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Notes on Nominal Demonstratives in Arbore[1]

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Abstract

This paper investigates nominal demonstratives in Arbore, which is one of least-known and endangered languages spoken in the south-western tip of the country close to Kenyan boarder. Arbore has six demonstratives and they are distinguished for plurality vs. singularity, masculine vs. feminine and proximity vs. distal. It is suggested in the study that demonstratives are composed of basic demonstrative forms and deictic suffixes. Contrary to an earlier study by Hayward (1984), the current study argues that the same element is used both as a demonstrative pronoun and adjective, hence the name demonstrative nominal. Due to grammaticalization, the demonstrative adjectives, in some cases, are merged to the head noun and it appears that the demonstrative elements are suffixed to the noun. As a final point, the study shows that Arbore demonstratives are gradually developing into definiteness marker in line with the typological findings of Diessel (1999).

1 Introduction

This paper is an attempt to examine the functional and formal characteristics of demonstratives in Arbore. Arbore is one of the most endangered languages in Ethiopia and spoken by around 7000 people in the south-western part of the country bordering Kenya near lake Chew Bahir. The majority of the speakers live in the Hamar Wereda, South Omo Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPR), but pockets of speakers are found in Oromiya Regional State as well. Arbore is not a written language and it is not used in education, however there is a half hour FM radio transmission daily by the language in the South Omo zone. The Arbore language

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is a highly endangered language and its status of endangerment is being amplified in recent days due to the migration of workforce who are speakers of other languages to the area, following major development projects such as construction of giant sugar factories. Thus, there is an urgent need to document the linguistic and cultural features of Arbore.

Arbore is an Eastern Cushitic language, which specifically belongs to the West-Omo-Tana language group (Mous 2012). Some of the closely related languages to Arbore include Baiso, Daasanach and El Molo. Previous linguistic investigations on Arbore are limited in number and depth. In fact, the only major linguistic study available on the language is by Hayward (1984) entitled 'The Arbore Language: A First Investigation'. The study gives a good account of the phonological, morphological and syntactic aspects of the language. It sheds light on the position of Arbore within the Eastern Cushitic sub-group and gives a list of vocabulary from the language. Hayward (1984) also includes a section that deals with demonstratives but a different position is taken in the present study regarding the formal status of the demonstratives of Arbore.

Demonstratives are spatial deictic elements and they indicate the location and distance of the referred object in relation to the origo or deictic center. A functional definition of demonstratives is provided by Diessel (1999: 6) as they are mainly employed 'to draw the hearer's attention to entities in a speech situation.' Demonstratives are one of the deictic elements in a language and understanding them requires contextual information both by the speaker and addressee. Typologically, the relative distance from the deictic center to the referred item could be judged as near (proximal), medium (medial) or far (distal). Most languages are attested to make a distinction between proximal and distal demonstratives, but there are some languages that exhibit medial demonstratives.

Some languages distinguish the form and function of demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative adjectives. Accordingly, Diessel (1999) suggests the categorization of the two into different classes. Alternatively, Dixon (2010) claims that the typological classification of demonstrative adjectives and demonstrative pronouns should be one and the same. Dixon argues that both of them should be referred to in the same category as 'nominal demonstratives'. In the present study, as will be illustrated in the following section, the suggestion made by Dixon (2010) is adopted since it better accounts for the formal and functional nature of demonstratives in Arbore. Moreover, demonstratives are cross-linguistically classified into three well-attested syntactic types: (1) nominal (2) local adverbial and (3) verbal demonstratives (Dixon 2003). The main objective of the present contribution is to provide the linguistic description of nominal demonstratives in Arbore.

2 Nominal Demonstratives

This section deals with the formal and functional characteristics of demonstratives and the grammaticalization process associated with their development into definiteness marking.

2.1 The Formal Status and Function of Demonstratives

Arbore has six nominal demonstratives. Unlike Hayward (1984), this study argues that the language uses the same word as demonstrative adjective and demonstrative pronoun. As a result, it is suggested that both of them should be commonly referred to as nominal demonstratives in line with the typological classification by Dixon (2010). Note, however, that the demonstrative nominal in some instances is coalesced with the head noun that creates an impression that it occurs as a suffix.

The nominal demonstratives in Arbore exhibit a six-way distinction based on the following three parameters:

(a) distance from deictic center (i.e. proximity vs. remoteness)
(b) number (i.e. singular vs. plural) and
(c) gender (i.e. masculine vs. feminine)

The nominal demonstratives of Arbore are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Nominal demonstrative of Arbore

SINGULAR		**PLURAL**
Proximal		
Masculine	*Feminine*	***tolo***
halo	***talo***	
Distal		
Masculine	*Feminine*	***towatto***
haatto	***taatto***	

Some examples that illustrate the use of demonstratives in the language are given below.

(1) **[tolo] sirba ʔosoka lago**[2]
these Sirba and Lago
'These are Sirba and Lago.'

(2) **ʔese [k'at'ure-n talo] horre**
She cat-SING that chased
'She chased that cat.'

[2] Arbore is a tone language, as a work in progress, tone is not marked in this paper.

(3) **jehe** **[neek'-in-no]** **ʔigiʃe**
I lion-SING-this killed
'I killed this lion (M).'
(N.B. **neek'-in-no** < **neek'-in-lo** < **neek'-in-halo**)

In example (1) the demonstrative **tolo** 'these', occurs as a pronoun and as a subject of a nonverbal sentence. In (2), the demonstrative **talo** 'that (F)' serves as a demonstrative adjective in a noun phrase and it modifies the head noun **k'at'ure** 'cat'. In both (1) and (2), the demonstratives occur as independent words. In example (3), the demonstrative element appears as a suffix, i.e. **-no**. However, that is a result of a grammaticalization process that has reduced **halo** 'this' to **-lo** in many cases and **-no** in example (3). The different stages of the grammaticalization and morphophonemic processes are provided as additional information.

According to Hayward (1984), the six demonstratives presented above in Table 1 are analyzed as deictic pronouns. In other words, Hayward argues that the demonstratives appear as an independent word in the shape they are presented in Table 1, only when they function as pronouns. Then, for the role of demonstrative adjectives, Hayward (1984) suggests two suffixes instead of the demonstratives given in Table 1. Hayward (1984: 191) argues that the suffixes **-ló** and **-átto** serve as deictic definitive in Arbore. It should, however, be noted that these suffixes make part of the demonstratives given in Table 1 and one is expected to explain these formal similarities. Here it is argued that **-lo** and **-atto** are shortened versions of the demonstratives **halo** 'this (M)' and **hatto** 'that (M)'. Evidence to substantiate this position is provided in the subsequent text.

The nominal demonstratives presented in Table 1 are analyzed as having an internal structure. The demonstratives are constituted of two components, namely the basic demonstrative form[3] and the deictic suffix, which is added to the basic form. Brief description of the two elements that make up demonstratives is provided below.

(a) Basic Demonstrative form

There are three basic nominal demonstratives, which are distinguished for gender and number. These three demonstrative elements cannot stand on their own. The three basic demonstrative forms in Arbore are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Basic demonstrative forms of Arbore

	Basic demonstrative form	
Singular	Masculine	Feminine
	ha-	**ta-**
Plural	**to-**	

[3] These basic forms that occur in the demonstratives also appear as a base for possessive pronouns in Arbore (cf. Hayward 1984: 229)

(b) Deictic suffix

The second component of the demonstratives is referred to as deictic suffix. The deictic suffixes are two and they are distinguishable by their relative distance from the deictic center. The basic demonstrative elements provided in Table 2 take one of the two suffixes that indicate distance from the origo-for proximity and for distance. The deictic suffix for proximity is **-lo** and the one for distance is **-atto**. These are the two suffixes which are considered as deictic definitives by Hayward (1984) and they are proposed to take the role of the demonstrative adjectives. The deictic suffixes are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Deictic suffixes of Arbore

	Deictic suffix	
Distance from origo	Proximal	Distal
	-lo	**-atto**

What has been presented in Table 1 above is given in Hayward's work as demonstrative pronouns and it was argued that the demonstrative suffixes **-ló** and **-átto** are directly suffixed to nouns. In this study, on the other hand, it is claimed that demonstrative adjectives occur as an independent word following a head noun as is the case in other noun phrases. Note that Arbore is a head initial language. Due to grammaticalization, the demonstrative adjectives, in some cases, are merged to the head noun and it appears that the elements **-lo** and **-atto** are directly suffixed to the noun. In other words, the merger of the demonstrative to the head noun and the phonetic reduction that ensues, gives the impression that the deictic suffix is directly suffixed to the head noun. During the fusion of the two words (i.e. the head noun and the demonstrative), which does not happen all the time, it is the basic demonstrative form that is given in Table 2 that is deleted. There are a number of arguments why this line of analysis is preferred over the one proposed by Hayward (1984). The arguments are provided below.

The most important evidence to support the claim that **-lo** and **-atto** are respectively the reduced forms of **halo** 'this (M)' and **hatto** 'this (F)' comes from the fact that this phenomenon is less common in the use of the feminine and plural. In particular, the feminine/singular demonstratives . **talo** 'this (F)' and **taatto** 'that (F)' always occur as an independent word following the head noun. The plural demonstratives, i.e. **tolo** 'these' and **towatto** 'those' are found in between the two, and they exhibit merger with the head noun, but with less phonetic reduction. Furthermore, note also that Arbore is a head-initial language and adjectives follow the head in a noun phrase (i.e. NP = N + Adj). This fact is also very important to the argument that is being explained here.

Let us now look at the use of the complete set of demonstrative adjectives in Arbore using the noun **ker** 'dog'.

(4a) **ker-lo**
dog-this
'this (M) dog'
(N.B. **ker-lo** < **ker-halo** < **ker halo**)

(4b) **ker talo**
dog this
'this (F) dog'

(4c) **ker-olo**
dog-these
'these dogs'
(N.B. **ker-olo** <**ker-tolo** <**ker tolo**)

The examples in (4) present the use of the three proximal demonstrative adjectives. As can be observed in (4b), the feminine/singular demonstrative **talo** 'this (F)' occurs as a separate word following the head noun. Then in (4c), **tolo** 'these' is reduced to **-olo** and is suffixed to the head. Finally, in (4a), **halo** 'this (M)' is coalesced with the head noun and the first open syllable, i.e. **ha-** which is the basic demonstrative form is elided. In short, it can be concluded that while **talo** 'this (F)' appears as is, **halo** 'this (M)' and **tolo** 'these' are merged with the head. Let us now look at the use of the distal demonstratives in a noun phrase.

(5a) **ker-ratto**
dog-that
'that (M) dog'
(N.B. **ker-ratto** < **ker-hatto** < **ker hatto**)

(5b) **ker tatto**
dog that
'that (F) dog'

(5c) **ker-uwatto**
dog-those
'those dogs'
(N.B. **ker-uwatto** < **ker-owatto** < **ker-towatto** < **ker towatto**)

Once again, it can be noted that **tatto** 'that (F)' appears as a separate word in (5b). Then, in (5a), the two words are merged and the initial consonant /h/ of **hatto** 'that (M) is assimilated to the final consonant of the head noun **ker** 'dog' creating a long

consonant /rr/. Finally, in (5c), the initial consonant /t/ of **towatto** 'those' is deleted and then the vowel /o/ is changed to /u/ due to assimilation.

The morphophonemic process described above for the noun **ker** 'dog' apparently differs based on the final consonant or vowel that a noun terminates. A detailed account of the phonological rules that explain these changes is well described in Hayward (1984) and readers are referred to the study for more information on that. In order to get an impression of the extent of changes to be expected, the use of the demonstrative adjectives with another noun **ʔohol** 'donkey' is provided in example (6) and (7). Let us first consider the proximal demonstratives.

(6a) **ʔohol-in-no**
donkey-SING-this
'this (M) donkey'
(N.B. **ʔohol-in-no** < **ʔohol-in-lo** < **ʔohol-in-halo** < **ʔohol-in halo**)

(6b) **ʔohol-in** **talo**
donkey-SING this
'this (F) donkey'

(6c) **ʔohol-lo**
donkey-these
'these donkeys'
(N.B. **ʔohol-lo** < **ʔohol-tolo** < **ʔohol tolo**)

The three distal demonstratives in their adjectival role in a noun phrase is given below.

(7a) **ʔohol-in-natto**
donkey-SING-that
'that (M) donkey'
(N.B. **ʔohol-in-natto** < **ʔohol-in-tatto** < **ʔohol-in tatto**)

(7b) **ʔohol-in** **taatto**
donkey-SING that
'that (F) donkey'

(7c) **ʔohol-latto**
donkey-those
'those donkeys'
(N.B. **ʔohol-latto** < **ʔohol-towatto** < **ʔohol towatto**)

The examples given in (6) and (7) illustrate that it is indeed the demonstrative nominal that occurs as modifier of the head noun, which in some cases, is merged with the head noun.

Additional point that supports the position that is taken in this study with regard to the form and function of demonstratives can be found from the grammaticality judgment of native speakers. The use of **halo** 'this (M)' and **hatto** 'this (F)' as an independent word modifying a head noun is judged as having some grammatical acceptability by some native speakers. As can be noted below, (8a) is grammatical and it is the one which is commonly used. On the other hand, some of the native speakers did not reject (8b) out rightly. This once again suggests that (8a) is developed from (8b).

(8a) **ker-lo**
dog-this
'this (M) dog'
(N.B. **ker-lo** < **ker-halo** < **ker halo**)

(8b) ? **ker** **halo**
dog this
'this (M) dog '

In this section, it has been argued that Arbore uses the same demonstrative in pronominal and adjectival functions. Unlike Hayward (1984), the study proposes that the demonstratives **halo** and **hatto** are the historical sources of **-lo** and **-atto** respectively. The grammaticalization process is described in the following section.

2.2 Grammaticalization in Demonstratives

The change of the full-fledged demonstrative nominal into suffixes in some contexts could be accounted by grammaticalization theory. Grammaticalization refers to the process in which words change into grammatical elements through time. Diessel (1999: 117) writes that grammaticalization 'may affect all aspects of linguistic sign: its phonological form, its morphosyntactic features, and its meaning or function.' Diessel (1999), in his typological study of demonstratives, adds that demonstratives are a common historical source for a number of grammatical items including definiteness, third person pronouns, complementizers, possessives etc.

The grammaticalization of demonstratives in Arbore is noted both at the levels of phonology, morphosyntax and semantics. At the phonological level, some of the demonstratives have undergone phonological reduction. For example, **halo** 'this (M)' and **hatto** 'that (M)' regularly appear as **-lo** and **-atto** respectively. There is the deletion of the initial consonant (syllable) from the demonstratives. Then, morphosyntactically,

the demonstrative elements **-lo** (< **halo**) and **-atto** (< **hatto**) have lost their status of occurring as a separate word in this particular context and they are added as a suffix. Finally, semantic widening has been noted in the case of the demonstrative element **-lo,** for it functions as a definiteness marker in some contexts (cf. Hayward 1984). In fact, Hayward (1984: 191) goes to the extent of saying that '**-ló** is simply a marker of definiteness, which has a specific deictic function only in the appropriate circumstances.' This is a common phenomenon typologically and a study made by Diessel (1999) confirms that demonstratives are commonly grammaticalized into definiteness markers in many languages of the world.

Of the six demonstratives identified and analyzed in Section 2.1, one could actually note three different levels of the grammaticalization stages. While **halo** 'this (M)' and **hatto** 'that (M)' are more grammaticalized exhibiting all the phonological, morphosyntactic and semantic changes; the feminine/singular demonstratives **talo** 'this (F) and **taatto** 'that (F) almost always occur as an independent word, showing no sign of being grammaticalized. In between the two groups, we find the plural demonstratives, i.e. **tolo** 'these' and **towatto** 'those' which exhibit some level of phonological and morphosyntatic change, but no semantic bleaching. In short, the three categories of demonstratives described above show the three different stages of the grammaticalization process that demonstratives are going through in the language.

3 Summary

This study dealt with nominal demonstratives in Arbore. Six demonstratives have been identified in the language and they are distinguished for plurality vs. singularity, masculine vs. feminine and proximity vs. distal. The demonstratives have an internal structure and they are made of basic demonstrative forms and deictic suffixes. Unlike previous studies, the present study finds out that the language employs the same elements as a demonstrative pronoun and demonstrative adjective. However, due to grammaticalization, some of the demonstrative elements have lost their status as a word when they appear as demonstrative adjectives and occur as a suffix. The grammaticalization process which accounts for the historical development of demonstratives to definiteness marking has also be discussed in the paper.

Symbols and abbreviations

DEM	Demonstrative
DIST	Distal
F	Feminine
M	Masculine
PL	Plural
PROX	Proximal
SING	Singulative
S	Singular

Reference

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