Psychologically distal demonstratives

Janne Bondi Johannessen

University of Oslo

1. Introduction

Psychologically distal demonstratives (PDDs) are a phenomenon that has not been noticed in traditional dialectology in the Nordic countries. One reason for this is possibly that they have been confused with the preproprial articles (PPAs, see Johannessen & Garbacz 2014), with which they share some properties. However, recently a number of publications concerning the PDDs have appeared: Johannessen (2006, 2008a, 2008b) and Strahan (2008). The PDD always has the shape of a pronoun, and is preposed to either a name or some other noun phrase denoting a human. The PDD has a special semantics that will be described in section 3. Suffice it to be said here that the psychologically distal demonstrative is used to indicate a psychological, not physical, distance between the person referred to and some other person in the discourse, normally the speaker, but occasionally also the listener. The distance is either relatively neutral, simply implying that the person referred to is unknown to the speaker (or other participant), or even somewhat negative, implying that the speaker is not necessarily very fond of this person. The PDD can be found in Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish. Faroese has not been investigated yet. The examples below are from Johannessen (2008a:162).

(1) a. hun e kvinnelige solisten og Bocelli (Norwegian)
   she (PDD) ehm female soloist.DEF and Bocelli
   ‘that female soloist and Bocelli.’

b. Har du talat med hon Lisa (Swedish)
   have you talked with she (PDD) Lisa
   ‘Have you talked with that girl Lisa?’

c. Jeg så hende pigen med briller (Danish)
   I saw her (PDD) girl.DEF with glasses
   ‘I saw that girl with glasses.’

d. Hún konan virðist allt í lagi (Icelandic)
   she (PDD) woman seems all ok
   ‘That woman seems all right.’
2. Results

2.1 Nordic Syntax Database (NSD)

There are two sentences in the database based on the ScanDiaSyn survey that are designed to check whether the PDD exists in the Nordic dialects. One of them tests a pronoun (the would-be PDD) with a common noun (2) and the other a pronoun with a proper name (3). In both cases, the informants were presented with a piece of context to trigger the psychologically distal interpretation.

Context for example (2):
Dette stedet er fullt av rare personer.
‘This place is full of strange people.’

(2) husker du han mannen vi traff i går (#99) (N)
    remember you he (PDD) man.DEF we met yesterday

'Do you remember the man we met yesterday?'

Context for example (3):
Jeg liker ikke sånne selvgode programledere.
‘I don't like that kind of self-admiring TV-hosts.’

(3) har du sett han Tommy Steine (#100) (N)
    have you seen he (PDD) Tommy Steine

'Have you seen that guy Tommy Steine?'

Sentence (2) is the real test sentence for the PDD, since sentence (3), even when presented to the informants with a degree of stress (one of the characteristics of the PDD), could be confused with a sentence containing a preproprial article. Since (2) contains only a common noun, such confusion cannot be found here. We present the map for (2) below. The PDD was only tested in Norway and Sweden.
Map 1: Psychologically distal demonstrative (PDD) with common noun
(#99: Husker du han mannen vi traff i går? 'Do you remember the man we met yesterday?')
(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

The map is dominated by white and grey markers, although there are a few black ones in South Norway, and in Northern Sweden. We will get back to this in section 2.2 and 3.

2.2 Nordic Dialect Corpus (NDC)

There are two reasons we would like to investigate the Nordic Dialect Corpus in addition to the syntax database. One is that the PDD was only investigated in Norway and Sweden for the syntax database. The other is that there are some black markers on Map 1. It would be good if the spontaneous speech data in the NDC could shed some light on the results from the NSD. Let us first look for PDDs in Danish, Faroese, and Icelandic. As accounted for in Johannessen (2008a), the PDD in the mainland Nordic languages is not inflected for case, i.e., not in Norwegian, Swedish and Danish. This means that the PDD always has the same case realisation independently of the syntactic position of the determiner phrase containing the PDD. In Norwegian and Swedish, the PDD
always has nominative case, while in Danish, it always has accusative. The Icelandic PDD, however, is inflected for case like other pronouns.

(4) her var jo både karl og pige (Dan.)
    *here was yes both *male.farmhand and *female.farmhand*

foruden den ham aftægtsmanden som var her
    *in addition to the him (PDD) old farmer who was here*

‘Here were both a male and a female farmhand in addition to the old farmer who was here.’

nordjylland5 (NDC)

(5) tað er for ógvusligt og tað tað er sum hann Peder í Kunoy segði (Faroe.)
    *it is too violent and it it is like he (PDD) Peder at Kunøy said*

tað fer alt á húsgang
    *it goes all to bankruptcy*

‘It is too violent, and it is like that guy Peder at Kunøy said that all goes bankrupt.’

(Thanks to Zakaris Svabo Hansen for helping to translate this.)

(6) og hún á vinkonu við eigum sameiginlega vinkonu (Ice.)
    *and she has friend.F.ACC we have.IPL common.ACC friend.F.ACC*

og hana Hildu og gönguhópurinn hennar er að fara núna að ganga þarna
‘And she has a friend, we have a common friend and that Hilda and her hiking-group is about to go there.’

iceland_b6 (NDC)

(Thanks to Þórhallur Eyþórsson for helping to translate this.)

There are examples of the PDD in all the three languages, Danish, Faroese and Icelandic, that were not tested for the PDD in the syntax database. To be fair, the Faroese example could be either the PDD or the PPA as it stands, but given that the PPA does not exist in Faroese (there is no mention of it in Thráinsson et al. 2004), we take this (only) example from the corpus to be an instance of the PDD.
We should also investigate the results depicted in the map. In Norway the PDD has been accepted by informants from the very south to the very north, making it a bit of a puzzle that there are some black markers in Southern Norway. Since the Norwegian part of the corpus contains many conversations about people, it should be possible to check whether we find the PDD in spontaneous speech in the areas where informants have rejected it. If there are such discrepancies between the grammatical survey and the spontaneous speech recordings, the black markers could be due to some misunderstanding among the informants. The black markers are all scattered across Southern Norway: Brunlanes (Vestfold), Bud (Møre and Romsdal), Eidfjord (Hordaland), Fusa (Hordaland), Kvam (Oppland), Kvinnherad (Hordaland), Sirdal (Vest-Agder), Vestre Slidre (Oppland). A search for PDDs in the NDC yields eight hits. However, excluding the PDS involving a proper name (the latter could in principle be ambiguous with the preproprial articles), four of these places (Brunlanes, Kvam, Kvinnherad and Vestre Slidre) contain utterances with a common noun following the PDD. These are clear cases of what we are looking for. An example is given in (7).

\[(7) \text{han} \quad \text{samboeren} \quad \text{min} \quad \text{han} \quad \text{er} \quad \text{fra} \quad \text{Utåker} \quad \text{(Nor.)} \\
\text{he} \quad \text{(PDD)} \quad \text{partner.DEF} \quad \text{mine} \quad \text{he} \quad \text{is} \quad \text{from} \quad \text{Utåker} \\
\text{‘My partner, he's from Utåker.’ kvinnherad}_02uk \quad \text{(NDC)}\]

Since these four places are spread across Southern Norway (from the south east to the south west and the northern part of the south), it is likely that the other four (Bud, Eidfjord, Fusa and Kvam) also have the PDD, since they would otherwise be the only four in the country without it. We will not investigate further the Norwegian situation. It seems clear that the PDD exists everywhere in Norway. In Swedish, it is the northern parts of the country that have rejected the PDD in the syntax database. The corpus unfortunately has much less overall Swedish than Norwegian data, but there is one example of a PDD (two in the same sentence) from the northern part of Sweden; Anundsjö (Ångermanland).

\[(8) \text{han} \quad \text{soldaten} \quad \text{Han} \quad \text{svenske} \quad \text{soldaten} \quad \text{(Swedish)} \\
\text{he} \quad \text{(PDD)} \quad \text{soldier.DEF} \quad \text{he} \quad \text{(PDD)} \quad \text{Swedish} \quad \text{soldier.DEF} \\
\text{de} \quad \text{har} \quad \text{inga} \quad \text{andra} \quad \text{möjligheter} \\
\text{they} \quad \text{have} \quad \text{no} \quad \text{other} \quad \text{possibilities} \\
\text{‘That soldier, that Swedish soldier, they have no other possibilities.’ anundsjo}_0w3 \quad \text{(NDC)}\]

One example is too little to conclude about Swedish. One reason that there are so few examples in the NDC must be that there are few recordings in which the informants talk about other people, which is of course a necessary prerequisite for this kind of phenomenon. Northern Swedish is assumed to have the preproprial article (Delsing
2003). However, there are not many positive evaluations of the PPA either in the NSD. Perhaps the ScanDiaSyn questionnaire was misinterpreted by the Swedish informants, but it is impossible to know.

To conclude on PDDs, it seems to exist in all the Nordic languages, although there is some variation in Northern Sweden, which may indicate dialectal variation.

3. Discussion

3.1 Pragmatic conditions for use

Johannessen (2008a:164–166) gives conditions for the use of the PDD. I refer to that paper, but repeat them briefly here:

PDD Condition 1: The speaker does not personally know the person referred to.
PDD Condition 2: The addressee does not personally know the person referred to.
PDD Condition 3: The speaker has a negative attitude to the person referred to.
PDD Condition 4: The person referred to must be specific.

3.2. Different syntactic status in the Nordic languages

Johannessen (2008a) shows that the way the PDD is used syntactically differs in the Nordic languages. In this section we will only describe Norwegian, Swedish and Danish. In Danish and Swedish the PDD is external to the DP, while in Norwegian it is inside the DP, being incompatible with another determiner. (9) shows that the Danish PDD can cooccur with an otherwise DP-initial possessive determiner. (10) shows that the Swedish PDD cooccurs with the otherwise DP-initial definite determiner.

(9) hende vores klasselærerinde (Danish)

her (PDD) our teacher.F.DEF

‘that teacher of ours’ (Johannessen 2008a:51)

(10) hon den ena tjejer (Swed.)

she (PDD) the one girl.DEF

‘that one girl’ (Johannessen 2008a:53)

The DP-external situation in Danish is further demonstrated by the fact that in Danish the PDD does not influence the definiteness requirement in that language: In Danish, there can be at most one expression of definiteness in the DP. The fact that the pronominal, and hence inherently definite, PDD cooccurs with a definite noun shows that the PDD is external to the DP.

(11) hende pige med briller (Danish)

her (PDD) girl.DEF with glasses

‘that girl with the glasses’ (Johannessen 2008a:3)
The Nordic Dialect Corpus confirms these findings. In the Danish (12) we see that the PDD is followed by a DP-initial possessive determiner, and the same is the case in the Swedish (13). They are both within the same nominal complex, if not the same DP.

(12) jeg kan huske ham vores yngre lærer der (Dan.)

I can remember him (PDD) our younger teacher there

‘I can remember that young teacher of ours there.’ aeroe6 (NDC)

In (13) the PDD cooccurs with the DP-initial definite determiner.

(13) ja sa han den gamle bygg-mästaren (Sw.)

yes said he (PDD) the Old builder

‘Yes, said that old builder.’ vaxtorp_om3 (NDC)

In Norwegian, however, we find the PDD as a regular determiner in the DP, modifying the adjective, as in (14). Like Swedish, there is generally a preposed determiner in DPs that also have an adjective, but with the PDD, the DP-initial determiner can no longer be present.

(14) han er overalt han lille gnomen (No.)

he is everywhere he (PDD) little gnome.DEF

‘He's everywhere, that little gnome.’ bjugn_16 (NDC)

The case differences between Norwegian and Swedish on the one hand and Danish on the other that we saw at the beginning of Section 2.2, and that were also described in Johannesssen (2008a) are confirmed by the corpus data. The Danish PDD is invariably in the accusative case, while the Norwegian and Swedish PDDs are in the nominative case.
References


Web sites:
Nordic Atlas of Language Structures (NALS) Journal: http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nals
Nordic Dialect Corpus: http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html
Nordic Syntax Database: http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html