanded and revised version of our previous work on this topic (Doran & Ward 2013, 2014). We are grateful to the audiences at LSA as well as at BLS for many useful comments and suggestions. A special note of thanks goes to Larry Horn, Craig Roberts, Alex Djalali, Line Mikkelsen, Chris Potts, and Jon Stevens. All errors remain our own.

Given that these proximal demonstrative NPs receive a property-denoting interpretation, the predicative use is distinct from other well-known uses of demonstratives. For example, consider the deictic use, the identificational use, and the degree modifier use of the demonstratives in (3)-(5):

- (3) This hamster right here is the scariest thing alive.
- (4) The dealers are these guys pictured here in the photograph.
- (5) The hamster was this big.

In (3), the demonstrative is used by the speaker to refer to an entity in the immediate perceptual surroundings and it is possibly accompanied by an ostensive gesture. In (4), the demonstrative appears in post-verbal position, but it is nevertheless used referentially, with the speaker referring to the relevant individuals pointed out in the photograph. In (5), the demonstrative likewise appears in predicate position, but here it is used to specify a degree or an amount of a property that is in turn being predicated of the referent, i.e. the demonstrative is used to specify how big the relevant hamster was. Thus, each of these uses (along with other uses) are distinct from the property-denoting interpretation that we are concerned with here. Furthermore, note that in each of (3)-(5), the distal demonstrative form would be felicitous given an appropriate context, which is not the case for the property-denoting use, as was shown in (2). Similarly, the proximal demonstratives in (3)-(5) can receive a contrastive pitch accent when the speaker is distinguishing the referent from among a set of contrasting values; but such emphasis is not allowed on the property-denoting interpretations given in (1).

The property-denoting use of the proximal demonstrative is also distinct from the so-called ‘indefinite *this*’ interpretation, which is similarly restricted only to the proximal form (Prince 1981, Wald 1981, Maclaran 1980, 1982). With the indefinite-*this* use, the speaker uses the demonstrative to introduce a hearer-new, topical entity into the discourse, as shown in (6):

- (6) I saw this scary hamster at the pet store.

The demonstrative here is used referentially, but it is distinct from other referential uses of the demonstrative in that the referent is presumed by the speaker to be unfamiliar to the hearer. While the referential use of indefinite-*this* use is distinct from the predicative proximal demonstrative, these uses do share the feature of being restricted to informal/colloquial contexts.

- (7) a. [CNN] Yesterday, police identified a suspect in the Rolling Meadows murder-for-hire case, 43-year-old Jeremy Griffin. He’s {#this/an} executive at Motorola.
- b. Hey, do you know Jeremy Griffin? He’s {this/an} executive at Motorola.

In the context of a news report, the property-denoting use of the demonstrative in (7a) is infelicitous; whereas in the informal context of (7b), such use is felicitous.

More generally, the property-denoting use of proximal demonstratives shares with the indefinite-*this* use the feature of being truth-conditionally equivalent to the use of the corresponding indefinite NP. However, in neither instance is the speaker’s choice of the demonstrative pragmatically equivalent to use of the corresponding indefinite NP.

- (8) a. Okay, so now everyone thinks I'm this great big lezzzer, and all my lesbian mates think I'm one of the sisterhood now. [corpus]
 b. Okay, so now everyone thinks I'm a great big lezzzer...

In (8a), the truth-conditional contribution of the demonstrative NP does not differ from the truth-conditional contribution made by the indefinite NP in (8b). In general, whenever the predicative use of a proximal demonstrative NP is felicitous, the corresponding indefinite NP is also felicitous. It follows that the speaker's use of the demonstrative conveys additional pragmatic information.

Previous accounts of the pragmatic contribution conveyed by non-deictic uses of demonstratives have appealed to the notion of SPEAKER AFFECT (Lakoff 1974, Bowdle & Ward 1995, Wolter 2006, Davis & Potts 2010, Potts & Schwarz 2010, Acton & Potts 2014). According to this notion, certain uses of demonstratives have been shown to convey "complex multidimensional social meanings involving exclamation" or "presumptions about shared attitudes and perspectives" (Acton & Potts 2014:3). Consider example (9) in which the speaker presumes a shared attitude – specifically one of contempt – with his addressee towards the referent:

- (9) That asshole Cheney is trying to fuck over the Obamas. [corpus]

In analyzing our corpus of naturally-occurring data, we find that all predicative uses of proximal demonstrative NPs involve predicates that either license an exclamative interpretation or denote properties associated with social/cultural stereotypes.

However the notion of speaker affect is characterized, the felicitous use of predicative proximal demonstratives does not require that the speaker be expressing an emotional or evaluation disposition – either positively or negatively valenced (Doran & Ward 2013) – towards the referent or towards things of the relevant kind. As evidence, consider example (10), in which the predicative demonstrative NP is felicitous even in the absence of a positive or negative attitude expressed by the speaker:

- (10) A: What's your hotel room like?
 B: I don't know what to think about it. It's this square-shaped room with beige carpeting.
 [*gratia* Jon Stevens, p.c.]

In (10), the speaker explicitly denies having either a positive or negative attitude towards the property, and instead asserts his uncertainty towards the room in question. Thus, the relevant notion of speaker affect is not that of expressing a particular evaluative attitude; rather it appears to be limited to interpretations involving exclamative and stereotypical associations.

In addition to considerations of speaker affect, there are further pragmatic conditions that license the predicative use of a proximal demonstrative NP. We claim that the following conditions must be met for the predicative proximal demonstrative to be felicitous:

Conditions for felicitous use of predicative proximal demonstratives:

- (i) there must be a salient open proposition (OP) in discourse of the form “*r* is an *x*” whose instantiated variable classifies the referent; and
- (ii) the OP must be instantiated with a discourse-new property; and
- (iii) the kind associated with this property must be presumed to be familiar to the hearer; and either:
- (iv) (a) the classification of the referent must be sufficient to convey additional information beyond mere category membership; or
(b) the classification conveys additional information about the speaker’s attitude towards the referent through the inclusion of expressive modifiers.

Under this analysis, the speaker conveys additional information about the referent, either through exclamative interpretations or through assumed mutual knowledge about the kind in question. We will take up each aspect of this analysis in turn.

First, the felicitous use of a predicative demonstrative NP requires a salient open proposition (OP) of the form “*r* is an *x*”, where *r* is the referent and *x* is the category that classifies the referent, as shown in (11):

- (11) A: Who’s Joan? (What does Joan do?, What’s Joan like?, etc.)
B: She’s this lawyer.

Here, B’s response instantiates the variable of the OP by classifying the referent, Joan, as being a member of the category of lawyers. In asking speaker B to provide a category that classifies the referent, Speaker A evokes the appropriate OP. When speaker A’s question evokes a different OP – one in which the classification of the referent is not at issue – the proximal demonstrative is infelicitous:

- (12) A: Who’s a lawyer?
B: Joan’s #this lawyer. [cp. Joan’s a lawyer.]

In (12), speaker A’s question does not evoke the appropriate OP: rather than asking speaker B to provide a category that classifies the referent, speaker A evokes a different OP. Here, the speaker is asking for a member of the category and the relevant OP is instantiated by the referent, rather than the category. Thus, the use of the proximal demonstrative is infelicitous in (12) because the discourse does not have a salient OP of the appropriate form.

Second, in addition to instantiating an appropriate OP, the property that classifies the referent must be discourse-new, in the sense of Prince 1992. When the relevant property has been previously evoked, infelicity results, as shown in (13a):

- (13) a. A: My cousin Bob is coming over today. He’s this fashion model.
B: What a coincidence! Have you met my cousin Sam? He’s #this fashion model, too.

- b. A: My cousin Bob is coming over today. He's this fashion model.
 B: Have you met my cousin Sam? He's a fashion model, too.
- c. A: My cousin Bob is coming over today. He's this fashion model.
 B: Have you met my cousin Sam? He's this interior designer.

In (13a), speaker B's use of the demonstrative is infelicitous because the property of 'being-a-fashion-model' has already been evoked by speaker A. The discourse-old property can of course be repeated by speaker B, as in (13b), but only if the indefinite is used rather than the demonstrative. Furthermore, the infelicity of the demonstrative in (13a) must be due to the relevant property being discourse-old, rather than speaker A's previous use of the demonstrative. In (13c), speaker B can felicitously use the proximal demonstrative even after speaker A's previous use of the same construction, provided that the property speaker B predicates of the referent is discourse-new in her utterance. Thus, (13c) shows that the issue with speaker B's use of the demonstrative in (13a) is not that speaker A has already used the proximal demonstrative, but that the relevant property in B's utterance needs to be discourse-new.

There is, however, one kind of exception to the generalization that a discourse-new property is required. In cases in which the property has been previously evoked, the proximal demonstrative can nonetheless be felicitous, provided that it is interpretable as a continued reference to the evoked property of the same individual.

- (14) A: My cousin Bob is cooking dinner tonight. He's this gourmet chef.
 B: Well, if he's this gourmet chef, then we will be eating well tonight!

In (14), speaker B's use of the demonstrative is felicitous in her reply because she can be interpreted as continuing to attribute the property evoked by A – 'being a gourmet chef' – to Bob. In this sense, the property in question retains its discourse-new status.

Third, the property that instantiates the variable of the OP must also be (presumed to be) hearer-old (in the sense of Prince 1992). In the felicitous use of predicative proximal demonstrative NPs, the speaker assumes that the hearer is familiar with the relevant category and, moreover, assumes that the hearer is familiar with what is typical or expected for members of the category. In (15), below, the demonstrative is infelicitous without the assumption that the kind in question is familiar to both speaker and hearer.

- (15) There's a rare bird hanging out in the Smith's backyard. It's #this piping plover.

The kind 'piping plover' is not, for us at least, sufficiently familiar to license the demonstrative here. While it may be known that the referent is a kind of bird, what the members of this kind are typically like is not sufficiently familiar for the demonstrative to be felicitous.

The final condition for the felicitous use of predicative proximal demonstrative NPs is that the speaker must provide additional information about the referent in one of two ways. The first way is for the speaker's classification of the referent to provide additional information with respect to stereotypes that are assumed to be familiar, thus licensing additional inferences about

the referent. The second way in which the final condition can be satisfied is for the speaker's classification of the referent to include a modifier that expresses an evaluative attitude. We take up these two ways in turn.

First, the classification of the referent with respect to familiar kinds can serve to convey additional information about the referent in virtue of familiar stereotypes about the relevant category and about what is typical for its members. Consider (16):

- (16) a. Everyone thinks I'm this New Yorker.
b. Everyone thinks I'm #this South Dakotan.

In (16a), membership in the category 'New Yorkers' is sufficient to convey additional information about the referent (the speaker) because the kind is associated with various cultural stereotypes about what people from New York are like. Thus, classifying someone as a New Yorker conveys information beyond the mere fact that the person is from New York. In contrast, in (16b), the category 'South Dakotans', for us at least, does not convey any further information about the referent; classifying someone as a South Dakotan implies nothing more than the fact that the person is from South Dakota, thereby rendering the demonstrative in (16b) infelicitous.

The condition that the speaker conveys additional extra-classificatory information about the referent via stereotypes can be satisfied in various ways. In example (16a), it is satisfied by the stereotypes that attach to being from a certain geographical area. Stereotypes, such as this one, arise from the conventional associations attached to social and cultural categories, as shown further in (17):

- (17) I only met her a few nights ago at a birthday bash, but holy fuck she is perfect. She's this hippy (sic), Buddhist, zen type. [corpus]

Here, the social identities of 'hippie', 'Buddhist', and 'zen-type' convey to the hearer information about the referent over and above simple membership in the category. That is, the hearer can infer more about the referent than simply the fact that she is a Buddhist.

In addition to social kinds, certain natural kinds can also have stereotypical associations regarding what the members are typically like.

- (18) a. A: John just got a new pet. Do you know what it is?
B: It's this ferret.
b. A: John just got a new pet. Do you know what it is?
B: It's #this dog.
c. A: John just got a new pet. Do you know what it is?
B: It's this Chihuahua.

In (18a), the kind 'ferret' provides additional information about the referent in that members of the category are assumed to be sufficiently alike to make generalizations about members of the category (e.g. they are disgusting pets). The speaker's use of the demonstrative is thus felicitous here as the classification provides the hearer with information beyond mere membership in the

kind. In contrast, in (18b), the kind ‘dog’ is too heterogeneous to provide any extra-classificatory information about the referent; there are simply too many different breeds of dogs for (18b) to be conveying any additional relevant information. In (18c), however, where the pet is classified as a specific breed, the demonstrative is felicitous. Members of the kind ‘Chihuahua’ are assumed to be sufficiently alike and thus this classification does suffice to convey additional information about the referent, e.g. its mannerisms, size, and general behavior.

The second way in which the final condition can be satisfied is for the speaker’s classification of the referent to include an expressive modifier. While conventionally associated stereotypes suffice to convey additional information about the referent that licenses the felicitous use of the proximal demonstrative, reference to kinds that do not in and of themselves have any stereotypical associations are also possible. Such kinds are felicitous when the speaker includes a modifier that expresses an evaluative attitude towards the referent through its classification. Consider, for example, artifact kinds. These kinds are typically infelicitous with the proximal demonstrative as they do not, on their own, provide a basis for extra-classificatory information. Consider (19):

- (19) a. A: I heard your sister gave you something strange for your birthday. What was it?
B: It’s #this pencil.
b. A: I heard your sister gave you something strange for your birthday. What was it?
B: It’s this {amazing/fucking/stupid/awesome/wicked} pencil!

Kinds such as ‘pencil’ typically do not allow for the proximal demonstrative, as in (19a), because such a simple classification for an artifact does not license any further inferences; knowing that an object is a pencil does not put one in a position to know any additional information about the entity given the lack of conventional stereotypes about pencils. However, the inclusion of any of the affect-laden modifiers illustrated in (19b) allows the proximal demonstrative to be used felicitously.¹

The additional information conveyed, either via conventional stereotypes or the inclusion of expressive modifiers, needs only to provide information about the referent beyond mere category membership; it does not need to make the referent uniquely identifiable. In example (20), the proximal demonstrative is felicitous, but the relevant cultural stereotypes do not in any way put the speaker in a position to distinguish the referent from other members of the relevant categories.

- (20) The inspector himself was excellent. We used him for our current house, four years ago. He’s this short guy with very little hair and a pronounced working-class English accent. It was like having Phil Collins inspect your house. [corpus]

The demonstrative here is felicitous because the kind ‘short guy with very little hair and a pronounced working-class English accent’ is rich with associations and thus the speaker is able to convey much more than simple kind membership with the classification provided. However,

¹ While the example cited in (19b) has the modifier pronominally, post-nominal modifiers are also possible, as in (1b) above, and subsequent discourse can provide additional information too, as in (1a) above.

as the second sentence indicates, the same classification is equally true of Phil Collins and so the description contained within the demonstrative does not make the referent uniquely identifiable.

The preceding examples have shown how the conditions enumerated above must be satisfied in order for a proximal demonstrative NP to be felicitous on the property-denoting interpretation. Our analysis has shown further that the expression of an evaluative attitude by the speaker may be present in many cases, but it is not the only way in which this use of the demonstrative is felicitous. For example, in (16a), the speaker may have either a positive or negative attitude towards New Yorkers, but the demonstrative is not felicitous here because the speaker is expressing an attitude. Rather, it is felicitous because of the extra-classificatory information provided by the stereotypes associated with the kind ‘New Yorker’. Properties with conventional associations, such as social categories and cultural stereotypes, will generally be felicitous with the demonstrative and may additionally convey the speaker’s attitude about the kind in question. But on the explanation offered here, speaker affect is the result of – but not necessarily a condition of – felicitous use.

Finally, note that the predicative use of proximal demonstratives may be accompanied by minimizers, e.g. *only, simply, just*, as evidenced in (21):

- (21) a. Well, basically, I’m just this small town girl who lives in [a] not so perfect world.
[corpus]
b. He was this muscular, tough looking kid, you would imagine him being a bully when he’s only this sweet little boy. [corpus]

In these examples, the speaker is treating the relevant property as a value on a partially-ordered set (Hirschberg 1985) and denies that higher values obtain. So, in (21a), the speaker is asserting that, for the purposes of self-classification, she’s only a small town girl – and denies the applicability of higher values with respect to the relevant property under discussion; that is, she’s not well-traveled, complicated, sophisticated, urbane, etc. And in (21b), which features two tokens of the proximal demonstrative, we see that the first instance serves to classify the referent based on shared stereotypes, while the occurrence of the minimizer *only* before the second instance of the demonstrative denies higher values on the relevant partially-ordered set.

Further, we note that certain predicates that represent high values on a contextually salient partially-ordered set become infelicitous in the presence of a minimizer, as in (22):

- (22) a. It’s {just/simply/only} #this {amazing/awesome} pencil.
b. He’s {just/simply/only} #this {rocket scientist/genius/Nobel Prize recipient}.

In (22a), the presence of the minimizer renders the utterance infelicitous given the exclamative interpretation of the adjectives *amazing* and *awesome*. With the pencil in question being assigned a high value on a contextually-relevant scale, the presence of the minimizer, whose function is to deny higher values, is infelicitous. Similarly, in (22b), we see that predicates which themselves correspond to high values on a contextually-relevant scale are infelicitous in the presence of minimizers.

More interestingly, we see that some predicates which, by themselves, would be infelicitous with the proximal demonstrative are nonetheless felicitous with a minimizer.

- (23) a. If I see my child start to go very quickly for a dog, I say ‘hold on’. [She might then say:] “It’s #(just) this dog.” [To which I would respond:] “Yeah, but we don’t know anything about that dog right there for a second.” [corpus]
- b. “I think a lot of people in the artistic community have this misconception that it’s #(just) this pen and ink,” Csernak said. “I’m trying to reverse the impression of comics.” [corpus]

In (23a), use of the minimizer *just* evokes a partially-ordered set of alternatives such that more specific values (i.e. Chihuahua, Poodle, etc.) are asserted not to hold. That is, the speaker is conveying that no further classification of the dog in question is relevant. Without the minimizer, such an interpretation is unavailable and infelicity results (cf. 18b). Similarly, in (23b), the minimizer evokes a set of alternatives that people in the artistic community fail to appreciate; thus, the speaker is rejecting the implication that pens and ink are limited to their use as writing implements.

In this paper, we’ve argued that the predicative use of proximal demonstrative NPs is distinct from other well-known uses of the proximal form, in that the demonstrative NP receives a property-denoting interpretation and not a referential one. Furthermore, we’ve shown that the conditions for this use require that the speaker provide a discourse-new classification of the referent that satisfies an OP of the form “*r* is an *x*” and, moreover, that the classification of the referent that satisfies the OP must be sufficient to convey additional information about the referent beyond simple category membership. We have surveyed different ways in which these conditions can be satisfied, e.g. by categories that are conventionally associated with stereotypical features and by the inclusion of modifiers that express the speaker’s attitude towards the referent. The features of this use that we have identified indicate that the speaker’s use of a proximal demonstrative with a property-denoting interpretation convey additional pragmatic information about the referent that would not be conveyed by corresponding use of an indefinite NP.

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