

Evaluative expressions influence prominence: effects on *die* and *diese* pronouns

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German has two main types of demonstrative pronouns — *die* (DPros) and *diese* (DemPros). However, it is not completely clear what functions differentiate them. Fuchs & Schumacher (2020) proposed that they differ in their referential shift potential such that DPros show robust whereas DemPros show a short-lived shift. Patil et al. (2020) showed that language formality is a distinguishing feature such that DPros prefer informal whereas DemPros prefer formal language. Zifonun et al. (1997) using the contrast between DPros and DemPros in (1a-b) suggested that DPros can refer to the information structurally prominent, i.e. topical, referent (*Peter*) as well as the less prominent (non-topical) referent (*Benz*) but DemPros can only refer to the closest possible referent, *Benz*, which makes the DemPro continuation in (1a) implausible (see Patterson et al. (2021) for experimental evidence of the last-mentioned preference for DemPros). However, if we consider (1c), it is clear that both demonstrative pronouns cannot refer to the topic. We hypothesize that in (1a) DPro can refer to *Peter* because it involves an evaluation of *Peter* by the (abstract) speaker, thereby making the speaker more prominent than this referent (as proposed by Hinterwimmer and Bosch, 2017). DemPros, in contrast, are not sensitive to the prominence modulation resulting from evaluation of the discourse referents.

METHODS To test the hypothesis we designed an acceptability rating study (n=114) in a 2x2 design — pronoun type (DPro vs. DemPro) and evaluation (evaluative vs. neutral sentences), using a 7-point Likert scale. Half of the items had negative and the other half had positive evaluations. We also tested the effect of the degree of evaluation (mild to strong evaluation). For each item in evaluative-DPro condition, we collected ratings of the degree of evaluation on a scale from -10 (extremely negative) to +10 (extremely positive) from four native speakers. The data was analyzed using the mixed-effects ordinal regression in the Bayesian framework (Bürkner & Vuorre, 2019) and the inferences are made using the 95% credible intervals around the estimates.

RESULTS The results are summarized in Fig. 1 in terms of the mean rating for four conditions. There were no main effects, but a reliable interaction between pronoun type and evaluation. Pairwise comparisons showed that the evaluative-DPro condition was rated higher than the other three. All other pairwise comparisons showed no statistical difference. There was no reliable effect of evaluation type (positive/negative). We also found that there was an interaction between condition and the degree of evaluation (Fig. 2): the evaluative-DPro condition showed an increase in acceptability with an increase in the degree of evaluation whereas the evaluative-DemPro condition did not show any reliable effect of the degree of evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS (i) DPros can refer to a discourse referent that is information structurally prominent (topic) when the (abstract) speaker is prominent as perspective-taker (ii) in contrast DemPros are not sensitive to prominence manipulations through perspective taking, and (iii) prominence in terms of perspective taking can be influenced by evaluative expressions and, also be modulated by the degree of evaluation.

LINGUISTIC EXAMPLES

(1)

a. Peter will einen Benz kaufen. **Der** /***Dieser** hat wohl zu viel Geld.

‘Peter wants to buy a (Mercedes-)Benz. **He** apparently has too much money.’

b. Peter will einen Benz kaufen. **Der** / **Dieser** soll aber nicht so teuer sein.

‘Peter wants to buy a (Mercedes-)Benz. But **it** should not be too expensive.’

c. Peter wollte einen Benz kaufen. ***Der** /***Dieser** fuhr gleich morgens zum Autohändler.

‘Peter wanted to buy a (Mercedes-)Benz. **He** drove to the car dealer right in the morning.’

(2)

Sentence 1 (same across all conditions): Maria hat Peter geohrfeigt. *Maria slapped Peter.*

Sentence 2:

Evaluative: Die / Diese hat sich einfach nicht im Griff! *She just can't control herself!*

Neutral: Die / Diese wollte die Rechnung nicht alleine bezahlen. *She didn't want to pay the bill alone.*

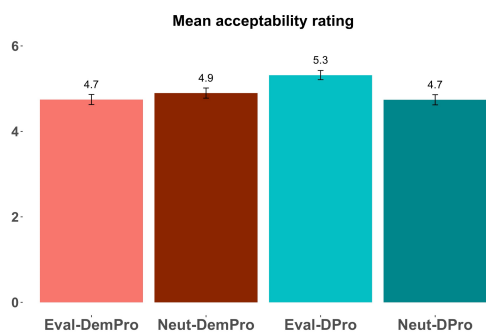


Figure 1: Mean acceptability rating for four conditions

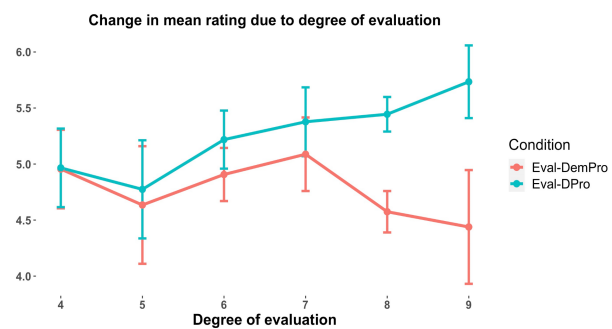


Figure 2: Change in mean acceptability rating as a function of the degree of evaluation across two evaluative conditions. X-axis numerically represents the degree of evaluations; the larger the number, the stronger the evaluation.

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