

Blackfoot demonstratives in narrative discourse: A pragmatic analysis

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ABSTRACT. Previous analyses of the Blackfoot demonstrative system (Uhlenbeck 1938, Taylor 1969, Frantz 2009) focus on situational uses of demonstratives and often conflate the meanings of multiple pragmatic uses of demonstratives into overly broad definitions. In this paper, I discuss the meanings of Blackfoot demonstratives in terms of their pragmatic functions. I follow Himmelmann's (1996) taxonomy of universal demonstrative uses as my criteria for delineating demonstratives into four categories: situational; discourse deixis; tracking; and recognitional. I demonstrate that recognizing the different pragmatic functions of demonstratives allows for a more nuanced description of their meanings and usage.

Keywords: Blackfoot language, demonstratives, anaphora, discourse deixis, recognitional demonstratives, pragmatic uses of demonstratives

1. INTRODUCTION. Cross-linguistically demonstratives serve a number of pragmatic functions. While the core meaning of directing the attention of the addressee to a particular entity is encoded in each of these pragmatic functions, the type of referent, the addressee's familiarity with the referent, and the knowledge shared by the speaker and addressee are among the factors that vary across the different pragmatic uses of demonstratives. In this paper, I discuss the pragmatic uses of demonstratives found in Blackfoot narrative discourse. In doing so, I provide evidence in support of Himmelmann's (1996) claim that demonstratives serve four universal pragmatic functions and illustrate the need for describing non-situational pragmatic functions of demonstratives in descriptive grammars.

In §2, I provide a brief overview of recent typological work on pragmatic functions of demonstratives. In §3, I provide data and analysis from Blackfoot textual data. The texts I analyze are from a collection of stories, mostly short stories, elicited and transcribed by Uhlenbeck (1912). The collection contains both traditional etiological stories, as well as historical and first-person accounts of Blackfeet life and customs. In §4, I provide some concluding remarks and discuss issues for further research.

2. TYPOLOGICAL GENERALIZATIONS OF DEMONSTRATIVE USES. Himmelmann (1996) and Diessel (1999) divide pragmatic functions into two main categories. The first is termed **SITUATIONAL** as this type is used to refer to non-linguistic entities situated in the physical environment. This type is sometimes also called **exophoric** as the referent is outside of the discourse itself. The second type is known as **NON-SITUATIONAL**, or **endophoric**, and its uses encode referents that are part of the discourse event. The non-situational category is further delineated into three sub-groups: tracking (or **anaphoric**) uses; discourse deixis; and recognitional uses.

Himmelmann (1996) proposes that situational, tracking, discourse deictic, and recognitional uses are universal. He argues further that because they are each universal, they are equally basic, that is, none of the pragmatic functions is derived from another. Although these four pragmatic uses are attested in much of the available cross-linguistic data on demonstratives, that data is severely limited by the fact that most descriptive grammars do not address non-situational pragmatic roles of demonstratives. Because of this, Diessel (1999) argues that

Himmelman's universality claim is based on too little data and that further research is needed. Diessel (1999) also argues against Himmelman's basic use claim, stating that situational uses are morphologically less complex, syntactically less restricted, and developmentally first-acquired and are therefore the basic demonstrative use from which non-situational uses are derived. I return to this second claim in §4.

2.1. SITUATIONAL USES. Situational uses of demonstratives may be broadly defined as those that point out non-linguistic entities in the physical environment (Diessel 1999:6). Diessel (1999), following Fillmore 1997, categorizes situational uses into gestural and symbolic uses, both of which encode features of spatial demarcation, but which differ with respect to whether entities are locatable in the surrounding environment (gestural) or in an imagined physical space (symbolic). Symbolic demonstrative uses often refer to entities in the surrounding environment that are either (i) too large in scope to be completely visible, or (ii) are non-corporeal. Symbolic demonstratives may also be used by the speaker to mentally situate the addressee within the physical environment of a narrative setting. This subtype of symbolic use is referred to by Lyons (1977) as deictic projection. In discussions of deictic projection in this study, I distinguish between the setting of the narrative event and that of the narration event. I use the term **NARRATIVE SETTING** to refer to the location where the story takes place as described by the narrator. **NARRATION SETTING**, on the other hand, refers to the location where the speech act participants are physically located when the speaker relays the story to his audience.

2.2. NON-SITUATIONAL USES. In addition to directing the addressee's attention to entities in the physical environment (or a mental representation of a physical environment), demonstratives also serve to direct the addressee's attention to participants that recur throughout the discourse. These uses of demonstratives interact with other tracking devices referred to as anaphora (e.g. personal pronouns, definite and indefinite articles, etc.). Because the term anaphoric is applicable in other broader contexts, Himmelman (1996) prefers the term **TRACKING** to describe this pragmatic use of demonstratives. Himmelman (1996) states that compared to other anaphoric devices, tracking demonstratives are relatively infrequent, and that they are used to reference major discourse participants. Diessel (1999:96) suggests that anaphoric demonstratives are often used to 'indicate a referent that is somewhat unexpected and not currently in the focus of attention'.

Like tracking usage, in discourse deixis usage, demonstratives refer to entities within the discourse itself. However discourse deictic uses differ from tracking uses in that the former do not refer to specific NPs, but to larger chunks of linguistic content. Discourse deixis focuses on 'aspects of meaning expressed by a clause, a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire story' (Diessel 1999:101). Alternately, tracking usage focuses on participants or objects within the narrative. The primary function of discourse deixis is to link the proposition in which the demonstrative is embedded to the proposition to which the demonstrative refers. Diessel (1999) states that discourse deixis is both anaphoric (backward-referring) and cataphoric (forward-referring). Cataphoric reference is described as one of the features that distinguishes the anaphoric pragmatic category from the discourse deixis category (Diessel 1999, Levinson 1983), but how common cataphoric reference is cross-linguistically requires further examination. The lack of typological generalizations regarding cataphoric reference is due in large part to the absence of descriptions of pragmatic demonstrative uses in descriptive grammars. This reveals the need for further research into discourse deictic uses in individual languages.

Although the recognitional use of demonstratives is first proposed in Lakoff 1974 and referenced in a number of subsequent studies, Himmelmann (1996) provides the first detailed discussion and is the first to argue that the recognitional usage is a universal pragmatic function of demonstratives. Recognitional uses have four defining features: they only occur adnominally; they are used to activate specific knowledge that is shared by the speaker and addressee; they refer to information that has not yet been mentioned in the preceding discourse; they refer to entities that are not locatable in the surrounding environment (Diessel 1999). That is, they are adnominal, non-situational demonstratives and their referents are hearer-old, but discourse-new.

2.3. THE NEED FOR PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS IN DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMARS. Most descriptive grammars categorize demonstratives by morphosyntactic characteristics. Descriptions often include paradigms of pronominal, adnominal, adverbial, and/or identificational forms, however glosses nearly always reflect situational meanings alone, or overly broad meanings that represent confluences of situational and non-situational uses (Himmelmann 1996). Examining demonstratives based on syntactic functions is not sufficient for describing the full range of demonstrative uses and meanings. I illustrate this fact by comparing 1 through 4 below. In 1, the referent is not overtly stated by the speaker, but is indicated by gesture, and the demonstrative stands alone as a pronoun. In 2, the referent is overtly mentioned along with an adnominal demonstrative.

- (1) Look at **that!** (Accompanied by a gesture toward a bird.)
- (2) Look at that bird! (Accompanied by a gesture toward a bird.)

Both of these exclamations may be made about the same referent, for instance, a bird that is hanging upside down like a bat from a telephone wire. In both examples, ‘that’ is functioning in the same way, to direct the addressee’s attention to a bird and to indicate that the bird is not near the speaker. In these two cases, one set of semantic features is sufficient to describe both occurrences of ‘that’ even though the word is functioning pronominally in 1 and adnominally in 2. Now compare 3 and 4, both of which contain adnominal demonstratives.

- (3) I bought that car this morning. (accompanied by a gesture toward a new car)
- (4) I bought **that** car this morning. (no accompanying gesture)

In 3, there is a specific referent visible to the addressee toward which the speaker makes a gesture. In this case, the meaning of ‘that’ is the same as it is in 1 and 2, (i.e. it is being used to point out a referent that is in the surrounding environment but that is not near the speaker). However, in 4 without an accompanying gesture, the assumption being made by the speaker is that the addressee knows which car the speaker was planning to purchase even though it is not present in the physical environment and has not been previously introduced in the current dialogue. The use of ‘that’ in 4 does not indicate anything about the spatial demarcation of the referent. This is the recognitional use described in §2.2 above. The meaning of ‘that’ in 4 indicates shared knowledge between the speech act participants, so spatial semantic features are of no use in assigning meaning to ‘that’ as it occurs in this example.

Of these four examples, 2 - 4 are identical morphologically and syntactically but not pragmatically or semantically. On the other hand 1 - 3 pattern together morphologically, pragmatically, and semantically, though not syntactically. A syntactic taxonomy is often of great

value in studies of demonstratives and is appropriate for examinations of morphosyntactic form, especially in languages where nominal, adverbial, verbal, and identificational forms vary morphophonologically. However, as seen here, for the purpose of investigating semantic content, a pragmatic taxonomy is required as pragmatic function plays a large role in determining meaning. Ultimately, both are useful distinctions for an in-depth analysis as each taxonomy highlights different aspects of function, form, and meaning.

3. BLACKFOOT DEMONSTRATIVES. In this section I describe the pragmatic uses attested in the Blackfoot stories transcribed in Uhlenbeck 1912. Here I provide evidence in support of Himmelmann’s (1996) claim that all four pragmatic uses are universal by demonstrating the presence of all four categories in Blackfoot.

3.1. SITUATIONAL USES. In Schupbach 2013 I describe gestural situational uses of Blackfoot demonstratives, summarized in Table 1 below.

Stem	Geometric Configuration	Number/ Gender	Referent/Region Configuration
<i>am</i> ‘proximal with respect to the speaker’	<i>-o</i> ‘interior’	<i>-wa</i> ‘proximate singular’	<i>-ma</i> ‘stationary’
<i>ann</i> ‘medial with respect to the speaker’		<i>-yi</i> ‘obviative singular’	<i>-ya</i> ‘moving away from speaker’ (<i>-ia</i> in Uhlenbeck)
<i>om</i> ‘distal with respect to the speaker’		<i>-yi</i> ‘inanimate singular’	
		<i>-iksi</i> ‘animate plural’	<i>-ka</i> ‘moving toward speaker’
		<i>-istsi</i> ‘inanimate plural’	<i>-hka</i> ‘invisible, indiscernible’

TABLE 1. Blackfoot demonstrative template (partial).

In Schupbach 2013 I argue that in gestural situational uses the demonstrative stems *am*, *ann*, and *om* encode the anchor feature [speaker] and the spatial demarcation features [proximal], [medial], and [distal] respectively. The suffix *-o* is used when the referent is located in a space shared by the speaker and the addressee – Imai’s (2003) [interior] geometric configuration parameter. This suffix only occurs in situational uses. The suffixes *-ma*, *-ya*, *-ka*, and *-hka* encode spatial deixis features of referent/region configuration, which indicate features related to the motion or invisibility of the referent. The suffix *-ma* ‘stationary’ is frequently used to refer to stationary objects, the position of which in relation to the speaker is determined by the stem. The suffix *-ya* ‘motion away from speaker’ is used when the referent is moving away from the speaker, and is also used in offerative cases when the speaker is handing the referent to the addressee. The morpheme *-ka* ‘motion toward the speaker’ is used with referents moving toward the speaker, but also has the extended spatial meaning of ‘back’ and the extended temporal meaning of ‘past’. The suffix *-hka* ‘invisible, indiscernible’ refers to objects that are in the surrounding environment but are concealed, or that have just left the area and are just out of sight. As these gestural situational uses are addressed in detail in Schupbach 2013, the remainder of the current study focuses on symbolic situational uses and non-situational uses.

very likely that many of these stories are set in a region to which the storyteller feels he belongs. Thus, I analyze non-gestural uses of the *am* stem, which refer to geographical features without an overtly expressed setting, as wider-context symbolic uses. Conversely, when the *am* stem is used with geographical referents in stories where the setting has been explicitly described (usually by means of place names), I analyze these as deictic projection symbolic uses, as is the case in 5 above.

3.2. TRACKING USES. Tracking uses are the most common in textual data I analyzed from Uhlenbeck 1912 and comprise almost two-thirds of 135 demonstrative tokens. About 61% of these tracking uses contain the stem *om* and the other 39% are built from the *ann* stem. The *am* stem does not function anaphorically.

The distal stem *om* is often used to introduce new information. Although I found no statistically significant correlation between *om* and discourse participants that are the current topic or focus of their clause,³ further study may show that it is a component of Blackfoot's focalization system. Introductory-*om* functions similarly to introductory-*this* in English in that its referents seem to be more likely to recur throughout the narrative.⁴ An example of introductory-*om* is given in 7.

- (7) **Omík** kitsímik káuaiχtsiu.
om-yi-ka kitsímm-yi-ka ikawaihtsi-wa
DD-IN.SG-MT door-IN.SG-MT be.open.II-3SG
 'The door lay open.' Uhlenbeck (1912:65)

Before the sentence in 7, no mention of a door has yet been made. While the setting of this section is Four-bears' lodge, and it could be considered common knowledge that there is a door, this is the first overt mention of it in the story. It is likely that the door is overtly mentioned here because its state of being open is relevant for the next few clauses.

The stem *om* is also used to refer to previously mentioned discourse participants that are temporarily relevant, but have not recently been in focus. An example of this is given in 8 in which *omá* refers to a man, Four-bears, who was not an argument in the previous three clauses, but who was introduced into the narrative earlier.

- (8) **Omá** Nisóχkyaio áisamò itsiksískaχkuyiuaie.
om-wa niisó-kiááyo-wa á-isamo-wa it-iksisskahko-yii-wa-áyi
DD-3SG four-bear-3SG DUR-be.a.long.time.II-3SG DCT-nudge.TA-DIR-3SG-DTP
 'After a long while, Four-bears pushed it.' Uhlenbeck (1912:65)

Omá serves to temporarily emphasize Four-bears, even though the bird is still the main character of this portion of the narrative. In fact, after this clause the bird is the only actor for the remainder of the story.

In Blackfoot, anaphoric uses of *om* bear much of the tracking load shared by pronouns and definite articles in other languages. Thus *om* is often translated with English articles *the* and *a(n)*, and sometimes with the English distal demonstrative *that*. However unlike English determiners and demonstratives, Blackfoot demonstratives do not encode definiteness or specificity (Glougie 2000, Genee 2005).

The medial stem *ann* is never used to introduce new participants but only refers to previously given information that has been recently mentioned. When the *ann* stem is used, the first mention of the referent is often in the same sentence. Occasionally, the tracking use of the demonstrative links a nominal in the left-detached position to a clause, a position that often contains focal or topical arguments (see Van Valin & LaPolla 1997 for discussion of the significance and use of this extra-clausal position). In the textual data, when the *ann* form and its referent are not in the same sentence, the referent is in the sentence immediately preceding. An example of this use of *ann* is presented below in 9.

- (9) Akimóχtsim **únnimaie** itáupiu omá piksíu.
 akim-ohtsi-ma **ann-yi-ma-ayi** it-á-opii-wa om-wa pi'ksii-wa
 place.of.honor-LOC-STAT **DM-IN.SG-STAT-ID** DCT-DUR-sit.AI-3SG DD-3SG bird-3SG
 ‘The bird sat at **the** upper end of the lodge.’ Uhlenbeck (1912:65)
 Literal translation: ‘The place of honor, **that is** where the bird sat.’

In 9, the anaphoric demonstrative refers to information that was just mentioned the word before in a left-detached position. The emphasis on where the bird sat is relevant to the setting and the later visual imagery of the bird flying across the lodge and out through the door.

3.3. DISCOURSE DEICTIC USES. In Blackfoot, only the *ann* stem is used for discourse deixis. The function of discourse deixis – to link the proposition in which the demonstrative is embedded to the proposition to which the demonstrative refers (Diessel 1999:101-102) – is illustrated in 10.

- (10) **Kénnyaie** mátanistsinoàu ksistsikúma.
ki-ann-yi-ayi matt-aanist-ino-aa-wa ksiistsikomm-wa
and-DM-IN.SG-ID also-MNR-see.TA-DIR-3SG thunder-3SG
 ‘**That way** the thunder was seen.’ Uhlenbeck (1912:65)

In this example, the discourse deictic use of *kénnyaie* refers to the preceding five sentences of the story, which describe how the bird was responsible both for the flashes of lightning as well as the sound of thunder. The demonstrative does not refer to any specific NP as it does in its anaphoric usage, but to a larger portion of the text.

Blackfoot frequently uses phrases containing discourse deictic demonstratives as formulaic endings to stories as in 11. This example is the conclusion to a short story about some young men who play a trick on a group of old women.

- (11) **Kénniaie** nanístksinoàii ámoksisk kipitákeks.
ki-ann-yi-ayi n-aanist-ssksino-aa-yi am-o-iksi-hka kipita-akíi-iksi
and-DM-IN.SG-ID 1-MNR-know.TA-DIR-3PL DP-INT-3PL-INV aged-women-3PL
 ‘**And that is** all I know about these old women.’ Uhlenbeck (1912:204)

In this example, the discourse deictic *kénniaie* refers to the entire preceding story, linking it with the proposition that the speaker has shared all his knowledge on the topic.

In the textual data I analyzed, Blackfoot discourse deixis is always anaphoric and never cataphoric. While further investigation may uncover instances of cataphoric uses, thus far there

is no evidence from Blackfoot texts to support the claim that cataphoric reference in discourse deixis is universal.

3.4. RECOGNITIONAL USES. Recognitional uses serve to activate information that is new to the discourse, but already known to the addressee. Frantz (2009:64) describes the *ann* stem as encoding ‘familiarity to the addressee’ in addition to proximity features. I propose that notions of familiarity arise from the use of the *ann* stem in recognitional uses. Thus, the distance features conveyed by *ann* in situational uses and the familiarity to the speaker expressed by *ann* in recognitional uses are not simultaneously expressed in each use of the stem *ann* but are a result of two different pragmatic functions.

In the textual data I examined, *annáhka* is the only form that appears in recognitional uses. In other words, recognitional forms are instances of the *ann* stem with the RRC suffix *-hka* and without the geometric configuration suffix *-o*. Further research is needed to determine whether recognitional demonstratives only occur with proximate animate nouns, or whether this is a result of a limited corpus and the relative rarity of this pragmatic use.⁵

Recognitional uses are sometimes difficult to identify because it is not known what information is common knowledge to the narrators of Uhlenbeck’s (1912) stories and their audiences. The portions of the texts that do contain identifiable recognitional uses often involve two characters within the narrative engaged in dialogue. The recognitional uses described below are all from such contexts in which (i) a demonstrative form is used to introduce new information in an exchange between two characters within the narrative and (ii) the narrator has indicated that the referent of the demonstrative is already known to the addressee prior to its mention. One such example is given below in 12. In this example, a woman has indicated that she loves a man named Round-cut-scabby-robe. Her public confession of affection causes Round-cut-scabby-robe embarrassment and so he leaves. As he does so, he asks a friend to meet him later and relay what the woman says about him after he leaves. When Round-cut-scabby-robe reunites with his friend, he asks the following question.

- | | | | | |
|------|-------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| (12) | Áuke, | tsániu | annáχk | ákéuayk. |
| | óki | tsá waanii-wa | ann-wa-hka | akíi-wa-hka |
| | DISC | what say.AI-3SG | DM-3SG-INVS | woman-3SG-INVS |
- ‘Now, what did **that** woman say?’ Uhlenbeck (1912:73)

The use of *annáχk* to refer to the woman whom they had previously discussed is not characteristic of tracking usage since she is not mentioned in the discourse that begins when the two friends reunite. The referent (the woman) is known to both discourse participants, but is new, within the discourse event.

Another example of recognitional use comes from a story in which a girl befriends a bear in the forest. In this story, the girl’s ‘meddlesome’ younger sister tells their father that her older sister is always playing with a bear. The father gathers a hunting party and kills the bear. The older sister blames her younger sister for the bear’s death and sends her on an errand that will result in the younger sister’s demise. Part of her instructions is given in 13.

(13) Istápot	omím	itsínitαχpi	annáχk	kyáio
itap-oo-t	om-yi-ma	it-i'nit-hp-yi	ann-wa-hka	kiááyo-wa
toward-go.AI-IMPV	DD-IN.SG-STAT	DCT-kill-CN-IN.SG	DM-3SG-INV	bear-3SG
	‘Go over there where that bear was killed.’			Uhlenbeck (1912:103)

Here the referent (the dead bear) is known to both speech-act participants and the situational use of *omím* excludes the possibility of situational interpretations of *annáχk*, since they employ two different stems to refer to the same location. The bear had not been previously mentioned in any conversation between the two girls, so it is new to their discourse. Since the last overt mention of the bear in the narrative is ten clauses prior to 13, even within the context of the overall narrative, this is not a tracking use of *annáχk* as *om* is used for long-distance tracking (§3.2).

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FURTHER RESEARCH. Himmelmann’s (1996) four pragmatic uses of demonstratives are each attested in Blackfoot. This lends support to Himmelmann’s first claim that all four pragmatic functions are universal. However the Blackfoot data do not support Himmelmann’s second claim that all four uses are equally basic. While the Blackfoot demonstrative system employs three stems in situational uses, only the *om* and *ann* stems are used non-situationally. The *ann* stem is the only one used in all four pragmatic functions. The restricted distribution of the *am* and *om* stems in non-situational functions supports Diessel’s (1999) argument that situational uses are the basic use from which the others are derived. Furthermore, the obligatory presence of the RRC suffix *-hka* on recognitional demonstratives indicates that recognitional forms are morphologically more complex than situational forms. Diessel, citing markedness theory (Croft 1990), states that morphologically more complex forms are derived from morphologically less complex forms. Thus textual data from Blackfoot supports two of Diessel’s arguments for the special status of situational uses as basic and the derived status of non-situational uses.

As noted above, the attested discourse deixis occurrences in the textual data are all anaphoric. It is unclear whether this is because cataphoric discourse deixis usage does not occur in Blackfoot, or whether it is an accident of the data as a result of a relatively small corpus. Further research is needed in this area, but not only on Blackfoot; discourse deixis usage is undescribed in many languages, even those considered well-documented.

The relationship between topic/focus and demonstrative usage is another area that needs further investigation. It may be that both *om* and *ann* are part of the focalization system, or that *ann* encodes topic and *om* focus. To address these questions, it is necessary to investigate instances of focalization and topicalization both with and without demonstratives to determine the contexts in which each strategy is used.

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NOTES

¹ 3=animate proximate (3rd person); AI=animate intransitive verb stem; CN=conjunctive nominal; DCT=deictic preverb; DD=distal demonstrative stem; DIR=direct; DISC=discourse marker; DM=medial demonstrative stem; DP=proximal demonstrative stem; DTP=distinct third person pronominal suffix; DUR=durative marker; ID=identificational suffix; II=inanimate intransitive verb stem; IN=inanimate noun; INT=interior geometric configuration; IMPV=imperative; INVS=invisible; LOC=localizer; MA=motion away; MNR=manner preverb; MT=motion toward; NOM=nominalizer; PL=plural; SG=singular; STAT=stationary; TA=transitive animate verb stem.

² Geers (1917:100) lists *ot-* and *aut-* as ‘cognate with’ *oto-* ‘go to do (something)’.

³ This analysis is based on the definition of focus given by Lambrecht (1994:207) that focus is the element in a proposition’s assertion that differs from its presupposition. Comrie (1989:63) describes ‘focus’ as ‘the essential piece of new information carried by a sentence’ and topic as ‘what the sentence is about’. Bliss (2005) argues that Blackfoot uses proximate/obviative morphology to mark focus and topic. Since the *om* stem takes both proximate and obviative morphology, it is likely that tracking uses of *om* serve some other function than to mark topic or focus.

⁴ Further quantitative research focused specifically on comparing the recurrence rates of new information introduced by *om* with new information introduced without *om* is needed to confirm this initial observation.

⁵ Since, by definition, recognitional uses introduce information that is new to the discourse, they frequently function as the focus of their clause. Based on Bliss’s (2005) proposal that proximate forms are used to encode focus, it is possible that recognitional forms are always proximate.

