



RITVA LAURY

Minimal reference

The use of pronouns in Finnish and Estonian discourse

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in Finnish and Estonian discourse

Edited by Ritva Laury



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Introduction

The purpose of this book is to make available, for the first time within one volume, some of the most innovative research into pronominal reference in Finnish and Estonian. The articles represent several linguistic subfields and theoretical approaches, including ethnomethodology, interactional linguistics, psycholinguistics, syntax, accessibility theory, and the theory of grammaticalization. In spite of the theoretical diversity the papers represent, all of them are staunchly corpus-based. Most deal with spoken language data, although written language is also represented.

The papers by Etelämäki and Seppänen both analyze the use of demonstrative pronouns in informal conversations in Finnish in the framework of ethnomethodological conversation analysis. Etelämäki's highly innovative paper, strongly influenced by the work of William Hanks (1990, 1992), is based on the assumption that referents in conversation are interactional entities which come into being and are meaningful only in and through verbal interaction and are also identified in relation to the ongoing activity. She proposes that the Finnish demonstratives *se*, *tämä*, and *tuu*, differ in terms of how they reflect and shape the actional structure of the conversation and how they set up a relation between the referent and its context.

Seppänen's paper deals with a feature of Finnish demonstratives which distinguishes them from the corresponding pronouns in languages like English, that is, their use without a nominal head for human referents. Seppänen focuses on the use of the Finnish *tämä* 'this' to refer to co-participants in the speech situation, combining the study of verbal interaction with the study of gaze, and shows how demonstratives are used to modify the participant framework (Goffman 1981, Goodwin 1981) in conversation. A particularly valuable contribution of Seppänen's study is the way in which it challenges the traditional, binary distinction between the second and third person along the lines of speech act participancy, showing that the Finnish demonstratives, although they are third person pronouns, are an important device for navigation in the area between the first and second person, providing a vehicle for paying attention to a person's participant status in the conversation without addressing her directly.

The topic of Laury's paper is the use of pronouns for first mentions of their referents. She shows that, contrary to claims that first-mention pro-

nouns can only be used for generic referents, in ordinary Finnish conversations, such pronouns are also used for referents which are individually identifiable to the addressees, given a sufficient degree of symmetry of the indexical ground (Hanks 1990) shared by the interactants. She also reviews existing research on the Finnish demonstratives to see how well the features proposed for them by various researchers account for their use for first mentions, noting that in particular, the recent approaches which are based on interactional factors are quite enlightening in terms of accounting for the ways in which they are put to use in interaction.

Like Seppänen's paper, the contribution by Laitinen also deals with personhood and participancy in the speech event. Her focus is on the pronoun *hän*, which was developed into a specifically human pronoun in standard written Finnish, although it was and still is a logophoric pronoun in most dialects of spoken Finnish. Laitinen's careful, scholarly paper, reflecting years of research and thinking on the topic, exemplifies and traces the development of *hän* from its logophoric origins to its other uses as the pronoun of the protagonist in narratives and, on the other hand, as an evidential particle of ignorance. The paper also contains a short section on the syntax of person marking in Finnish.

The papers by Pajusalu and Kaiser deal with the factors that influence the choice of pronouns in, respectively, spoken Estonian and written Finnish, adding grammatical features to the chiefly pragmatic ones dealt with in the papers discussed above. Pajusalu's paper, based on a corpus of spoken Estonian, considers the main anaphoric reference-tracking devices of the language, the demonstratives *see*, *seal*, *sealt*, and the third person pronouns *tema* and *ta*. Pajusalu's paper is groundbreaking in two ways: up to date, there has been relatively little work done on Estonian pronouns, especially based on actual language use: thus her research, here and elsewhere, fills a considerable void. Another novel feature of Pajusalu's paper is that she combines the examination of the semantic, pragmatic and information flow features which affect the choice of pronouns in Estonian with grammatical features, case in particular. She also shows that, although animacy of the referent is generally thought to be an important factor controlling the choice of referential forms in Estonian, the personal pronouns can also have inanimate referents. Especially interesting is discussion of the interconnection of the paradigms of the pro-forms with morphological case.

Kaiser's paper offers an innovative deconstruction of the factor of the salience and accessibility of the referent, which has often been thought to control the choice of referential form in a relatively straightforward way. She examines the choice between the Finnish pronouns *hän* and *tämä* in two different ways, on the basis of psycholinguistic experiments as well as the distribution of these forms in a written corpus, concluding that a unified factor of salience fails to explain how language users interpret and make use of these two pronouns. Instead, she suggests that the demonstrative *tämä* accesses the discourse level, being associated with the low end of the salience scale, while the pronoun *hän* accesses the syntactic level, and is associated with the high end of the grammatical role scale.

Duvallon's carefully argued paper also proposes a syntactic approach to the use and interpretation of pronouns, but from a perspective differ-

ent from Kaiser's; like Laury's paper, Duvallon's paper also takes up the issue of first-mention pronouns, but here, too, her perspective is distinct. Using the Pronominal Approach developed by Blanche-Benveniste et al (1987), Duvallon examines the use and interpretation of the pronoun *se* in spoken Finnish. She notes that reference formulation can be an extended process, and that the pronoun *se* can be used for picking out a referent with a minimum of descriptive content even when a lexical description is still in progress, still being negotiated, or even momentarily unavailable. In such cases, she argues, the interpretation of the pronoun takes place inside the linguistic context, by establishing a connection between the host construction of the pronoun and the larger, suspended sequence it is housed in. Duvallon is the first to apply the Pronominal Approach to the study of Finnish, and her work has great promise.

Päivi Juvonen takes up a topic which has so far not received sufficient attention in Finnish linguistics, perhaps due to its complexity, namely indefinite determiners. She discusses the three forms which have been noted to express indefiniteness in spoken Finnish, *yks*, *joku/jokin*, and *semmonen*. Based on their use in a spoken corpus, she comes to the conclusion that the determiners differ pragmatically. Juvonen suggests that *yks* and *joku* differ so that *yks* is used when the referent is specific, but its identity is not retrievable from the context, while *joku* is used with either specific or non-specific referents. *Yks* tends to imply that the referent will be important in the upcoming discourse; on the other hand, *joku* seems to imply that the exact identity of the referent is not important, or that the speaker is not the original source of the information given. Contrasting with these two, *semmonen* is used when the identity of the referent itself is not in focus, but its type or class membership is.

Put together, these articles represent both theoretical innovation and diversity of approach. It has been a great pleasure to work on this volume with this group of researchers and as the editor, I would like to thank all the contributors for their creativity, flexibility and enthusiasm. Many of us were recently able to participate in a workshop at the Annual Finnish and Estonian Conference of Linguistics in Tallinn, where ideas brought forward in the volume were discussed and expanded upon. The active participation of newer Estonian and Finnish colleagues in the workshop was especially welcome and encouraging, and it is to be hoped that further research and cooperation along the paths opened in this volume will continue across the language boundaries. Auli Hakulinen deserves great thanks for originally coming up with the idea for this volume. I also wish to thank Johanna Ilmakunnas and Pauliina Rihto, the publishing editors at Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, for excellent cooperation and expert help in the production stage of the volume, and Pentti Leino, the series editor, for his relaxed attitude about many things.

In Helsinki, June 15, 2004

Ritva Laury

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APPENDIX

Morphological glosses

| | |
|------|---|
| ABL | ablative |
| ACC | accusative |
| ADE | adessive |
| ALL | allative |
| CLT | clitic |
| COMP | comparative |
| COND | conditional |
| ELA | elative |
| ESS | essive |
| GEN | genitive |
| ILL | illative |
| IMP | imperative |
| INE | inessive |
| INF | infinitive |
| NEG | negation |
| PAST | past tense |
| PCP | participle |
| PL | plural |
| PSS | passive |
| PTC | particle |
| PTV | partitive |
| PX | possessive suffix |
| Q | question |
| SUP | superlative |
| TRA | translative |
| COM | comitative |
| 1SG | first person singular (likewise for 2 nd and 3 rd) |
| 1PL | first person plural |

Context and referent in interaction

Referential and indexical dimensions of the Finnish demonstrative pronouns

Introduction

In this paper, my aim is to describe the referential and indexical features of the Finnish demonstrative pronouns *tä(m)ä*, *toi (tuo)* and *se*, with emphasis on the pronoun *tä(m)ä*.¹ I examine everyday talk as activity, where artefacts are constituted and talked about along with all sorts of other things being done. I assume that conversational referents are best understood as interactional entities (see Etelämäki 1998); furthermore, they only come to being in interaction when referred to. In addition, they are identified in relation to the on-going activity, regardless of whether they are concrete, physical objects, or linguistically created ones (i.e. second or third order entities, Lyons 1977: 443–445).² As Heath & Hindmarsh (2000) write, the objects are “inseparable from the environment in which they are located and the specific courses of action in which they figure”. Hence, also referential expressions become meaningful only in and through the interaction. Furthermore, the profoundly interactional character of referents-in-interaction is embodied in the grammar of reference forms, particularly in the semantics of demonstrative pronouns.

The acts of reference are profoundly reflexive: the objects of reference are identified in relation to the on going activity, and simultaneously the activity is reflected and constituted through the references to the objects. Therefore, referential expressions themselves take part in indexing the activity, and in that way create their own indexical contexts. When considering referential expressions, the reflexive nature of reference invites us to look at two directions, namely the referential and the indexical. Demonstrative pronouns are referential indexicals, which means that their basic function is to individuate objects of reference in terms of their relation to the indexical ground of reference (Hanks 1990: 36–43;

1 The paper is based on my forthcoming doctoral dissertation *Tarhoite ja toiminta. Tutkimus suomen pronomista tä(m)ä*.

2 This is not an ontological claim about the existence of entities *per se*, but a claim about the existence of mutually shared referents in interaction.

1992). The indexical ground is that part of the interactional context that functions as the sociocentric origo for the reference. Since the context is dynamic, the demonstratives function in two ways: while referring to an entity they also organize the indexical ground, and set a relation between the referent and the indexical ground (Heritage 1996 [1984] 236–237, see also Hanks 1992: 53).

I approach linguistic phenomena through ethnomethodological conversation analysis, where conversation is examined as organized activities accomplished in and through turns-at-talk. In conversational data, the unfolding interaction appears as the primary context for the referential acts. The data used for this paper is naturally occurring face-to-face, and telephone conversations. In the next section, I will describe the Finnish demonstrative system. I will then proceed with the analyses of three conversational sequences to exemplify the use of the pronouns, and to empirically argue for the referential and indexical features that I propose in this paper. Finally, I will briefly discuss the idea of indexical context including conversational activities.

The Finnish demonstratives

There are three demonstrative pronouns in Finnish, namely *tä(m)ä*, *toi (tuo)*, and *se*. Besides the three demonstrative pronouns, there are also pronominal adjectives and adverbs, which are based on the same roots.

Table 1. *The Finnish demonstratives.*³

The Finnish demonstrative pronouns

Pronouns:

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <i>tää (tämä)</i> | (‘this’) | <i>nää (näämä)</i> | (‘these’) |
| <i>toi (tuo)</i> | (‘that’) | <i>noi (nuo)</i> | (‘those’) |
| <i>se</i> | (‘it’/‘the’) | <i>ne</i> | (‘they’/‘the’) |

A sample of other Finnish demonstratives

Adjectives:

Adverbs/Particles:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>tä-mmönen (tä-llainen)</i> | <i>tää-llä</i> | <i>näin</i> |
| <i>to-mmonen (tuo-llainen)</i> | <i>tuo-lla</i> | <i>noin</i> |
| <i>se-mmonen (se-llainen)</i> | <i>sie-llä</i> | <i>niin</i> |

The translations above are only approximate ones, since the Finnish reference system is quite different from the English one. All the Finnish demonstrative pronouns may be used either independently or adnominally. There are no unambiguous articles in Finnish, but adnominally used pro-

3 The first form is commonly used in southern Finnish vernacular. The standard Finnish forms are in parentheses.

nouns *se* (Laury 1997: 250–263) and even *tä(m)ä* (Juvonen 2000: 196) have been noted to possess features of a definite article.

In my description, I will follow Hanks' (1990, 1992) model of demonstrative reference, first applied to Finnish by Laury (1997). He proposes that the meanings of referential indexicals are composed of three features, namely characterizing, relational, and indexical. The characterizing features designate properties of referents, the relational ones convey the relation of the referent to the ground, as well as ways of access (tactual, visual, discourse) to the referent, and the indexical features organize the indexical ground against which the referent is to be identified (Hanks 1990: 66, 1992: 51–53). According to Laury (1997), the characterizing features of the Finnish demonstratives designate the referent to be either “the one”, i.e. a single object, or “the region”. The relational features express that the referent is either included in or excluded from the context. The indexical features organize the context to either speaker (+ addressee) or addressee centric (1997: 58–62). My proposal differs somewhat from the ones introduced above, as can be seen from the table below. I have only specified the referential (i.e. characterising) and indexical features in the table, since they are in focus in this paper:

Table 2. *The Finnish demonstrative roots.*

| Roots: | Referential features: | Indexical features: |
|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| <i>tä-</i> | open | asymmetric |
| <i>t(u)o-</i> | open | symmetric |
| <i>se-</i> | closed | symmetric |

For the sake of uniformity, I use the term referential instead of characterizing, when referring to the features that correspond to referential dimension. I suggest them to be “open” (for further definitions) and “closed”, for the following reasons. As mentioned above, the demonstrative class in Finnish includes pronouns, adverbs, and even adjectives. They are all based on the three demonstrative roots *tä-*, *to-/tuo-*, and *se-*. The pronouns refer to a single entity, while the adverbs might refer to a region (*täällä*, *tuolla*, *siellä*), manner (*näin*, *noin*, *niin*, *täten*, *siten*), or time (*tällöin*, *tuolloin*, *silloin*), and the adjectives to quality⁴ (*tällanen*, *sellanen*, *tollanen*). In these forms, such referential properties as regional, manner, or temporal are designated by affixes that are mostly frozen forms of

4 The pronominal adjectives are often used as determinants for potentially referential NPs, in which case they can be compared to other NP determinants. However, as NP determinants they emphasize the category that the NP expresses rather than the specificity of the referent (see Vilkuna 1992: 132–133; Juvonen, in this volume), which is due to their adjectival character.

original case markers. Hence, it is not the demonstrative root that makes these distinctions.⁵

In addition, the root itself seems to convey some referential meaning. It designates the referent properties that have to do with the issue of definiteness. In the next section, I will propose that definiteness, when understood as “knownness”, is not a static feature of a referent, nor is it a dichotomy (see also Du Bois 1980; Chafe 1994: 93–100; Laury 1997: 34–51). The question is not only whether the referent is identifiable, but also whether it is adequately identified for the on-going activity. The pronouns *tä(m)ä* and *toi* express that paying attention to, describing, or determining the referent is somehow relevant for the on-going activity, and therefore the referent is open for further characterizations. That way they also function as pointing. The pronoun *se* marks the referent to be sufficiently defined for the on-going purposes, and therefore “closed” for further identification.

The indexical grounding of referents simultaneously makes reference to, and articulates with, the context in which the reference is performed (Hanks 1991: 254–255). Thus, the indexical component of reference organizes the indexical ground of reference. I propose that the Finnish demonstratives organize it as either “symmetric” or “asymmetric”, according to the mutuality of the participants’ understanding of the on-going activity, rather than proposing the reference to be either speaker or recipient centric. This is because in my view the indexical ground is profoundly social (see below; also Hanks 1990: 36–43), and based on the on-going interaction. In the next two sections I hope to exemplify the points I have made so far, by analysing three extracts from actual conversational data. I will first discuss the referential features, and then the indexical ones.

Referential features

In this section, the main emphasis will be on the characterizing features of the pronoun *tä(m)ä*, but I will discuss the other two demonstratives, too. I have argued that the pronouns *tä(m)ä* and *toi* convey that their referents are still open for discussion, whereas the pronoun *se* marks its referent as known enough for the on-going purposes. Since *tä(m)ä* and *toi* point at their referents as “observables”, their use is parallel to the

5 In addition to referring to inanimate referents, the Finnish demonstratives might be used for referring to persons, and even to the participants of a conversation (Seppänen 1998; Kaiser, in this volume). Among other things, they differ from the Estonian demonstratives in this respect (see Pajusalu, in this volume). Since the demonstratives might be used to referring to human and inanimate entities, the referential features do not designate such features as “animate” or “human” either. However, in person references the pronouns do propose particular participant statuses for the referent (Seppänen 1998). In addition, a notion of participant roles is related to the notions of humanity or animacy.

act of pointing. I will exemplify my proposal in the analysis of the following extract (1).

The extract is from a conversation with two participants, Airi and Sisko. They are both artists, and they are at Airi's studio discussing her paintings that are present in the room. The extract is from the beginning of the situation. I will focus on Airi's turns, and show how the demonstrative pronouns function, first, in directing the recipient to look at the painting, and secondly, in organizing the unfolding activity.

(1) (Airi ja Sisko)

- 1 Airi: ensin puhutaan tosta?.hh
first let's talk about that one?
- 2 Sisko: mm:.
mhm.
- 3 (0.5)
- 4 Airi: h:\$(h)y(h)y k(h)yl se on aika kaamee.hh\$.hhniin
h:\$(h)i(h)i it(h) is quite awful indeed.hh\$
- 5 totah (2.4) se nyt jatkaa sitä lootustee°maa°?
so:h (2.4) it now continues the lotus theme?
- 6 (3.2)
- 7 Sisko: mitä lootusteemaa
what lotus theme
- 8 Airi: sitä mitä mä tein (.) siihe viime näyttelyyn
the one that I did (.) to the previous exhibition
- 9 sen pallon (.) pyöreän jos oli se valkosen
that ball the round one that had that white
- 10 |PAINTING.....
loo[tus keskellä? (0.5) (0.2) mut]ta: (.) se on
lo[tus in the middle? (0.5)|(0.2) but] (.) it has
- 11 Sisko: [NODDS REPEATEDLY]
- 12 Airi: (.) jostain syystä (.) ruvennu mua kiinnostamaan
(.) for some reason (.) begun to interest me
- 13 tää (0.6) pelkän tumman ja vaaleen (0.4) #niin#ku
this (0.6) pure dark and light (0.4) #like#
- 14 vaihtelu?
varying?

This book presents some of the most recent research on Finnish and Estonian pronouns and other minimal forms of reference. The articles deal with features particular to the pronoun systems of Finnic languages, such as logophoricity and the use of demonstratives for human referents, as well as other topics of current interest in research into the nature of pronominal reference, in particular the contextual, interactive and grammatical factors which influence the use and interpretation of pronouns. An international group of authors approach these questions from several theoretical frameworks including psycholinguistics, syntax, conversation analysis and discourse analysis.



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