

SOUTHERN THAI DEIXIS

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'Demonstrative elaboration' was used by Sapir to refer to complex deictic systems in certain languages - systems which he said could lead to 'an endless procession of nuances' (1921:93, 108). He went on to observe that languages differ as to which deictic distinctions are obligatory or at least 'very natural', and the comparative impoverishment of English demonstratives and articles in this regard was noted. (We use *deixis* below to refer to such demonstrative categories, e.g., to spatial adverbials like *here* and *there* and to adjectival and pronominal forms like *this* and *that*; although *deixis* is sometimes also applied to tense phenomena and personal pronouns, those will not be dealt with here.)¹

As though to constrain somewhat Sapir's 'endless procession', recent cross-linguistic interest in deictic phenomena has led to a search for deictic generalisations and universal features. Such studies include the important general taxonomic proposals of Fillmore (1971; 1982), emphasising a two-way category system of syntactic functions and 'distance contrasts', the latter covering the familiar *proximal-(medial)-distal* distinctions made in many languages - but not in the same manner. The tendency of these distinctions to be coded through phonetic iconicity is also well-known (Tanz, 1971, 1980). A more diachronic-developmental approach has been taken by Lyons (1977, 1979), who suggests a quasi-derivational progression from what he calls 'proto-reference', including pointing gestures, through demonstratives, textual deixis and on to anaphors, articles and personal pronouns. Perhaps related to this progression are other proposed deictic features and contrasts, such as an *unemphatic/emphatic* distinction noted for Southern Sotho and earlier stages of Turkish (Anderson and Keenan, 1985) and the use of deictic forms to indicate *emotional closeness and distance*, as though through a metaphorical process related to spatial distance (R. Lakoff, 1974).

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In the following sections we turn to a deictic system that Sapir would probably have considered 'demonstrative elaboration'. We present evidence suggesting that the deictic forms under review operate as two separate but linked subsystems, along with another series of reduced forms. The main subsystems are separate along both formal and functional lines, although there is a certain functional overlap. Of the proposed approaches noted above, no one of them alone adequately accounts for the structure of the total deictic system under review below, although taken as a whole these studies suggest most of the relevant categories and contrasts needed to clarify how the system is constituted and operates.

The deictic system described is that of a representative rural Southern Thai dialect (i.e. of *Pak Tay*, as the dialect group is called locally); the variety discussed here is spoken in the Sathing Phra District of Songkhla Province.² General features of the dialect, including sociolinguistic background, have been described elsewhere (Diller, 1979a). For purposes here it is sufficient to note that the seven-tone system is represented by paired subscript numbers (one to five) suggesting relative pitch and contour; this follows the practice of Li (1977:5).³ Absence of a subscript of this sort indicates an unstressed variable-pitch syllable, not unlike the so-called 'neutral tone' of Mandarin Chinese.

1. Deictic forms

Deictic forms for Sathing Phra Southern Thai as encountered in recorded conversations and colloquial texts can be represented paradigmatically as in Figure 1.⁴ Out of the thirty-three forms, two perhaps have a somewhat marginal status, being regarded by some speakers as 'very impolite' or even as 'sub-linguistic' exclamations (note Lyons' 'proto-reference'); these forms are represented in parentheses. Not indicated in Figure 1 are interrogative and indefinite forms which clearly have a close relationship, e.g. *day*₂₄ 'which', *nay*₅₅ 'where', etc. Glosses for sets of forms in Figure 1 are suggested in Figure 2; these should be taken as only very loose approximations for convenience, pending fuller discussion below.

Considerable allomorphy or near allomorphy characterises Figure 1. This is partly a matter of free variation and partly variation conditioned by environment. Such alternation is to be distinguished from more substantive morphophonemic or morphosyntactic relationships which code distinctive semantic, pragmatic and syntactic information as discussed below. Allomorphy has been observed only among items with the same vowel and tone, and is of two sorts. (i.) The initial *h-* often occurs as an apparently free variant of initials *d-* and *n-*, as in forms such as *de*₃₁ / *he*₃₁ '(look) here!' and *na:n*₃₁ / *ha:n*₃₁ '(look) there!'.⁵ For Group II in Figure 1, the column-4 variants in *h-* often (but not invariably) have weaker stress than do their column-3 counterparts in *n-*; such weaker-stress forms - especially *han*₄₃ 'that' - are far more common than their *n-* counterparts in narrative texts. (ii.) Forms in final *-m* sometimes occur as optional variants for items with back vowels (vowels which code, as we see below, a distinction of 'relatively distal'); *-m* is most common utterance-final or in other pre-pausal contexts. Thus, at least for Groups I and II, columns 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8, can be taken as variants of other preceding columns, substantially reducing the total system.

	proximal		medial		distal			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I.	<i>(de:55)</i>	<i>(he:55)</i>	-	-	<i>do:55</i>	<i>do:m55</i>	<i>ho:55</i>	<i>ho:m55</i>
	<i>de:24</i>	-	-	-	<i>do:24</i>	-	-	-
	<i>de:31</i>	<i>he:31</i>	<i>na:n31</i>	<i>ha:n31</i>	<i>do:31</i>	<i>do:m31</i>	<i>ho:31</i>	<i>ho:m31</i>
II.	<i>ni:22</i>	-	<i>nan22</i>	<i>han22</i>	<i>nu:22</i>	-	-	-
	<i>ni:43</i>	-	<i>nan43</i>	<i>han43</i>	<i>nu:43</i>	-	-	-
	<i>ni:21</i>	-	<i>nan21</i>	<i>han21</i>	<i>nu:21</i>	-	-	-
III.	<i>-ni</i>	-	-	<i>-an</i>	-	-	<i>-o</i>	-
IV.	<i>ni?5</i>	-	-	-	<i>nu?5</i>	<i>num5(5)</i>	-	-

Figure 1. Southern Thai (Sathing Phra) deictic forms.

	proximal 1,2	medial 3,4	distal 5,6,7,8
I.	(Look/come) here!	(Look/go) there!	(Look/go) right over there!
II.	(Around) here	Thereabouts	(Somewhere) over there
	This (one) here This (way)	That (one) there That (way)	That (one) over there That (former or removed way)
III.	The (item just mentioned)	The (item)	The (former item)
IV.	(Final assertion particles ; see text.)		

Figure 2. Preliminary glosses for Figure 1

2. Phonological organisation

Allomorphy involving *h*-variants mentioned above is part of a more general phonological organisation among the deictic forms. Figure 3 reorganises data in Figure 1 so as to bring out more clearly phonological relationships between the two deictic groups labelled I and II, although some detail (especially of non-occurrence) is not indicated. Note the complementarity between tones (indicated at the extreme right of Figure 3) on the one hand, and vowel height on the other: high vowels characterise the *proximal* and *distal* forms for Group II, while corresponding forms in Group I show mid-vowels. A separate distinction, that of vowel length, applies to differentiate the *medial* forms of the two groups. Not shown directly in Figure 3 is a similar stress distinction (stress in this dialect should be considered secondary or non-contrastive): forms in Group I are always fully stressed; moreover they usually constitute the stress peak of the sentence or utterance unit in which they occur. Stress features of Groups II and IV are variable; and Group III postclitics are regularly unstressed.

The parallel separation of Groups I and II is reinforced by the distribution of initial consonants, with a homorganic (i.e. alveolar) nasal / voiced stop alternation associated with the high / mid-vowel contrast noted above. The clear impression is that of two separate but 'phonologically interactive' subsystems. It remains to note that residual forms of Figure 1, those of Groups III and IV, are clearly phonological reductions of forms in the first two primary groups. Group III forms are unstressed postclitics, while Group IV show shortened vowels and occur in the manner of final particles.

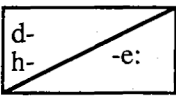
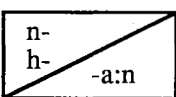
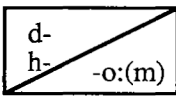
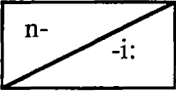
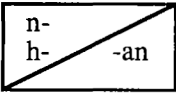
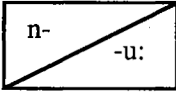
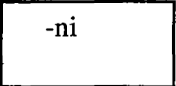
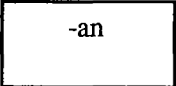
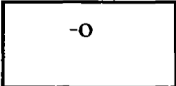
	proximal	medial	distal	TONES
Group I				55, 24, 31
Group II				22, 43, 21
		(l e n i t i o n)		
Group III				

Figure 3. Phonological organisation of deictic forms.