

Does contrast affect the use of the personal pronoun *er* and the pronominal demonstratives *der* and *dieser* in German?

Two of the most frequently used German demonstratives are *der* and *dieser*, which can be used adnominally (like determiners) and pronominally (like pronouns). Although there is some recent work on the pronominal use (Patil et al. 2020, Fuchs & Schumacher 2020), it remains unclear which linguistic factors influence a speaker's preference to use *der* or *dieser*. One of these factors might be *contrast*, which has been discussed theoretically but not empirically tested. In this presentation, I report the results of two forced-choice experiments in which I empirically investigated the question whether the linguistic factor *contrast* affects people's choice to use the German personal pronoun *er* or the pronominally used demonstratives *der* and *dieser*. Bisle-Müller (1991) and Ahrenholz (2007) assume that only *dieser* and not *der* is able to express a contrast between several referents and therefore should be preferred in those contexts. Contrary to that, Bosch & Hinterwimmer (2016) argue that *der* is able to express contrast, which might be a difference between *der* and the personal pronoun *er*. The statistical analysis of the results of the two experiments shows that *der* and *dieser* seem to be equally able to express a contrast between their referent and other referents, while they are used more often in such contrastive contexts than in contexts without contrast. In contrast to that, the personal pronoun *er* is used more often in contexts without contrast than in conditions with a contrast between its antecedent and other referents. Therefore, the results do not support the hypothesis of Bisle-Müller (1991) and Ahrenholz (2007). Instead, they are more in a line with the hypothesis of Bosch & Hinterwimmer (2016).

Selected references

- Ahrenholz, Bernt. 2007. *Verweise mit Demonstrativa im gesprochenen Deutsch. Grammatik, Zweitspracherwerb und Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. Berlin: de Gruyter. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110894127>.
- Bisle-Müller, Hansjörg. 1991. *Artikelwörter im Deutschen. Semantische und pragmatische Aspekte ihrer Verwendung*. Tübingen: Niemeyer. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111677590>.
- Bosch, Peter & Stefan Hinterwimmer. 2016. Anaphoric reference by demonstrative pronouns in German. In search of relevant parameters. In Anke Holler & Kaja Suckow (eds), *Empirical perspectives on anaphora resolution*. 193–212. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Fuchs, Melanie & Petra B. Schumacher. 2020. Referential shift potential of demonstrative pronouns – evidence from text continuation. In Ashild Næss, Anna Margetts & Yvonne Treis (eds.), *Demonstratives in discourse*, 185–213. Berlin: Language Science Press. Doi: <https://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/282>.
- Patil, Umesh, Peter Bosch & Stefan Hinterwimmer. 2020. Constraints on German *diese* demonstratives: Language formality and subject-avoidance. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 5(1): 14. 1–22. Doi: <http://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.962>.