Maria Averintseva-Klisch (Tübingen) **/ Manfred Consten** (Jena[1])
Can Demonstratives be Discourse Topics?
Evidence from German Right Dislocation

[2007, Talk at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft Annual Meeting, Siegen]

We argue for an interrelation of different functions of demonstratives in the form of a hierarchy of features allowing for demonstrativity (cf. Averintseva-Klisch/Consten forthc.). These features are proximity (subsuming spatial and cognitive proximity) and discourse topicality (see 1.3). We test the impact of emotive marking as an instance of cognitive proximity on demonstrativity. For this purpose, we consider a special construction in German called right dislocation, which explicitly marks the discourse topic, and thus suits well to investigate the interplay between topicality and cognitive proximity. We will present a pilot questionnaire study for this point.

1. Demonstratives

1.1 Lexical Forms

(1) a. strong demonstratives:
dieser (N) / diese (N) / dies(es) (N) vs. *jener (N) / jene (N) / jenes (N) 'this (one)* vs. *that (one)'*
    b. weak demonstratives:
der / die / das 'this one'

In our talk, we are dealing with lexical NPs (*dies-* + N), thus with strong demonstratives only. NPs with *jen-* + N are not accounted for, since they are quite rare in modern German, at least they are not really used contrasting with *dies-* (Himmelmann 1997: 49f).

1.2 Discourse Functions of Demonstrativity

1.2.1 Reference to Non-topics

It has been claimed that demonstrative NPs are used anaphorically basically to refer to non-discourse topics (Zifonun e.a. 1997, Consten/Schwarz-Friesel 2007, Bosch/Katz/Umbach 2007: "non-subjects").

(2) A propos Müntefering$_i$, er$_i$ war doch auch so, als er$_i$ noch SPD-Chef war.
    Er$_i$ wollte seinen$_i$ Vertrauten$_k$ zu seinem$_i$ Stellvertreter machen. <u>Dieser Mann$_k$</u> / <u>Dieser$_k$</u> bekam aber keine Mehrheit.

Talking about Müntefering$_i$, he$_i$ was also like this when he$_i$ was still the SPD leader. He$_i$ intended to make his$_i$ confidant$_k$ his$_i$ deputy. However, <u>this man$_k$</u> / <u>this one$_k$</u> did not obtain the majority of votes.

Discourse Topic (DT): we understand DT here as the discourse referent that is most stably activated in the mental representation of each discourse segment; as such, DT is the default goal of coherence relations.

1.2.2 Emotive Marking as an Instance of Cognitive Proximity[2]

In this case, the demonstrative use indicates the speaker's emotional involvement with his topic, for example in order to give a negative evaluation of the referent.

(3) Unser \Freund\ alpa$_i$ ist ein ganz widerlicher Kerl, Bah! Möge ihn$_i$ der Blitz beim Scheißen treffen.[...] Soviel Geld kann der$_i$ im ganzen Leben nicht verdienen, wie er$_i$ als Entschädigung zu zahlen hat, <u>dieser Blödmann$_i$</u>. Statt etwas ordentliches auf die Beine zu stellen, müllt er$_i$ die Postfächer zu wie eine Horde Tauben ein frisch gewaschenes Auto. <u>Dieser Dreckskerl$_i$</u>. Hoffentlich faulen ihm$_i$ seine Flossen ab, damit er$_i$ so eine blöde Idee nicht noch einmal in die Tat umsetzen kann.

<div align="right">(similar Internet-chat Beepworld.de, 4.4.2006.
Speaker complains about someone who flooded the chat participants with spam)</div>

Our 'friend' Alpa$_i$ is a most disgusting guy, uuh! May the lightning struck him$_i$ when (he's) crapping. […] He$_i$ (Ger.: weak dem. pronoun) won't earn as much money in (his) whole life as he$_i$ has to pay for compensation, <u>this dumbass$_i$</u>. Instead of getting something useful going, he$_i$ spams the mailboxes like a horde of pigeons [pollutes] a newly-washed car. <u>This louse$_i$</u>. Hopefully his$_i$ arms will rot off so he won't again put such a silly idea into action.

1.3. Hierarchy

As a result, the non-discourse topic constraint can be overridden by 'cognitive proximity'.

(4)   Hierarchy of features allowing for demonstrativity (Averintseva-Klisch/Consten forthc.):

> **physical proximity** (deixis: in space, anaphora: in text) **< Non-DT-ity < cognitive proximity**

This interplay of topicality and cognitive proximity is tested in considering the use of demonstratives in the German Right-Dislocation construction (RD).

2. German Right Dislocation and its Discourse Function

2.1 Definition

Right Dislocation: (RD): Construction consisting of a clause-internal pro-form and a coreferent NP at the right periphery that serves to mark the discourse topic (for the following segment) (cf. Averintseva-Klisch 2006, 2007).[3]

(5) Den Tag$_i$, den$_i$ vergess' ich nicht, der$_i$ war viel zu schön, <u>der Tag$_i$</u>. (Altmann 1981:129)

That day$_i$, I will never forget it$_i$, it$_i$ was simply too wonderful, <u>the day$_i$</u>.

---

[2] The term 'cognitive proximity' is not limited to emotive marking but covers proximity with respect to epistemic and temporal levels as well (cf. Averintseva-Klisch/Consten forthc.).
[3] RDs are to be distinguished from afterthoughts which serve as a local repair of a potentially unclear (pro)nominal reference as in (a):
(a) (*context*: Peter and Karl have also already returned from their holidays.)
    Hast Du ihn$_i$ schon gesehen, (ich meine,) <u>den Karl$_i$</u>?
    Have you already seen him$_i$, (I mean,) <u>Karl$_i$</u>?

2.2 Marking of a New DT

RD establishes its referent as the discourse topic of the beginning discourse segment.

(6) Wer weiß, wie beschwerlich der Heimweg für ihn$_k$ und den Jungen geworden wäre, wenn ihnen das Glück nicht den Karpfen Cyprinus$_i$ zur Hilfe geschickt hätte! Ahnungslos kam er$_i$ dahergeschwommen, <u>der Karpfen Cyprinus$_i$</u>. Er$_i$ war schon ein alter Herr, hatte Moos auf dem Rücken und liebte es, während des Schwimmens stillvergnügt vor sich$_i$ hin zu blubbern.

<div align="right">(O. Preussler, Der kleine Wassermann)</div>

Who knows, how hard the way home would have been for him$_k$ and the boy, if the fortune haven't sent the carp Cyprinus$_i$ to help them. He$_i$ came swimming along suspecting nothing, <u>the carp Cyprinus$_i$</u>. He$_i$ was an elderly gentleman with moss on his back and (he$_i$) loved joyful bubbling along while swimming.

2.3 Marking of an Ongoing DT

RD can also confirm the respective referent as the ongoing discourse topic, especially when it is unclear whether the speaker intends to keep the same DT, e.g. after a change of point of view within the narration, like in (7), or when RD additionally conveys emotive content like in (3) above.

(7) „Der Taifun$_i$!" rief Lukas dem Kapitän zu. „Da ist er$_i$!" Ja, da war er$_i$, <u>der Taifun$_i$</u>. Ein hellblauer Blitz fuhr zischend vom Himmel nieder [...]

<div align="right">(M. Ende, Jim Knopf und die Wilde 13)</div>

"The typhoon$_i$!" shouted Lukas to the captain. "Here it$_i$ is!" Yes, it$_i$ was there, <u>the typhoon$_i$.</u> A light blue lightning flashed up from the sky […]"

Thus, RD-constructions are good material for analyzing the interdependency of discourse topicality and demonstrative reference.

3. Demonstrative RD-NPs

3.1 Status of the Referent of the NP as New or Old Discourse Topic

The use of demonstratives as right-dislocated constituents should be restricted to NPs introducing a new DT (as discussed in 2.2.), cf.:

(8) [Der Atem der Menschen]$_i$ liegt in der Luft und hinterlässt einen merkwürdigen Schauder auf meinem Rücken. Er$_i$ ist weder kalt, noch lässt er$_i$ mich diese Angst spüren, die mich sonst zusammenfahren lässt. Und da ist er$_k$, <u>dieser Blick$_k$</u>. Ausdruckslos scheint er$_k$ in die Leere zu schweifen. Es ist wie das Schwarz und das Weiß in einem Bild, als wenn er$_k$ aus der großen Menge zu erkennen ist, ohne das[s] man wirklich lange suchen muss. [...]
(Web-Stories - Momentaufnahmen von Marco Frohberger www.webstories.cc/stories/story.php?p_id=3799)

The people's breath$_i$ is in the air and $\emptyset_i$ leaves a strange shudder on my back. It$_i$ is not cold, and it$_i$ doesn't make me feel fear […] either. And there it$_k$ is, <u>this glance$_k$</u>. It$_k$ seems to wander deadpanly into space. It is like the black and the white in a picture, as if it$_k$ stands out from the crowd and you do not have to search (for it$_k$). […] (the rest of the paragraph is about the glance-referent)

In contrast, demonstrative DT-maintenance is ruled out according to the general Non-DT-bias (as discussed in 1.2.1.), cf.:

(9)   „Der Taifun$_i$!" rief Lukas dem Kapitän zu. „Da ist er$_i$!" Ja, da war er$_i$, ?<u>dieser Taifun$_i$</u>.
    "The typhoon$_i$!" shouted Lukas to the captain. "Here it$_i$ is!" Yes, it$_i$ was there, <u>this typhoon$_i$</u>

According to our claim in 1.3, this constraint can be overridden by cognitive proximity, cf.:

(10) „Der Taifun$_i$!" rief L. dem Kapitän zu. „Da ist er$_i$!" Ja, da war er, <u>dieser blöde Taifun$_i$</u>.
    "The typhoon$_i$!" shouted Lukas to the captain. "Here it$_i$ is!" Yes, it$_i$ was there, <u>this damned typhoon$_i$</u>

This claim is tested in our questionnaire study (3.4).

3.2 Emotive Marking

Demonstrative reference to established DTs should be possible in cases of emotive marking, i.e. if the RD-NP provides an additional, more specific description of the speaker's emotive attitude towards the referent (in our questionnaire items, this is a pejorative evaluation).
"Strong emotive marking": the evaluation is provided by the lexical meaning of the head noun of the RD-NP (cf. the questionnaire items (13), (16))
"Weak emotive marking": the emotive specification is given by mere demonstrativity, with a cotext making such a pejoration plausible (cf. the questionnaire items (12), (15)).

3.3 Change of Point of View

Discourse structures with a change of point of view are plausible cases of RD with ongoing DT (cf. 2.3). We tested "change of point of view" as a second independent variable in order to find out whether it has an impact on the acceptance of demonstrativity.

3.4 Questionnaire Study[4]

3.4.1 Variables and Items

- independent variables and items[5]

condition 1 - emotive marking: none / change of point of view: none

(11) A und B treffen sich auf der Straße. A erzählt:
    „Vorhin hab ich den Pfarrer gesehen. Er ist ja schon seit den 60er Jahren im Dienst.
    Aber er scheint noch ziemlich fit zu sein, dieser / der Pfarrer. Jedes Jahr pilgert er zu Fuß
    über die Alpen." B: „Ja ja, dabei wird er wohl vom Heiligen Geist beflügelt."

    A. and B. meets on the street. A tells: "A little while ago, I saw the pastor. He has been on duty since the
    1960s. But he still seems to be quite fit, this / the pastor. Every year, he pilgrimages across the Alps."
    B: "Well, maybe he is quickened by Holy Spirit."

---

[5] For all items holds: RD with ongoing DT; DT: human referent, gets introduced in the first sentence as definite NP-object in the mittelfeld, in the second sentence pronominal subject in the vorfeld, in the target sentence pronominal subject in the mittelfeld, in the closing sentence pronominal subject in the mittelfeld, vorfeld being filled with an adverbial. Head of DT-NP has two syllables. Items presented are mixed up with filler items. Order dem/def is varied.

condition 2 - emotive marking: weak / change of point of view: none

(12) Schulhof-Gespräch. A: „Und, gibt's was Neues bei euch?"
B: „Ja, wir haben nen neuen Lehrer. Er ist Spezialist für mongolische Sprachen. Aber didaktisch ist er eine Niete, dieser / der Lehrer. Im Unterricht ist er einfach unmöglich."

> At the schoolyard. A: "Any news"? B: "Well, we have got a new teacher. He is specialised in Mongolian languages. But concerning didactics he is a duffer, this / the teacher. During lessons, he is simply obnoxious."

condition 3 - emotive marking: strong / change of point of view: none

(13) Ein Fußballfan ereifert sich: „Habt ihr das schon gehört? Bayern München hat einen neuen Torwart eingekauft. Er ist über zwei Meter groß. Trotzdem kriegt er vor dem Tor keinen hohen Ball, dieser / der Trottel. Aber viel Geld sackt er trotzdem ein."

> A football fan blustering: "Did you hear this? Bayern München [football team] have bought a new keeper. He is more than two meters tall. But for all that he won't catch a ball in front of the goal, this / the dumbass. But he bags a lot of money anyway."

condition 4 - emotive marking: none / change of point of view: yes

(14) Kneipengespräch. A erzählt: „Mein Onkel kann sich jetzt ne Putzfrau leisten. Er sagt, sie kommt immer freitags. Mir ist aber nicht ganz klar, wie sie das schafft, diese / die Putzfrau. Schließlich hat sie drei Kinder und noch vier andere Putzstellen."
B: „Na und, vielleicht ist ihr Mann ja arbeitslos."

> In a pub. A. tells: "My uncle can afford a charlady now. He says, she always comes on friday. But I wonder how she manages all this, this / the charlady. After all, she has three children and other four charlady jobs." B: "So what, maybe her husband is out of work."

condition 5 - emotive marking: weak / change of point of view: yes

(15) A und B unterhalten sich über das Gesundheitswesen. A: „Mein Onkel hat von seiner Ärztin erzählt. Er sagt, sie hat in Bangladesh studiert. Ich finde, dass sie ziemlich unfähig ist, diese / die Ärztin. Gestern, da hat sie nämlich beinahe jemanden vergiftet mit nem falschen Medikament." B: „Tja, dann wird sie wohl nicht sehr beliebt sein."

> A. and B. chatting about the public health system. A: "My uncle told me about his doctor[fem]. He says, she attended a university at Bangladesh. I think that she is quite incompetent, this / the doctor[fem]. To wit, yesterday she nearly poisoned somebody with a wrong drug." B: "Well, I guess she is not very liked, then."

condition 6 - emotive marking: strong / change of point of view: yes

(16) Zwei Angestellte im Büro. A berichtet: „Nicole hat eben den Chef nach Hause gefahren. Sie sagt, er war heute ziemlich erkältet. Soweit ich das sehe, ist er etwas zu oft krank, dieser / der Penner. Vielleicht hat er ja andere Interessen als Arbeit."
B: „Jaja, die Oberen können sich's halt leisten."

> Two employees at office. A. reports: "Nicole has just driven the boss home. She says, he had a cold today. As far as I can see, he is ill a little bit too often, this / the dosser." B: "Well, the bosses get away with everything."

- dependent variable and task

Bitte streichen Sie von den grau unterlegten Ausdrücken alles durch, was für Sie nicht gut klingt, z.B.:

~~diese / die~~ *Bücher* = Sie finden die Version „Bücher" am besten.

~~diese /~~ *die Bücher* = Sie finden die Version „die Bücher" am besten.   → no DEM

diese / ~~die~~ *Bücher* = Sie finden die Version „diese Bücher" am besten.   → DEM only

diese / die Bücher = Sie finden die Version „die Bücher" und „diese Bücher" gleich gut. → DEM and DEF

Please cancel all those expressions out of the grey ones that do not sound good for you, e.g.:

~~these / the~~ books = You consider "books" the best version.

these / the books = You consider "these books" and "the books" equal. [and so on].

3.4.2 Results

- **Preference for Demonstratives**
  The mere unrelated data show an astonishing over-all preference for demonstratives:

DEM only	DEM and DEF	no DEM	Sum
827	152	317	1296

Tab. 1

- **Change of Point of View**
  The variable „change of point of view" clearly fails to have a significant impact on demonstrativity.

- **Emotive Marking**
  Surprisingly, "weak emotive marking" turned out to be a better feature for licensing demonstrativity than "strong emotive marking" (tab. 2).

emot. marking	DEM only	DEM and DEF	no DEM	
none	250	41	141	432
weak	364	22	46	432
strong	213	89	130	432
	827	152	317	1296

χ^2=143.12   (critical value with p=0.05: 9.49)

Tab. 2

"Strong emotive marking" has significant effect on demonstrativity (apparently only due to the large number of subjects who chose "DEM and DEF", tab. 3). Remarkably, the number of "DEM only" judgements is even smaller than for items without any emotive marking (the latter, again, may be effected by the RD-construction itself).

emot .marking	DEM only	DEM and DEF	no DEM	
none	250	41	141	432
strong	213	89	130	432
	463	130	271	864

χ^2=21.12   (critical value with p=0.05: 5.99)

Tab. 3

If the dependent variables "DEM only" and "DEM and DEF" are regrouped to one single variable "DEM possible": "strong emotive marking" has no significant effect on demonstrativity (Tab. 4) while "weak emotive marking" still has (Tab. 5)

emot. marking	DEM possible	no DEM	
none	291	141	432
strong	302	130	432
	593	271	864

$\chi^2 = 0.65$ (critical value with p=0.05: 3.84)

Tab. 4

emot. marking	DEM possible	no DEM	
none	291	141	432
weak	386	46	432
	677	187	864

$\chi^2 = 61.59$ (critical value with p=0.05: 3.84)

Tab. 5

4. Discussion

With RDs with ongoing DT, demonstrativity is licensed mainly in order to specify the speaker's attitude towards the referent by *mere* demonstrativity. Unlike common examples in linguistic literature (e.g. Zifonun e.a 1997) suggest, it seems that speakers tend to mark cognitive proximity only *one* time.

In general, this result is consistent with our claim that the demonstrative bias for non-discourse topics can be overridden by cognitive proximity.

We didn't find any effect of change of point of view on the acceptance of demonstrative RD, a result which suggests that demonstrativity is not sensitive to local strategies of re-marking of DT.

Furthermore, it seems that the RD construction itself has an affinity to demonstrativity (an informal observation that will be tested separately), which might be explained by the similarity of the discourse functions they have: At the first glance, they seem to be conflictive (RD marking DTs, demonstratives non-DTs). Still both perform a kind of focussing of the respective referent, in the case of RD the focussing having the textual function of marking the DT, in the case of demonstratives the function of emotive marking as an instance of cognitive proximity.

5. References

Averintseva-Klisch, M. 2006. 'Separate Performative' Account of German Right Dislocation. In: Ebert, Ch. / Endriss, C. (eds.): *Proceedings of the Sinn und Bedeutung 10*, ZASPiL 44, 15-28.

Averintseva-Klisch, M. 2007. Anaphoric properties of German Right dislocation, *in* M. Schwarz-Friesel / Consten, M. / Knees, M. (eds.), *Anaphors in Text: Cognitive, formal and applied approaches to anaphoric reference*. Amsterdam: Benjamins (SLCS 86), 165-182.

Averintseva-Klisch, M. / Consten, M. forthc. The role of discourse topic and proximity for demonstratives in German and Russian. In: Johansson, S. e.a. (eds.), Special issue of *Languages in Contrast*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Bosch, P. / Katz, G./ Umbach, C., 2007. The Non-subject Bias of German Demonstrative Pronouns. In: Schwarz-Friesel, M. / Consten, M. / Knees, M. (eds.), *Anaphors in Text: Cognitive, formal and applied approaches to anaphoric reference*. Amsterdam: Benjamins (SLCS 86), 145-164.

Consten, M. / Schwarz-Friesel, M.. 2007. Anapher. In: Hoffmann, L. (ed.). *Wortarten des Deutschen*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Himmelmann, N.P. 1997. *Deiktikon, Artikel, Nominalphrase. Zur Emergenz syntaktischer Struktur*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Zifonun, G. , Hoffmann, L. and Stecker, B. (eds.). 1997. *Grammatik der deutschen Sprache*. Berlin: de Gruyter. Vol. 1. (= IDS 7.1).

Contact:

maria.averintseva@uni-tuebingen.de

www.linguistik.uni-tuebingen.de/averintseva

manfred.consten@uni-jena.de

www.textlinguistik.net