Sentence connectives and deictic shift in Paasaal narrative

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Abstract. In the Paasaal language of northern Ghana, the demonstrative pronouns nye (proximal) and ee (distal) combine with the focus marker re to form sentence connectives in narrative discourse. Previous research has been unable to identify a difference in meaning between the two constructions, and Diessel (1999) predicts that the deictic function of demonstratives should not be preserved when they are grammaticalised. However Deictic Shift Theory, a cognitive theory of deixis in narrative, can both reveal the difference in meaning between these two constructions, and also offer an explanatory account of this difference based on their deictic origin. Thus the original proximal/distal distinction in the deictic terms is indeed preserved after grammaticalisation.

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the use of demonstratives as sentence connectives in the Paasaal variety of Sisaala (Gur, Ghana). Nye (‘this’) and ee (‘that’) are demonstrative pronouns which have a roughly standard proximal/distal distinction (i.e. similar to English this and that) when they are used with reference to the spatial domain. They have become highly grammaticalised in the form of the sentence connectives nye re and ee re. Neither native speaker introspection nor previous linguistic research has revealed a difference in meaning between these two constructions, and this paper is an attempt to understand the effect of using the ‘proximal’ connective, rather than the ‘distal’ one. I will discuss these connectives in the light of a cognitive theory of deixis in narrative - Deictic Shift Theory, developed by the Discourse and Narrative Research Group at the State University of New York. We will see how this theory helps to explain the difference between nye re and ee re in a principled way that relates to the spatial meaning of the demonstrative pronouns from which they are derived.

The discussion is organised as follows: in §2, I provide some language background and a brief description of the demonstratives in

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question. In §3 and §4 I give some theoretical background on the grammaticalisation of demonstratives and on Deictic Shift Theory. Insights from this theory are then used to analyse the Paasaal data in §5, in an attempt to uncover a difference in meaning between the two sentence connectives. In §6 I discuss the possible implications for grammaticalisation theory, and §7 summarises the findings of the paper.

2. Paasaal demonstrative pronouns

In this section I first give a brief background to the Paasaal language. Then in §2.1 I describe the general distribution and function of the demonstrative pronouns nye and ee, while in §2.2 I focus on the sentence connectives nye re and ee re.

The Sisaala language is spoken by approximately 200,000 people, in four major dialect groups in Ghana and Burkina Faso. The Paasaal group consists of around 30,000 people in north-west Ghana. Publications on Paasaal are limited to descriptions of the phonology (Toupin 1995) and the grammar (McGill, Fembeti & Toupin 1999). For other varieties of Sisaala see Blass (1975, 1980, 1990).
Fig. 1  Languages of Ghana (taken from Grimes 2000). Paasaal is labelled 55 and is shown in two regions.
2.1 Nye and ee

Paasaal has two demonstrative pronouns *nye* (‘this’), and *ee* (‘that’). *Ee* and its variant *gee* are in complementary distribution – *ee* occurs clause-initially, as in (3), while *gee* occurs elsewhere.

(1)  

diya r ᵃ nyę/gee

house FM¹ this

this/that is a house

[RG 39]²

(2)  

[“But if they bring food, and say it's Spider and his friend's food,”]

t mę tol le gee."

2PS also share FM that

that's your share.

[TX ganii22 014]

(3)  

[Spider smashed the calabash of wisdom].

Ee r ᵃ tų ᵃ wągyuŋ lii gyaase dunıya buloŋ.

that FM belong.to wisdom go.out spread world all

That's why wisdom spread over all the world.

[TX calab11 041]

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¹ The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

1PS  1ˢᵗ person singular pronoun (similar for other persons and numbers)
AUG  augmented verb form
DP  distant past
EMPH  emphatic
FM  focus marker
FUT  future tense
IMPF  imperfective aspect
INTJ  interjection
NOM  nominalisation
PERF  backgrounded, perfective aspect
PL  plural
PST  past tense
TM  topic marker

² All the examples in this paper are cross-referenced to their source. An explanation of the codes used is given in Appendix A. The Paasaal orthography (which is phonemic, but does not mark tone) is used throughout.
Nyε and ee can only be used as pronouns. A separate pair of demonstratives no (‘this’) and hay (‘that’) are used to modify nouns e.g. diya no (‘this house’). No and hay do not have the same discourse properties as nyε and ee, and so they have no further relevance to this discussion.

2.2 Nyε and ee as sentence connectives

A striking feature of Paasaal narrative is how often deictic terms (followed by the focus marker re) introduce sentences, as in (4) and (5). From a folktales corpus of 855 sentences, nyε re introduces 120 sentences and ee re 102 sentences. Narrative sentences from the Paasaal New Testament seem to have a similar proportion of such sentences.

(4) [Spider said that he would roam and collect all wisdom.]
Nyε re v sii kpa v gαrγiγia.
that FM 3PS rise take 3PS gourd
Then he took his gourd.

(5) [He said that they should ask him.]
Nye re ba mu di ba piyes i ba nyuna.
this FM 3PP go that 3PP ask 3PP father
Then they went to ask their father.

These connectives are usually translated by native speakers as then or so. They are clause-external, do not co-refer with an antecedent NP, and do not appear to refer to an antecedent proposition3. As with the Burkina Faso variety, nyε re and ee re often, but not always, coincide with paragraph boundaries.

3 However see Blass (1990:82), concerning the Burkina Faso variety of Sisaala, where she glosses e ner as ‘that being it’.

3. The grammaticalisation of demonstratives

In this section I show that three of Diessel’s (1999) four uses of demonstratives apply to nyε and ee. I then discuss the grammaticalisation of demonstratives, and argue that contrary to a claim by Diessel, we should not be surprised to see traces of the original deictic meaning of the Paasaal demonstratives preserved in their sentence-connective use.
Diessel (1999:93) distinguishes four pragmatic functions of demonstratives, given in Table 1 and exemplified in (6)-(9). He groups the last three together and calls them *endophoric* uses.

**Table 1 The four pragmatic functions of demonstratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Ex.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exophoric</td>
<td>refers to entities in the speech situation</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaphoric</td>
<td>coreferential with a prior NP</td>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse deictic</td>
<td>coreferential with a prior proposition</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognitional</td>
<td>indicates the hearer can identify the referent based on specific shared knowledge</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) **That** seat right there. [accompanied by a pointing gesture] [Diessel 2003:3]

(7) The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of **ice**. On top of **this** ice were as many feet of snow. [London 1902:1]

(8) A: Hey, management has reconsidered its position. They’ve promoted Fred to second vice president.
    B: **That**’s false.
    [Webber 1991:111-112]

(9) I couldn’t sleep last night. **That** dog [next door] kept me awake. [Gundel, Hedberg, and Zacharski 1993:278]

Turning to Paasaal, *nye* and *ee* can have each of the first three uses, as demonstrated in examples (1)-(3). Example (1) is most naturally used when pointing to a real house, or a representation of one, and so is an example of exophoric use. Example (2) is a case of anaphoric use because the demonstrative pronoun *(g)ee* refers to the same entity as its antecedent, the food. Finally example (3) shows discourse deictic use. This is because *ee* is not an anaphor with an NP referent. Instead it refers to the proposition ‘Spider smashed the calabash of wisdom’.

Diessel (1999:125-127) shows that the grammaticalisation of distal demonstratives to form sentence connectives is not uncommon cross-

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4 According to Diessel (1999:105), recognitional demonstratives are usually only used adnominally. This predicts that *nve* and *ee* will not be used recognitionally (as they cannot modify nouns), and this does seem to be the case.
linguistically. However he does not discuss proximal demonstratives, and gives no examples of them being used as sentence connectives. Heine, Claudi and Hünnemeyer (1991) and Greenberg (1985) both state that proximal demonstratives are less likely than distal ones to be adopted for grammaticalisation, but they do not mention sentence connectives specifically. In fact, I am not aware of any literature concerning the differences in meaning for languages which allow a choice between sentence connectives derived from deictic terms.

Should we expect such a difference in meaning? After all, Diessel (1999:118-119) does state that

...grammatical items that developed from demonstratives do not function to orient the hearer in the outside world and they are always non-contrastive.

Diessel (along with most other linguists) views the *exophoric* use as unmarked, and writes (1999:119):

(10) [A]naphoric, discourse deictic, and recognitional demonstratives are already to some extent grammaticalised...All three endophoric demonstratives serve language-internal functions and they are non-contrastive.

He gives the English pair *this* and *that* as a supporting example. Certainly Lakoff’s (1974) discussion of *this* and *that* appears to offer some support for this view, at least regarding what she calls ‘emotive’ uses of the demonstratives. She writes (1974:349,351):

A problem we shall find in examining *that* is that, while its spatio-temporal uses are very nearly opposite those of *this*, its emotive uses are surprisingly close...[‘Solidarity’ uses – such as the sympathetic (11)] are perhaps the most curious semantically, since the discourse marker *that* seems to establish emotional closeness between speaker and addressee.

(11) How’s *that* throat? [Lakoff 1974:351]

However on closer inspection Diessel’s analysis proves to be controversial.
First of all, he wrongly claims (1999:102, 2003:12) that this cannot be used to refer to antecedent propositions across a turn-transition. So in the monologue (12) either this or that is acceptable, but in the dialogue (13) (allegedly) only that can occur.

(12) Kissinger made his long-awaited announcement yesterday. **This/that** statement confirmed the speculations of many observers.

[1974:346,350]

(13) A: I’ve heard you will move to Hawaii?
   B: Who told you **that** (*this)?

[1999:102]

Similar forms of Diessel’s argument can be traced back to Lakoff (1974) and Gundel, Hedberg, and Zacharski (1993). Lakoff (1974:349) states that “that can be used by a speaker to comment on an immediately prior remark by another. This cannot be so used.” She gives the following example:

(14) A: Dick says that the Republicans have credibility problems.
   B: (*This) **That** is an understatement.

[1974:349]

However her statement says nothing about cases where the demonstrative does not occur in topic position. Gundel, Hedberg, and Zacharski (1993:279) make the bolder claim that “Both determiner and pronominal this require the referent to be not only activated, but speaker-activated”. While this holds for the one example they give, it is not true in general. In fact (13) can be a perfectly natural exchange with this. The argument Lakoff (1974:350) used to distinguish the two meanings in (12) can also be applied to examples such as (13). She states (1974:350) that “[t]here seems, however, to be a subtle feeling in [(12) with this]...that the speaker remains involved in his subject, and may well go on to say more about it”. Regarding example (13), if B accepts the antecedent proposition (that B will move to Hawaii) as a topic for continued discussion, then he is more

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5 Note I avoid the term ‘anaphoric’ here because Diessel (1999, 2003) uses it specifically for coreference with NPs.

6 In fact it seems likely that even Lakoff’s restricted claim is wrong. A Google search for the string “Oh no! This is terrible!” returns many results where this occurs immediately after a turn-transition, both in reported speech and in direct ‘speech’ i.e. newsgroup postings. Unfortunately I cannot discuss this further here.
likely to use *this* than *that*. This in turn can give rise to the implicature that B also accepts the truth of the antecedent proposition. A number of examples showing this effect can be found on the Internet, one of which is given in Appendix C.

Diessel’s (1999:119) claim that “[a]ll three endophoric demonstratives serve language-internal functions” can also be contested if we adopt a conceptualist semantics rather than an objectivist semantics. It is not possible to pursue this in detail here, but it is intuitively reasonable that a framework which includes the notion of *mental spaces* (Fauconnier 1997) or *cognitive domains* (Langacker 1987) could account for the difference in meaning between *this* and *that* in example (13). The same proximal/distal distinction could apply both to the mental space we use in order to conceptualise the “real” world, and to a more abstract ‘topic space’ containing potential discourse topics. This conceptualisation reveals itself in expressions such *You’re straying from the subject*.

So, in certain contexts, including that of (13), pronominal *this* can be used either cataphorically or anaphorically, regardless of whether the referent is speaker-activated. Exactly what these contexts are is not relevant for our purposes, although it would be an interesting research topic. Here it is sufficient to have shown that discourse deictic demonstratives can be contrastive, contradicting Diessel’s claim in (10). Thus the proximal/distal distinction has been retained after the first step of grammaticalisation, from the exophoric use to the discourse deictic use.

Turning to other languages, we can also find evidence that the distinction is often retained after grammaticalisation. Although for Romanian demonstratives, Calude (2002) finds that the distinction is lost in emotional uses, parallel to Lakoff’s findings for English, in Samoan (Mosel n.d.) the demonstratives do indeed retain their proximal/distal distinction for discourse use. Also Djenar (2001) has shown that the three-way Indonesian locative pronoun system retains the proximal/distal distinction when used anaphorically, with the meaning transferred from the spatial to the psychological domain. Indeed Djenar (2001:51) goes as far as to state, following Bühler (1934), that “the deictic component never completely disappears in anaphoric use”.

Regarding sentence connectives, according to Diessel (1999:113) they are often grammaticalised discourse deictic demonstratives. The typical grammaticalisation path is shown in Fig. 2.
As stated above, I am not aware of any literature discussing the difference in meaning (or lack thereof) between sentence connectives derived from proximal and distal demonstratives. Apparently there is such a difference in meaning for Japanese, but I have not seen this discussed in print. However since we have seen that proximal and distal demonstratives can often be contrastive at the first stage of grammaticalisation (the endophoric uses), it is not unreasonable to look for this distinction further on down the grammaticalisation path. So if we are to look for the difference in meaning between the sentence-connectives Ꙟ q and Ꙟ q (if indeed there is one), then the deictic origin of these terms seems to be the natural place to start.

Therefore the main aims of this paper are (i) to show the extent to which the sentence connectives Ꙟ re and Ꙟ re retain the proximal/distal distinction inherent in the meaning of the deictic terms from which they are derived, and (ii) to examine the nature of the distinction in the psychological domain. To achieve these aims we must first become familiar with some concepts from Deictic Shift Theory, to which I now turn.

4. Deictic Shift Theory

In this section I will introduce Deictic Shift Theory (DST), the theoretical framework which will inform our analysis in §5. Duchan, Bruder, and Hewitt (1995) is a presentation of the theory along with a number of applications. Segal (1995a:14) describes the central insight of DST as follows:

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It seems that the difference in meaning between the three Japanese sentence connectives Ꙟ kara, Ꙟ kara, and Ꙟ kara can be attributed to the difference in meaning of the demonstratives from which these connectives are derived. I am grateful to Kyoko McGill (March 2004) for this information.
Readers and writers of narratives sometimes imagine themselves to be in a world that is not literally present. They interpret narrative text as if they were experiencing it from a position within the world of the narrative.

He refers to this cognitive act as *deictic shift*, and traces the idea back to Aristotle’s *mimesis*, or experience of that which is not literally present. He claims that without considering deictic shift, it is hard to account for much of the detail of narrative. Readers feel that they get inside stories and vicariously experience them. DST argues that this metaphor is cognitively valid – in other words, the reader often takes a cognitive stance himself within the mental world he has created to understand the story. Segal (1995b) refers to this mental world as a *storyworld*. DST claims that the deictic centre often shifts from the real world to a location in the storyworld. Furthermore, the deictic centre can shift between different locations within the storyworld.

This insight fits very well with conceptualist views of meaning (e.g. Jackendoff 2002, Langacker 1987). It is not necessary, and in fact can be unhelpful, to view our conceptualisation of the “real” world as discrete from our conceptualisation of fictional storyworlds. Rather our conceptualisation of worlds can be characterised by a continuum covering different modes of fictional experience as well as reality. At one end of the scale are fictional novels, which although we may “get absorbed” into the story, are clearly distinct from the reader’s physical world. Films are further along the scale towards reality. 3D-films and interactive computer games bring us still closer in distinct ways. For example, when watching a 3D-cinematic elephant jumping on you from a great height, it is almost impossible to stop the deictic shift into the film’s storyworld, even though you know it to be fictional. Modern computer games respond to the participants’ choices, and can sometimes provide far more vivid sensations than everyday life. Finally, and for the present, at least, hypothetically,

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8 Deictic Shift is related to, but broader than, the notion of logophoricity, defined by Huang (2000) as “...the phenomenon whereby the ‘perspective’ of an internal protagonist of a sentence or discourse, as opposed to that of the current, external speaker, is being reported by some morphological and/or syntactic means”. The perspectives relevant to Deictic Shift are not limited to those of the protagonists, nor is Deictic Shift always expressed morphosyntactically. For further discussion see Oshima (2004).
fiction could merge into reality\textsuperscript{9} through an interaction with an android able to pass the Turing test, and so pass itself off as human.

In all these cases, as in the case of the “real” world, we must construct a mental space (Fauconnier 1997) or cognitive domain (Langacker 1987) in order to conceptualise the stimuli we encounter (whether these stimuli arise from visual or auditory perception, or from reading a book). Intuitively, remembering, imagining, watching a film, playing a virtual reality computer game, and living one’s everyday life all involve similar cognitive mechanisms and manipulation of concepts. A mental storyworld is therefore required in order to live one’s life in just the same way as it is needed to understand an oral folktale. This parallelism does not seem to be discussed by the Narrative Research Group in their presentation of DST (Duchan, Bruder & Hewitt 1995), but is highly compatible with cognitive theories of linguistics, such as Conceptual Semantics (Jackendoff 2002) and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987). So if we take a conceptualist approach to meaning, and concede that similar cognitive mechanisms are involved both in experiencing everyday life and in processing fictional narrative, it is not at all surprising that the viewpoint of the experiencer can shift both within and between storyworlds.

Before going on to analyse the Paasaal connectives in §5, I first give two sets of relatively clear examples of deictic shift to clarify the preceding theoretical discussion. The first examples come from English:

(15) The discovery of a man shot dead in the parking lot of her student residence last Thursday morning was the fourth crime to occur on the campus since September, she said in an interview. Mantle said that was the last straw, and she will be continuing her studies elsewhere\textsuperscript{10}.

(16) According to her dad, this “entrepreneur” had twice before failed to pay her for legitimate work completed, but this time was the last straw\textsuperscript{11}.

\textsuperscript{9} More specifically, reality in the mind of a human experiencer, and this is what conceptual semantics takes to be the locus of meaning.


\textsuperscript{11} Radio show newsletter taken from http://www.americanentrepreneur.net/newsletter_view.asp?id=23 [accessed 30th March 2004].
These two examples demonstrate events in a storyworld being viewed from far off in the storyworld, as in (15), or close by, as in (16). The use of *this* in (16) causes a deictic shift to (or, depending on the previous narrative, maintains the deictic centre at) a viewpoint in the storyworld near the events - we even seem to experience the frustration through the eyes of the father.

Naturally deictic shift does not only occur with demonstratives. The following example shows deictic shift involving the Paasaal deictic motion verbs, *ko* (‘come’) and *mv* (‘go’).

(17) 🌱 puŋ ɡeev stya ko/mv fiye拮
    3PS lie that 3PS eye-PL come/go be.cool
    *He lay until he recovered.*

[RG 153-154]

The construction **CLAUSE ONE geo  S (CLAUSE TWO) ko/mv VP (CLAUSE TWO)**\(^{12}\) is the most common form of *terminating-sequence* sentence in Paasaal, where the situation represented by the first clause continues until the start of the situation of the second. If the speaker uses *ko* (‘come’) then she gives the hearer the impression that she was actually present during the events of the story (even when this is obviously impossible, as in the case of an animal folktale). The storyworld is being viewed from within the storyworld, nearby to the protagonist, and from the exact moment of his recovery\(^{13}\). If the deictic centre is further away in time, or even outside the storyworld itself, the more neutral verb *mv* is used. The two scenarios are shown in Fig. 3:

\(^{12}\) Here S stands for subject, VP for verb phrase.

\(^{13}\) In fact it was a Paasaal speaker’s linguistically-naive (more accurately, DST-naive) explanation of the difference in meaning between *ko* and *mv* in this construction that first attracted me to DST.
In summary, in this section we have discussed the notion of deictic shift, and shown that it can be useful in explaining certain cross-linguistic phenomena. In the next section I return to the Paasaal sentence-connectives "mx» q»" and "»» q»" and attempt to use insights from DST to shed some light on the difference in meaning between them.

5. Analysis

This section considers and rejects two initial hypotheses concerning the difference in meaning between the two Paasaal connectives (§5.1 and §5.2), before studying some distributional patterns of the two connectives more closely (§5.3). This leads to the proposal (§5.4) and evaluation (§5.5) of a third account based on insights from DST14.

5.1 Thematic discontinuity?

Dooley and Levinsohn (2001:35-42) classify types of discontinuity in discourse. Narrators group sentences into units of text, or thematic

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14 The data used for this analysis was collected in Ghana in 1996. I glossed twenty-five Sisaala oral folktales, told in natural settings by skilled storytellers. One such tale is provided in Appendix B. Despite working with linguistically-trained native-speakers, I could not find a difference in meaning between the two sentence connectives.
groupings, which reflect the fact that humans process information in bite-size chunks. Discontinuities in content provide good motivation for the speaker to break the text down into manageable chunks. Dooley and Levinsohn focus on four dimensions involved in ‘chunking’ a text – time, place, action, and participants.

My first hypothesis was based on Dooley and Levinsohn’s observation that sentence connectives are often used as points of departure in stories, in other words where there is a thematic discontinuity along one of the dimensions listed above. Perhaps ee re marked a greater thematic discontinuity than nye re?

This hypothesis was considered in the descriptive grammar (McGill, Fembeti & Toupin 1999:152), but rejected after discussions with Paasaal consultants. Furthermore the data shows that very similar discontinuities are apparently arbitrarily marked with nye re or ee re, as in (18)-(19).

(18) [Once upon a time Bird and Fowl were good friends]
   
   **Nye re** kyee kidigt,  
   this FM day one  
   Then one day,  
   [they made a decision about food.]
   
   [TX ofiila14 002]

(19) [Once upon a time Leper and Blindman were good friends]
   
   **Ee re** kyee kidigt,  
   that FM day one  
   Then one day,  
   [Leper wandered off.]
   
   [TX gbege21 003]

5.2 *Causal or temporal link?*

My second hypothesis was that the clause following the connective might be linked, either causally or temporally, to the preceding clause. Both of these options are common cross-linguistically. Dooley (1986) describes how sentence-initial devices in Brazilian Guaraní indicate either causal or temporal relationships.

15 In the Burkina Faso dialect e ne seems to be the equivalent of ee re (Blass 1990:82). Although it does not always mark a new paragraph, it does signal to the hearer that there is a particular type of break in the continuity of context. Blass does not mention if there is a connective corresponding to nye re.
In Hixkaryana (Derbyshire 1985) the distal demonstrative \(\text{zhe}\) participates in the causal sentence connective \(\text{zhe ke}\). Chinese seems to be rare in that both the demonstratives \(\text{zhe}\) and \(\text{na}\) participate in sentence connective constructions. \(\text{Zhe}\), the proximal deictic, appears to imply a closer causal connection than \(\text{na}\), the distal\(^{16}\).

Languages with sentence connectives indicating temporal relationships include Epena Pedee (Harms 1994), where \(\text{mapái}\) (based on the distal demonstrative) indicates a close temporal connection between the two surrounding clauses.

These two possibilities were rejected here due to sentences such as (18) and (19). In (19), for example, the good friendship of Leper and Blindman is very unlikely to have been the cause of Leper wandering off. Similarly, a temporal link would be just as unlikely. The stative situation represented in the opening sentences of these two examples is simply the setting for what follows. It does not situate an event in time, but rather refers to a durative situation which extends forward in time to include the event time of the second sentence as well. But the connectives also occur when there is straightforward temporal procession, as in (4) and (5), and it is hard to conceive of an account schematic enough to cover both of these scenario types.

5.3 Some distributional patterns of \(\text{nye re}\) and \(\text{ee re}\)

The fact that seemingly identical thematic discontinuities can be marked with either connective suggests that the context might need to be widened to uncover the difference in meaning. Rather than looking at the discontinuities between events, or trying to connect one event to another causally or temporally, I will now attempt a more holistic approach and consider how a particular section of narrative is construed in relation to the rest. In this section we will look at three patterns relevant to the occurrence of \(\text{nye re}\) and \(\text{ee re}\). First, I will note that \(\text{nye re}\) is more likely to occur at important points in the narrative. Secondly, that \(\text{nye re}\) is more likely than \(\text{ee re}\) to occur directly before a chain of closely-connected events. Finally, I will show that \(\text{nye re}\) is more likely to occur in conjunction with direct speech, while \(\text{ee re}\) occurs more often with indirect speech. This section is simply concerned with describing these patterns. In §5.4 I give an explanation in terms of DST.

Firstly, the distribution of \(\text{nye re}\) and \(\text{ee re}\) can be characterised relative to the important and less important parts of a narrative. Although

\(^{16}\) I am grateful for Lezhou Su for this observation (March 2004).
narrative is possibly the simplest form of discourse, it has generally resisted the efforts of linguists to apply a structural model of discourse analogous to those used in syntax. Segal (1995a:9) points out that a drawback of most structured representation theories is that they require a “well-defined a priori set of structural relations”. However it is precisely because it departs from the expected that a story is worth telling. We can avoid this problem by looking at the start of each folktale, which in our corpus always follows the pattern shown in Table 2. There is no strict correspondence between the various stages and formal structure, and the length of each stage varies considerably across the stories.

Table 2 Paasaal folktale structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Obligatory?</th>
<th>Main event line?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction of main character</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Background setting, usually using stative verbs</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Background events, leading up to the commencement of the story</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Start of narrative proper</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Often a story starts by introducing a character in the first sentence, and then the narrative proper begins in the second sentence, as in (20). Here we have only stages 1 and 4.

(20)  [Once upon a time Blindman and Cripple lived together as friends]  
    Nye re  
    [one day they went fishing. They arrived, Blindman went down to the water and was fishing...].  
    [TX nyu23]

Other stories have more background information. Example (21) shows stages 1, 3, and 4.

(21)  [In the beginning all the world’s people were arguing about death. Some wanted to die and be reincarnated, others just to die.]  
    Ee re  
    [they decided to choose two messengers to send to God. Whoever

17 As it can be difficult to distinguish the boundary between stages 3 and 4, the following diagnostic was used when analysing the stories: could a period of several days be inserted without disrupting the coherence of the story?
arrived first, God would listen to him.] Nyε re [those who were in favour of reincarnation picked out a dog, the others picked out a goat. The dog and the goat set off...].

[TX suba16]

Of the 25 stories, the first deictic sentence connective after the stage 3-4 transition point is nyε re 22 times (88%), and εε re only 3 times (12%). This compares with a figure of 54% for nyε re and 46% for εε re overall. This is highly significant. It seems that nyε re is marking the parts of the narrative on which the narrator wants us to focus more closely.

In addition to marking the start of the narrative proper, nyε re also seems to play a role in highlighting the most important events in a story. Consider the folktale given in Appendix B, which tells of the adventures of a blind man and a leper. The leper finds some eggs but cannot carry them home, so he asks for the blind man’s help. In order to win the eggs for himself, the leper tricks the blind man into falling into a ditch. He can do this because he is holding the blind man’s stick. Note the climax of the story is marked with nyε re twice (lines 18 and 21), as is the important statement early on which tells us that the leper is holding the stick (line 6).

Secondly, the distribution of the two connectives can depend on the nature of the actions immediately following the connective. If there is a long series of closely-connected actions, this is often introduced by nyε re:

(22) Nyε re Spider went over. And he took hold of Hyena's eyes, and was sewing, and was sewing, and finished sewing, and then asked him to show all the places that he could still see through. Hyena showed him, and he sewed them tight. Eε re he went and chopped some wood. Hyena asked him why. Eε re Spider said he was making a walking-stick for him.

[TX hyena (4) 039]

(23) Eε re one day, Rabbit said that he would show Hyena what injustice is. Nyε re he went to get some honey and brought it back, and got his wife to grind flour. He got her to take the honey and the flour and mix them together, and make balls out of them. Then she roasted them until they looked good.

[TX memii25 013]

---

18 A $\chi^2$ test gives a chi-square of 13.072 and a p-value of 0.000.
Perhaps marking a series of actions with *nyɛ re* encourages the hearer to view these actions as a detailed chain of sub-events.

Finally, there is a strong correlation between *nyɛ re* and direct speech, and between *ɛɛ re* and indirect speech. For this analysis only examples where the sentence connective was immediately followed by a speech verb (or a serial verb construction containing a speech verb) were considered. So for example, (24) and (25) would both be included. The results are highly significant\(^\text{19}\), and are given in Table 3.

\[(24) \quad \text{Nye re v baa “Tɔɔ...”} \quad \text{[TX fishing7.txt 019]} \]
\[
\quad \text{this FM 3PS say OK} \\
\quad \text{Then he said “OK...”,} \\
\]

\[(25) \quad \text{ɛɛ re kuwɔri ko gyuŋ base aŋu v...} \quad \text{[TX memii25 089]} \]
\[
\quad \text{that FM chief come enter speak that 3PS} \\
\quad \text{Then the chief came in and said that he...} \\
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nye re</th>
<th>ɛɛ re</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Relationship between speech and sentence connectives

5.4 *An explanation in terms of DST*

In the previous section we noted some patterns in the distribution of *nyɛ re* and *ɛɛ re*. But are these patterns simply conventionalised mappings between the choice of deictic and the effect the speaker wants to have on the hearer? The claim here is that they are not, but instead can be understood by considering the cognitive stance within the storyworld which the speaker expects the hearer to adopt. I suggest that using *nyɛ re* has the effect of shifting the deictic centre to (or maintaining the deictic centre at) a position close to the events in the storyworld. I will now treat each of the three patterns mentioned above in turn, and show how they can be explained from a DST perspective.

First of all, we saw a correlation between important parts of a story and events marked with *nyɛ re*. To help understand this we now consider the relationship between *storyworld time* and *addressee time*. Talmy

\(^{19}\) A \(\chi^2\) test gives a chi-square of 20.841 and a p-value of 0.000.
(1995) defines storyworld time as the (often fictional) time which passes within the storyworld. Addressee time, on the other hand, is the time which passes in the real world as the story is being told.

Hill (1991) notes that as a story reaches a climax, the density and detail of narrated events increases, and (in Talmy’s terms) less and less storyworld time fits into a given amount of addressee time. Fig. 4 highlights this aspect of the relationship between the two timelines.

With this observation in mind, we now consider how it is that the hearer devotes more attention to the events at a climax of a story. The answer is by shifting his cognitive stance (or deictic viewpoint) close to the action. Zubin and Hewitt (1995:130-133) introduce the term deictic centre window to denote the portion of the storyworld which is profiled at any one point of a narrative. This window naturally moves around as the deictic centre moves. So if the field subtended by the constant angle $\theta$ in Fig. 5 represents the deictic centre window, then we can see that to devote the same attention to events that are close together in the storyworld, we must shift our viewpoint closer to the action. Therefore the events being described seem closer, and thus in Paasaal are marked with $n\text{ye }r\text{e}$, the sentence introducer derived from the proximal demonstrative.
But what about uses of *nve re* and *ee re* which cannot be explained in terms of the addressee time/storyworld time relationship? Recall that either deictic can be used even when the *same* thematic discontinuity is present (cf. examples (18) and (19)). All attempts to find an example where native speakers would consider one of the connectives more appropriate than the other failed. A corollary of this is that every time either *nve re* or *ee re* introduces a sentence, the speaker has made a choice. I suggest that this choice is governed by how the speaker wishes the hearer to construe the situation represented by the sentence with respect to the wider narrative context. If the hearer is to view the information as relatively less important, then the use of *ee re* encourages him to adopt a viewpoint far off in the storyworld. If instead it is a more important part of the story then the use of *nve re* encourages him to view the situation from a position close by in the storyworld.

Secondly, in order to view a chain of related events, the deictic viewpoint must be closer to the events of the narrative than if events are seen as unanalysable wholes.

Finally, concerning direct speech, Segal (1995b:68-69) writes:

[Dialogue]...is a patently mimetic form...Authors present dialogue to let readers witness a conversation taking place. When a narrator orally tells a story, he or she often varies voice quality and even direction of gaze and posture to simulate different speakers of a dialogue. This emphasises the mimetic aspects of the discourse. Obviously, the narrator is showing the utterances to the audience and not telling about them.

Direct speech involves the hearer taking up a viewpoint very close to the events of the story. Therefore the correlation between *nve re* and direct speech is further confirmation that *nve re* is a signal to the hearer to position himself close to the events in the storyworld. It is interesting to
speculate as to why ɛɛ re is especially common before indirect speech. Although an instance of indirect speech may last for several sentences in a narrative, it can be viewed as a single action, in contrast to examples (22) and (23). If ɛɛ re is more likely to be used to mark actions which are thought of as wholes, rather than broken down into a detailed chain of events, then this could account for the correlation.

5.5 Some criticisms

At least three criticisms can be made of this analysis as it stands. First, it relies upon an outsider’s judgment as to the important parts of the story in Paasaal narrative. As Edwards and Sienkewicz (1990:2, 195-196) point out, Western linguists often place more importance on the plot of oral culture folktales, and less on the descriptive passages. This problem could be mitigated here by further discussions with native speakers and immersion in the Paasaal culture, or preferably by training Paasaal students in linguistics. Unfortunately the latter is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future.

Another drawback is that the analysis may be hard to falsify, because of the difficulty of finding an objective measure of the effect the narrator intended to create in the mind of the hearer. Psycholinguistic experiments of the kind discussed by Bruder (1995) could perhaps be useful in testing the hypothesis. One possibility might be to use different connectives to introduce different events, and test how this affects native speaker intuition/response times when tested on matters such as the relative importance of events and participants. Stark (1987) used such an experiment to show that manipulating English sentence connectives such as meanwhile and then affected how easily subjects could access characters in a story.

Finally, although I have argued both that we can expect to find a difference in meaning between deictically-derived sentence connectives, and that there is such a difference in Paasaal, I have not yet provided a potential grammaticalisation path. Diessel’s remark that sentence connectives are often derived from discourse deictic uses is persuasive given the similarity between the construction exemplified in (3) and the sentence connective construction. However it is not clear how the backward-looking discourse deictic use could grammaticalise into the forward-looking sentence-connective use. It is possible that the link between the connective and the conceptualiser’s construal of the following clauses is not in fact causal, but instead symptomatic of some deeper relationship. This is definitely an area for further research.
6. Implications for grammaticalisation theory

As we saw in §3, Diessel claimed that grammaticalised demonstratives are non-contrastive in meaning. In §5 I claim to have shown that this is not the case for Paasaal. Along with the English counterexample discussed in §3, this suggests that Diessel’s observation is not a strict universal.

Of course grammaticalisation is not a discrete process. Constructions change gradually over large timescales, and a given linguistic construction can be at any stage of the grammaticalisation process. As Fig. 2 showed, discourse deictics belong to an earlier stage of grammatical evolution, sentence connectives to a later one. It is a moot point as to what stage of grammaticalisation are at. Grammaticalisation is generally manifested phonologically, morphosyntactically, and functionally (Diessel 1999:116-119). Grammaticalised structures tend to be reduced phonologically, restricted to certain syntactic positions, and become progressively more abstract and ‘bleached’ of semantic content. If we considered purely the phonological criterion, we would have to conclude that nye re and ee re are not highly grammaticalised. There appears to have been no discernible change phonologically. The other two criteria tell a different story however. Naturally, as sentence connectives they can only appear in sentence-initial position. Semantically, the difficulty of determining the meaning of these connectives shows how abstract they have become. Significantly, Traugott (1989) argues that constructions become more subjective as they grammaticalise. The meaning of grammatical items is often situated in the speaker’s belief towards the situation. This seems to characterise the meaning of nye re and ee re well. Finally the frequency of these connectives, occurring in one in every four sentences of narrative discourse, is characteristic of ordinary grammatical items rather than demonstratives.

In summary, it seems that these two sentence connectives are indeed strongly grammaticalised, providing evidence that the deictic contrast between proximal and distal demonstratives may be preserved through the grammaticalisation process for longer than Diessel claimed.

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20 According to Diessel (1999:150-152) there is almost no evidence that demonstratives themselves are grammatical items (in the sense of having been grammaticalised from something). This is not an uncontroversial view, however.
7. Conclusion

Despite Diessel’s (1999) claim that grammaticalised demonstratives are not contrastive in meaning, I have uncovered a number of contrastive patterns in the use of nye re and ee re as sentence introducers. I have attempted to use Deictic Shift Theory to give a unified explanation for these patterns based on the deictic origin of the connectives. I concluded that the speaker’s choice of nye re or ee re depends on how far away from the events being narrated she wants the hearer to take his cognitive stance. Thus the grammaticalised demonstratives retain their spatio-temporal sense of proximity and distance, but in this case the metric must be understood cognitively, as an imagined distance in the storyworld.

References


Appendix A – key to cross-referenced data sources

RG Reproduced from the Paasaal reference grammar (McGill, Fembeti & Toupin 1999). The page number is given after RG.

TX Data from a collection of interlinear folktales and historical narratives, transcribed from recordings made of skilled storytellers in natural settings. The name of the text and the line number are given after TX.

Both the grammar and the texts will shortly be available in the Rosetta Project language archive, which can be found at:

http://www.rosettaproject.org/live/search/detailedlanguagerecord?ethnocode=SIG.

Appendix B – a Paasaal folktale

A fully-interlinearised version of this folktale can be found in the Rosetta Project language archive (see Appendix A).

1Gbege bee nyuluŋ ne gyi we doŋ, a yaa kyaŋbidiyema. Ẹe re kyee kidige, 2Gbege sii gbe tuu samane. U gollọ ko ki baŋ di ṣiŋ siu fuula. 3U baŋ di u deŋ di suuhala re pina gẹẹ mugugu. 4U baa u!, aŋ miige kpa ko gyiŋ diya, 5a yiri u kyaŋa Nyuluŋ di u sii ko daha.

6Nye re u kyeebe kaŋ Nyuluŋ daaŋ kpa we u vaalu ki tiyan. Ba mu pele. 7Gbege kaŋ Nyuluŋ noŋ tuu daga suuhala hu. 8Ẹe re Nyuluŋ kaŋ u ĩogọ wuri, a paa suuhala gyiŋ su. 9Nye re ba miige kpa ki ko bee. Ba ko kpaga geyye memii, 10nye re Gbege baa: "Nyuluŋ, leŋ di á kaŋ kina hu kpaag ñomọg daha, 11di gẹẹ daa, ka di á kaŋ guú diya, simunna si fugime á sii." 12Di Nyuluŋ baa di lee tiyan? Di u aa mu na suuhala hu gẹẹ, 13di ba fa yaa u kina u bee paa aŋ ko ki yiri u? 14Di u beelu kẹ bi gẹẹ kpaal bulaŋ. Gbege baa, "A mọọ nẹy?" 15Ị yan kaŋ ba deee re?

Ẹe re u talle u nyuwa ka ba vala ki mu. 16Ba kpaa di ba lli siya, di bootogibal kidige re pina gẹẹ. 17Na Gbege me re kaŋ Nyuluŋ daaŋ. 18Nye re u mu siŋ bootogi hu nyuwa aŋ baa di Nyuluŋ siŋ gẹẹ di u fiī fiī. 19Doŋ ne u siŋ, ka Gbege teŋ fá baare bootogi hu baŋ siŋ, 20aŋ baa di Nyuluŋ ko di u kana u ba mu. 21Nye re Nyuluŋ mu kpa degini bootogi, "birem, birem, birem” 22u āa ko
A leper and a blind man were living together, and were close friends. Then (ee) one day, the leper wandered off to a distant place. He was roaming around when a bush fowl whistled. He went to look and saw guineafowl eggs lying together. He said Uh! and returned home, and called his friend the blind man that he get up and come here. Then (nye) he picked up the blind man's stick and put it under his armpit. They arrived. The leper took the blind man's hand, went down and showed him the guineafowl eggs. Then (ee) the blind man removed his bag and filled it with guineafowl eggs. Then (nye) they were returning home. They came close under the walls, then (nye) the leper said 'Blind man, let us take the things and divide them among ourselves here, if not that, and we take them into the house, scroungers will cheat us.' Then the blind man asked how? When he went and saw the guineafowl eggs, if they been his [the leper's] things, why didn't he collect them [first] and then come and call him? [He said] that he [blind man] and him [leper] have nothing to share together. The leper said, "Is it like this? Do I then have their strength?" Then (ee) he apologised and they were walking. They were going out ahead, and a big gutter lay there. See the leper too was holding the blind man's stick. Then (nye) he went and stood at the edge of the gutter and said that the blind man should stand there while he urinates. There he stood, and the leper quickly ran and stood on the other side of the gutter, and said that the blind man should come that he take him and they go. Then (nye) the blind man went straight in to the gutter, "birem, birem, birem" he was coming like that. "birem, birem, birem, wuu", he fell in the gutter. Not one guineafowl egg remained intact.

They were coming back home and Haduwong had died, they were singing funeral songs. Then (nye) the leper walked and came and sang his song: "Never again will a leper lead a blind man, see there are many roads."
Appendix C – discourse deictic this across turn-transitions

This example shows a discourse-deictic usage of this across a turn-transition (in contrast to Diessel’s (1999:102-103) claim that this does not occur). Using this rather than that suggests the speaker accepts the proposition referred to as a topic for continued discussion. This in turn can give rise to the implicature that the speaker also accepts the truth of the antecedent proposition when this is used. The example is taken from http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DREISER/ch23.html [accessed 21st July 2004].

“Somebody said that you went out riding with him and that he came here every night.”
“No such thing,” answered Carrie. “It isn't true. Who told you that?”

She was flushing scarlet to the roots of her hair, but Drouet did not catch the full hue of her face, owing to the modified light of the room. He was regaining much confidence as Carrie defended herself with denials.

“Well, some one,” he said. “You're sure you didn't?”

“Certainly,” said Carrie. “You know how often he came.”

Drouet paused for a moment and thought.
“I know what you told me,” he said finally.

He moved nervously about, while Carrie looked at him confusedly.

“Well, I know that I didn't tell you any such thing as that,” said Carrie, recovering herself.
“If I were you,” went on Drouet, ignoring her last remark, “I wouldn't have anything to do with him. He's a married man, you know.”
“Who--who is?” said Carrie, stumbling at the word.
“Why, Hurstwood,” said Drouet, noting the effect and feeling that he was delivering a telling blow. “Hurstwood!” exclaimed Carrie, rising. Her face had changed several shades since this announcement was made. She looked within and without herself in a half-dazed way.

“Who told you this?” she asked, forgetting that her interest was out of order and exceedingly incriminating.
“Why, I know it. I've always known it,” said Drouet.