Demonstratives in Romani – A Minimalist account

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According to a common view within Minimalist Program, demonstratives that occur in SpecDP are raised from a lower structural position. Demonstratives are base-generated in a low position in Determiner Phrase within the extended nominal projection. Romani dialects can be grouped according the obligatoriness vs. optionality of Demonstrative Raising. While Demonstrative Raising is obligatory in a majority of the Romani dialects, in dialects such as Kalderas and Ursari demonstratives may remain in situ. The factors behind the parametric variation related to Demonstrative Raising included different language contacts.

1. DEMONSTRATIVES IN ROMANI

According to Matras (2002: 103–104) the demonstratives constitute in Romani a four-term system that is typologically striking compared to most of the European languages. This four-term system covers every logical combination of the two vowels a and o that bear semantic distinctions and the two demonstrative stems d- and k-. This system has been retained in a majority of Romani dialects, but in the convenience sample of 30 dialects Matras (2000) used, the smallest demonstrative systems only comprise two terms: Polish and North Russian dialects lack the proximate demonstratives (e.g. dava and dova), while in sini and manuš, the remote demonstratives (e.g. kava ja kova) are missing. Finnish Romani distinguishes furthermore between long and short forms of the demonstratives. The ‘long’ demonstratives (a)davva, kovva and (a)dovva constitute a three-term-system similar to the ones in some Russian, South-Polish and Austrian Burgenland romani. The original four-term-system survives, however, in the ‘short’ demonstratives (a)da, (a)do, (a)ka and (a)ko (Valtonen 1968: 125).

2. WORD ORDER AND AGREEMENT IN DPS CONTAINING DEMONSTRATIVES

Determiner phrases containing demonstratives can be divided into three types in the European Romani dialects (1a–c). The determinerless structure *N > Dem is unattested (Matras 2000: 104).
Table 1
Demonstratives in Finnish Romani.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Long Forms</th>
<th>Short Forms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simplex proximate</td>
<td>davva dâles dâla dâlen (a)da</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific proximate</td>
<td>(a)ka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplex remote</td>
<td>dovva dôles dôla dôlen (a)do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific remote</td>
<td>kovva kôles kôla kôlen (a)ko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) a. (Dem > N) kadava rom this man 'this man'
b. (Dem > Det > N) kadava o rom this DET man 'this man'
c. (Det > N > Dem) o rom kadava DET man this 'this man'
(Examples Boretzky 2000a: 43.)

The first type is shown in (1a). This type is incompatible with definite determiners. It is the most commonly found in Romani dialects. I will call it Type 1. The RMS database suggests that this type occurs in 93 of 100 samples describing 50–60 dialects. Type 1 is the only option in all northern dialects (e.g. Finnish Romani, German and Italian Sinti, Manuš, Romani of Wales, Polish and Latvian Romani, xaladitka) and Central dialects (e.g. Böhm, Burgenland, West and East Slovak, Romungro and Gurvari).

In Finnish Romani, adnominal demonstratives always precede NP (2a), adjective modifiers (2b), genitives (2c), and often possessives (2d) as well as most quantifiers or quantificational adjectives (2e). The possessives may sometimes precede the demonstratives as in spoken Finnish (3a). Furthermore the universal quantifiers sâro 'all, entire' and sâkko
'every' may occur before the demonstratives, but in such case they head a QP that gets DP as its complement (3b).

(2) a. (Dem > N)
   davva čër
   this:NOM.SG house
   'this house'

   b. (Dem > Adj > N)
   davva baro čër
   this:NOM.SG big:M house
   'this big house'

   c. (Dem > N_{Gen} > N)
   house
   'this house of the brother'
   (Dem > Poss > N)
   davva mo čër
   this:NOM.SG my:M house
   '(this) my house'
   (Dem > Adj > N)
   davva sáro rakkiba
   this:NOM.SG all:M talking
   'all this talking'

(3) a. (Poss > Dem > N)
   mo davva čër
   my:M this:NOM.SG house
   '(this) my house'

   b. (Q > Dem > N)
   sáro davva rakkiba
   all:M this:NOM.SG talking
   'all this talking'

The second type of DPs containing a demonstrative, represented by (1b), follows a greek pattern and is an option to the one shown in (1a) in some of the Romani dialects spoken in Greece and Macedonia and certain kalderaš variants. The RMS database suggests that this occurs in Romacilikanes, Sofades, Čurjarja Arilje, and Macedonian Arli. I will call it Type 2. In some Romani dialects, in which demostratives are incompatible with definite determiner, postnominal adjectival modifiers
may have a definite determiner of their own. This yields a structure Dem > N > Det > Adj, e.g. in kalderaš kado kaš o baro ‘this:M tree DET big:M = ‘this big tree’ (example Boretzky 1994: 55, ref. Matras 2000: 102).

Let us take a look at the final Type 3 shown in (1c), which is the only possible one in no Romani dialects, in other words, omitting demonstrative raising is always optional in Romani. According to Matras’ (2000) convenience sample, this kind of structures are optionally found in kalderaš, ursari and Agia Varvara; RMS database suggests occurrence of postnominals demonstratives in spoitari, too. Kalderaš belongs to the Vlax group, while Ursari and Spoitari are classified as South Balkan dialects (Boretzky (1999a, 1999b, 2000b, 2000c) sees Ursari to belong the dialect group South Balkan I together with Arli/Erlí, Sepeči, Rumelian, Zargarin, Romano and the Crimean Romani dialect (Matras 2002: 223)).

No dialect group seems to offer the possibility of Type 3 systematically. The syntax of DPs that contain a demonstrative seem not to follow well the usual classification of Romani dialects (e.g. Matras 2002), but have an areal nature unlike external possession, for instance, discussed by Crevels and Bakker (2000). According to Boretzky (2000a: 43) Type 3 may have been formed as a result of greek influence (cf. aftos o andras ‘this Det man’), but its occurrence in Vlax dialects may been reinforced by Romanian influence (cf. om-ul acesta ‘man-DEF this’). Matras (2000: 102) considers the postnominal position of the demonstratives as postponed modification and possible as pronominal elements independent of the head nouns. As such, the demonstratives can independently represent the referent. Furthermore postnominal demonstratives have a weaker determiner character than the prenominal ones, which may explain the obligatory occurrence of a definite determiner in the construction. (Matras 2000: 103–4.)

In a majority of Romani dialects, prenominal demonstratives agree with their head nouns in primary case (i.e. nominative and oblique), but not in secondary case (4). Some Romani dialects retain a gender distiction in the oblique or non-nominative (5a), while in other dialects, the gender distiction becomes neutralized in favour of the unmarked masculine (5b). Postnominal demonstratives behave like postnominal adjective attributes and possessives: they receive a full noun-like case inflection (6). (Matras 2000: 101.)

(4) phendem kodo-le rom-es-ke
    said.1SG DEM-OBL.M man-LayerI.M-DAT
    ‘I said to this man’ (Kalderaš/Lovari, Matras 2000: 101.)

(5) a. kada-la romnj-a-sa
    this-OBL.F woman-LayerLF-SOC
'with this woman'
b. kada-le rom-e(s)-sa
   this-OBL.M man-Layer.I.M-SOC
   'with this man'
   (Kalderaš/Lovari, Matras 2000: 101.)

(6) e gaž-es-ke kodo-les-ke
   'for that man' (Kalderaš, Boretzky 1994: 55, ref. Matras 2000: 101.)

In Finnish Romani, demonstratives show number agreement with the head NP as shown in (7). Unlike in many Romani dialects, demonstratives do not agree with the head noun in gender and often neither in primary case (8). No description of Finnish Romani mentions of a feminine form of demonstratives. DPs containing a possessor are ambiguous as the examples in (9) suggest.

(7) a. davva rankani/-o džuvli
   this.NOM.SG beautiful.F/M woman.NOM.SG
   'this beautiful woman'
b. dala rankane/-o džuvja
   these.NOM.PL beautiful.PL/M woman.NOM.PL
   'these beautiful women'

(8) a. dovva romni
   this.NOM.SG Romni.NOM.SG
   'this Romni'
b. dovva/ dola romjaha
   this.NOM.SG/ this.OBL.SG Romni.OBL.SG-INSTR
   'with this Romni'

(9) a. davva phâlesko čër
   this.NOM.SG brother.OBL.SG-GEN-M house
   'this house of the brother/the house of this brother'
b. davva phâlesko džuvli
   this.NOM.SG brother.OBL.SG-GEN-M wife.NOM.SG
   'this wife of the brother/the wife of this brother'
c. davva phenjako dâd
   this.NOM.SG sister-OBL.SG-GEN-M father
   'this father of the sister/the father of this sister'
3. A MINIMALIST VIEW OF ROMANI DPs CONTAINING DEMONSTRATIVES

In a number of languages, such as English, French, and Italian, demonstratives and definite determiners are in complementary distribution. Therefore it was considered in the early generative tradition that demonstratives and definite determiners share a syntactic position, despite of having different semantic features. The generative work at the beginning of the 1990s showed that demonstratives and definite determiners occur different structural positions (Giusti 1991; Cornilescu 1992; Brugè 1996; Roca 1996; Bernstein 1993, 1997). As a result, the demonstratives were interpreted either as adjectives (Cinque 1996) base-generated as a part of universal serialization of adjectives either above or below numerals and descriptive adjective, and depending of language, they could be either raised to a higher position or remain in situ. It was on the other hand suggested by several linguists working on DPs in Romance languages such Spanish, Italian, Catalan and French, that demonstratives are rather base-generated a specifiers of a functional projection located between DP and NP (e.g. Giusti 1992; Bernstein 1993, 1997, 2001). Demonstratives, then, are seen as SpecDemP, while definite determiners are base-generated as heads of D.

Several suggestion have been made for the structural location of DemP. According to Giusti (1992, 1993, 1997, ref. 2002), demonstratives are maximal elements adjoined to functional specifiers, and they are located immediately below the highest functional projection. However Brugè and Giusti (1996) claim that in many languages the demonstratives are rather specifiers that located quite low in DPs, and for instance their position as second elements in (10) is derived. According to Brugè (2002), the structural position of DemP is below are other functional projection containing different classes of the adjectives, but above the NP projection.

(10) a. băiatul acesta frumos
    boy-DEF this nice
    ’this nice boy’

b. *băiatul frumos acesta

From the point of view of Giusti (1992) and Bernstein (1993, 1997, 2001), common to Type 1 and Type 2 is a demonstrative raising. Demonstrative raising is better illustrated by the Finnish Romani example (11). Brugè and Giusti explain the need for demonstratives to raise by the assumption that the referential and deictic features of demonstrative are checked in SpecDP. According to Brugè (2002) the obligatory of
demonstrative raising follows a parametrized principle stating when the feature [+ referential] is checked. Most Romani dialects have a strong feature [+ referential] that is checked before Spell-Out so that demonstrative must be raised to its prenominal position in SpecDP.

Type 1 and Type 2 are distinguished from each other by (in)compatibility with definite determiners. The fact that some Romani dialect allow demonstratives and definite determiners to co-occur within the DPs, supports a view like the one of Giusti, assuming demonstrative raising to SpecDP. Giusti (2002) explains cross-linguistic differences in the (in)compatibility of demonstratives with definite determiners by differences in the realization of the referential feature of D salience either in D itself or its specifier. In the those languages in which demonstratives are compatible with definite determiners both the specifier of D and the head D are made visible. On the other hand in languages, in which demonstratives and definite determiners are in complementary distribution, either the specifier of D or the head D is made visible, but not simultaneously both of them.
Example (12) corresponds to Type 3 and, thus, represents a Romani dialect that allows postnominal demonstratives. The possibility of postnominal demonstratives in Romani dialects supports the assumption of a low structural base-position of demonstrative (as suggested for Romance languages by Giusti 1992). The noun is raised to a higher functional projection to receive case, while the demonstrative remains in situ. Brugè (2002) assumes that in cases like this the demonstrative has a weak [+referential] feature that is checked after Spell-Out but before LF.

(12) 

4. SUMMARY

Table (2) summarizes the characteristics of the different structural types of DPs containing demonstratives. Following the minimalist tradition, I have assumed here that demonstratives have a low base-position in DPs, but – according to parametrized principle, they may undergo raising to Spec,D. Demonstrative raising takes place in a majority of Romani dialects which thus have a strong feature [+referential] that is checked
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative Raising</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong feature [+referential]</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak feature [+referential]</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SpecD and D visible</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SpecD or D visible</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

before Spell-Out. A relatively small number of dialects permit contact-induced variation, and the may have either strong or weak [+referential] feature. The weak [+referential] feature is checked after Spell-Out but before LF. As a result, there is no need for the demonstrative to leave its base-position in SpecDemP. (In)compatibility with definite determiners depends on whether both SpecD and D can be made simultaneously visible.

References


Roca, Francesca 1996. La determinación y la modificación nominal en español. Doctoral dissertation, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.