

There is this guy who is obsessed with specificity

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1 Introduction

English and German have non-canonical uses of demonstratives (Lyons 1999, Ionin 2006, von Heusinger 2011, Deichsel 2015 and references therein), shown in (1) and (2) respectively.

- (1) There is this man who lives upstairs from me who is driving me mad because he jumps rope at 2 a.m. every night. (Maclaran 1982: 85)
- (2) Und da war dieser Bauer aus Ostermiething, der schluckte alle Pillen, die er bekommen und die er von anderen einhandeln konnte.
'And there was this farmer from Ostermiething, who swallowed every pill he could get and he could catch from other people.' (Deichsel 2015: 2)

Ionin argues (2006) that the demonstrative in (1) behaves similarly to an indefinite noun phrase, whereby it has a specific reference. According to Lyons (1999), the referential use of the demonstrative is not very common cross-linguistically, see also Ionin (2006).

A further non-canonical use of the distal demonstrative is the so-called *recognitional* or *anamnestic* use (Himmelman 1996, 1997). Von Heusinger, Chiriacescu & Deichsel (2010) and von Heusinger (2011) argue that the recognitional use of the German demonstrative *dies-* should be distinguished from its indefinite one: the recognitional demonstrative alternates with the definite article but not the indefinite one, (3), as the referent is known to the hearer although not prementioned and not present at the current discourse. By contrast, the indefinite demonstrative alternates with the indefinite article, (4), as the referent is not only not prementioned and physically absent, but also new to the hearer.

- (3) Was ist eigentlich mit diesem/ dem/ *einem Telefon passiert, das immer in deinem Zimmer war?
'What has actually happened to this/ the/ *a phone which used to be in your room?'
- (4) Gestern kam ich in eine Bar und da war dieser/ *der Fremde/ ein Fremder, der mich die ganze Zeit anstarrte.
'Yesterday I walked into a bar and there was this/ a/ *the stranger who stared at me all the time.'
(von Heusinger et al. 2010, ex. (10) and (13))

Recognitional demonstratives point to shared knowledge between the hearer and the speaker (Himmelman 1996). In this sense, they are unlike specific indefinites, which are known to the speaker but are new to the hearer. According to Himmelman (1997), the recognitional use of the demonstrative includes an emotive component, which, as Wolter (2006) signals, cannot be used if the referent is not salient and familiar in the context. As Wolter further points out, semantically unique descriptions seem to be acceptable only with this emotive reading, e.g. *That John Smith is a great guy!*

As far as I know, such usages have not been discussed for Greek, to which I turn in section 2.

2 Greek demonstratives

In Greek, unlike in English, demonstratives embed DPs. In other words, noun phrases introduced by *this* are formally definite:

- (5) afto to vivlio
this the book

This being the case, perhaps one would not expect to find indefinite uses of the Greek demonstrative, since it co-occurs with a definite noun phrase. Matters are different with respect to the recognitional use though, which should be possible. Indeed, this is possible in Hungarian, another language in which demonstratives embed DPs. This is discussed at length in Molnár (2010), where the example in (6) comes from:

- (6) te itt kínlódsz ezzel a pár garasoddal, [...]
you here torment.2SG these.com the couple pennies.POSS2SG.COM
'You torment yourself about your couple of pennies.'

Molnár further notes that the recognitional use is often strengthened by the presence of attributes.

Contexts rendering the recognitional and emotive use of the demonstrative can be constructed for Greek as well:

- (7) Aftos o Janis ine poli kalo pedi *emotive*
This the John is very good child
'This John is a great guy.'

As in English, (7) cannot be uttered if there is no emotional solidarity among the discourse participants (Lakoff 1974).

Moreover, like its recognitional counterparts in English, German and Hungarian, the demonstrative cannot alternate with an indefinite noun phrase:

- (8) Ti epathe afto to telefono/to telefono/*ena telefono pu itan sto domatio su?
what happened this the phone/the phone/a phone that was in room yours
'What happened to this phone that was in your room?'

In (9), while the demonstrative may be used, it does not have the same interpretation as the indefinite noun phrase; note that the definite noun phrase can also be used if further information is supplied, and the demonstrative sounds better if the modifier relative clause is included:

- (9) eki pu kathomun irthe enas tipos/aftos o tipos/o tipos pu su elega
there that sitting came a guy/this the guy/the guy that you telling about
'There where I was sitting came a guy/this guy/the guy I was telling you about.'

In case the indefinite is used, there was no previous mentioning of the person who came. However, when the demonstrative is used, where somehow both the speaker and the hearer are aware of the referent, he/she has already been introduced in the discourse.

We can thus conclude that Greek allows recognitional uses of the demonstrative, which are related to familiarity. This does not come as a surprise. As mentioned, in Greek demonstratives embed definite DPs. The Dem + DP combination is a doubling structure, according to

Author note

For Klaus; thank you for your friendship and for always asking questions about Greek specific indefinites!

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