Demonstratives with fixed reference in narrative texts in Wan

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Background

• Demonstratives help interlocutors keep track of the story’s characters;
• their use is determined by discourse factors such as:
  - topicality
  - accessibility
  - activation state
  - discourse prominence
  - distance to previous mention.

(Himmelmann 1996: 226-229; Diessel 1999: 95-105)
Goals of the talk

• discuss how demonstratives are used in Wan (Mande, West Africa);
• show that demonstratives can have antecedents in different domains (within or outside the clause);
• discuss the unusual way in which they are used for long-distance binding in narrative texts;
• explore its implications for syntactic theory.
Major anaphoric elements in Wan

• personal pronouns

(1) lòŋ̀ gé ṣè dè è wō á yēē?  
   hare say 1SG father 3SG made FOC how  
   ‘The hare said: how did it happen?’

• demonstratives

(2) è bé wò kū sɔ̀ɔ̀ ...  
   3SG that.one make caught IDPH  
   ‘And he kept doing it until...’
Demonstratives used for discourse deixis

(3) **ɓe á ñàà yrēnō kōlī yā**
that.one COP 1SG:POSS evening lie with
‘That's my lie for the evening.’

(4) **ɓe gò bālē_mī wā**
that.one inside insignificant NEG
‘That is not without meaning.’

(5) **ɓe è gé èèè ɓé ziè yā á dōō gà**
them 3SG say INTJ that.one bad with NEG QUOT go
‘The hare said: eh, that’s not bad, go.’
Sentence-bound use of demonstratives

Extraposed constituents:

(6) lāā lòŋ nĩ bé déè àá pō dō kpó è má yά
2sg:poss hare little that.one father 3sg:poss thing one unique def it.is there
‘Your hare, that mister, he had a unique property [his cleverness was unique].’

Antecedents in conditional clauses:

(7) ké àá pe mĩ lèŋ bé bēē bò
if 3pl+3sg tell:past person to then that.one:narr pass
‘If you tell someone, he passes [and makes gossip everywhere].’
Sentence-bound use of demonstratives

Common in correlative clauses:

(8) bä pā kēēē lé béé gé
    LOG was.capable that DEF of that.one here.is
    ‘That is all that I could do.’

(9) bé kēēé zō bé gé
    then that DEF came that.one say
    ‘And the one who came said...’
Sentence-external referents: the puzzle

• The use of demonstratives does not depend on
  - distance to previous mention;
  - topicality;
  - accessibility;
  - switch of reference.

• Reference of demonstratives remains fixed throughout long stretches of discourse, independent of contextual factors (see also Perekhvalskaya 2016 for Mwan).
Examples

(10) bé è gā lē nē dō tā bé bē gé then 3SG went woman child one on then that.one say ‘And he$_{\text{pers}}$ went to an old woman, and she$_{\text{dem}}$ said...’

(11) bé lē bâlè jē-i jē-i é gē nè yâ mō then woman big very.old DEF PRT at.the.place there then bē mā ǎ klā é bē gé à dè lēŋ that.one S>O that behind see that.one say 3SG father to ‘Then there was a very old lady there, when she$_{\text{dem}}$ knew about it, she$_{\text{dem}}$ said to his$_{\text{pers}}$ father...’
And the python transformed [into a man] and came, and there were no scars on him. 

She says: [ooh - to her father and mother - I found a guy for me, here he is].

There was her little sister, she had yaws.

She says [Wow, this is your lover? You will marry him?]. The other one says: [The man that I found is this one.]
And *shëDEM* gave him that work, then when *shëDEM* once went [to the field] — *he*₃SG had already finished, preng!

‘[for] *he*₃SG had heard *her*DEM voice there, since *shëDEM* comes from far away there, then *shëDEM* stops down there: greetings-oh-greetings!’

‘then *he*₃SG quickly calls his hair, in order for them to place themselves [back] on him*₃SG’
Fixed reference at the level of episode

(13) े गेशें<...>
3sg say

‘Heₚᵉʳˢ says: [there's a hoe lying under the tuft of grass, choose the one you like!]’

bé gā bे-ř à dō kpó é mì bōŋbōli dō é mì kēé
that.one went touch-purp 3sg one unique def at very.big one def at like.this

‘Heₜᵉₘ went to take one that was this size - this big!’

àāyò béé bē tālā bēā léₜᵣ kǔₜₜ á sānī fāŋ
no that.one that.one threw that.one+3sg responded adj.foc there idph

‘No, heₜᵉₘ threw itₜₑₘ and caught it in the air, idph!’
Fixed reference at the level of episode

He$_{PERS=hyena}$ went, he$_{PERS=hyena}$ took the hare's child in the cloth -- and he$_{PERS=hyena}$ went to put him$_{DEM=hare}$ right there.

He$_{PERS=hyena}$ sang: /SONG/

When he$_{DEM}$ was coming slowly, and he$_{DEM=hare}$ arrived, at his$_{DEM=hare}$ arrival near them: idph! He$_{DEM=hare}$ hid under something.

He$_{PERS=hyena}$ sang, but he$_{PERS=hyena}$ saw him$_{DEM=hare}$ no more.

When he$_{PERS=hyena}$ left, it was already daylight...
Shifts of reference

• between episodes
• when one of the characters becomes more prominent, especially through speech reporting

And he$_{PERS=buffalo}$ goes to draw the water, wants to put the calabash in the water, and the water spirit, he$_{PERS=spirit}$ comes up for him$_{PERS=buffalo}$

/SONG/

And he$_{DEM=buffalo}$ dances, and dances, and dances, and no longer draws water.

And when he$_{DEM=buffalo}$ did not return, they said...
Summary

• In narratives, demonstratives have deictic uses (discourse deixis), sentence-internal used, and long-distance uses.

• Long-distance uses help distinguish between the main character (3rd person) and secondary participants (demonstratives).

• The demonstrative’s reference changes between episodes, and when secondary characters change.
Towards an account

• The demonstrative’s binding potential is not defined by the antecedent’s discourse status or information-structure properties.

• The account needs to refer to the level of narrative structure.

• Narrative structure:
  - subsumes the notion of Main Character;
  - reflects episodic structure.

• Both 3rd person and demonstratives are used anaphorically; demonstratives cannot be bound by Main Character outside their local domain.

• Different functions of demonstratives:
  - deictic uses;
  - anaphoric sentence-bound uses;
  - long-distance antecedents restricted to secondary characters.
Implications

• Pronominal use is sensitive to narrative structure:
  - anaphoric reference is sensitive to episodic boundaries (Fox 1987);
  - the use of logophoric pronouns is sensitive to the notion of (Non-)Narrator (Nikitina 2012);
  - the use of demonstratives is sensitive to the notion of Main Character.

• Formal syntactic representations need to incorporate the level of narrative structure.

• Other aspects of morphosyntax that are sensitive to narrative structure:
  - the choice of tense-aspect (forms restricted to narrative genres, forms specialized for reporting event sequences);
  - word order (word order patterns associated with narration);
  - complex constructions (repetition of portions of a previous clause, patterns of Tail-Head linkage)...
Thank you
Selected references


