DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS OF THAI DEMONSTRATIVES: A CASE ON PRAGMATICALLY CONTROLLED IRREGULAR FUNCTIONS.

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1. Introduction

In Thai, demonstratives can be divided into two types morphologically and syntactically: DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVES, hereafter DADJ (nii ‘this/that, nán ‘that/those’, nóon ‘that/those’, and núun ‘that/those’), and DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS, hereafter DPRON\(^1\) (nūi ‘this/these’, nān ‘that/those’, nōon ‘that/those’, and núun ‘that/those’). Generally speaking, a DADJ functions as a modifier indicating deixis and definiteness while a DPRON functions as a reference. However, with some pragmatic forces, these functions are found to become vague or even reversed. In this paper, in order to construe the syntactically irregular uses of demonstratives, I need to begin with the (simple) syntax of demonstratives, both internally and externally. I then discuss their roles in semantics and pragmatics, which are significant to the syntax of demonstrative construction as well as the selection of particular lexical demonstratives in different contexts.

2. Syntactic Structures of Demonstratives

2.1. Internal syntax

The internal structures (morphology) of these two types of demonstratives are related to each other, in that they contain the same demonstrative stem, /n/. DADJs are marked with a high level tone as /n'\(\)/ (e.g. nii ‘this/these’) and DPRONs with a falling tone as /n^\(\)/ (e.g. nūi ‘this/these’). In parallel, these two demonstrative types are possibly distinguished by up to four degrees spatially and temporally from the speaker, as represented by four distinct vowels scaled from the most
unrounded vowel to the most rounded vowel, /i, a, o, u/. The four-term system of demonstratives is presented in the table below:

Table1: Thai Demonstrative System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance/Tempo</th>
<th>nearer</th>
<th>farther</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Adjective  | nǐi | nán | nóon | nūun |
| Pronoun    | nǐi | nán | nǒon | nūun |

2.2. External Syntax

2.2.1. Syntactic Structure

A DADJ always occurs, in the scope of a noun phrase (hereafter NP), to the right of the head noun that is generally a common noun, as exemplified.

(1) [bān nán] sǔay  
    house that beautiful  
    ‘That house is beautiful.’

In the demonstrative construction, a classifier, which normally can occur before any modifier such as a relative clause, possessive phrase, or prepositional phrase (see Singnoi (2000) for further details), can also occur before a DADJ, as shown:

(2) [bān lǎŋ nán] sǔay  
    house CLF that beautiful  
    ‘That house is beautiful.’

A DPRON substitutes for an NP, as shown:
(3) なん ㎏/mail ㄖبون ㄖian
that be school
‘That is a school’

It is odd or even ungrammatical if the correspondent DADJ occurs in this slot:

(4) なん ㎏/mail ㄖبون ㄖian
that be school
‘That is a school’

Also a DPRON is able to stand for a classifier phrase (where the head noun is a classifier) like ㄌㄧŋ なん in (2):

(5) บ้ำan ㄌㄧŋ なん
house CLF that
|     |
บ้ำan  なん

Its modifying of a noun or classifier is ungrammatical:

(6) *[บ้ำan ㄌㄧŋ なん] สู้ay
house CLF that beautiful
‘That house is beautiful.’

However, the choice of using the two types of demonstratives is not determined solely by such syntactic facts. Rather, it is the semantics and/or pragmatics that also determine the usage of demonstratives. In fact, a DADJ may also modify a proper noun or pronoun and even be used as a pronoun. These uses are pragmatically driven (that is, the pragmatic facts drive the syntactic irregularity of these demonstratives) as discussed in section 4.

2.2.2 Syntactic Functions

The demonstratives have a primary syntactic function in marking a boundary of an NP. That is to say, they mark where NPs end. The boundary-marking function of
demonstratives is quite rigid, so that other things preceding or following them are considered in or out of the scope of the NPs, respectively, Thus consider:

(7) a. [bân nán] lék mâak
    house that small much
    'That house is very small.'

b. [bân lék nán] mâak
    house small that much
    'Those little houses, there are a lot of them.'

c. [bân lék mâak nán]
    house small much that
    'that very small house'

We can see that, by placing the demonstrative nán before the verb as in (7a), after the first verb in (7b), and finally as in (7c), the verbs 'small' and 'much' are excluded from the NP, the former is included in the NP, and both of them are included in the NP, respectively. Consider also:

(8) a. [bân lãŋ thiũ-sọɔŋ]
    house CLF second
    'the second house'

b. [bân nán] lãŋ thiũ-sọɔŋ
    house that CLF second
    'the second house'

(9) a. [bân khoɔŋ čhǎŋ]
    house POSSM 1
    'my house'

b. [bân nán] khoɔŋ čhǎŋ
    house that POSSM 1
    'That house is mine.'