Vietnamese Demonstratives Revisited*

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In this paper, I will try to show that Vietnamese demonstratives are to be analyzed not only in terms of distance but also in terms of space. I will first present L.C.Thompson's analysis and then my own.

1. Morphological Structure

In his Vietnamese Grammar (1965:142) Thompson lists the basic demonstratives in the table reproduced below:

	Unspecified -ao/-âu (even)	Close to Speaker or Newly Introduced -ay/-ây (even)	Remote Already Identified -ây/-o (short)
PLACE d- (first register)	đâu 'wherever'	đây 'here'	đấy 'there'
REFERENCE n- (second register)	nào 'whichever'	này 'this'	no '(an) other, that'
PROPORTION b- (first register)	bao 'to whatever extent'	bây 'to this extent'	bấy 'to that [such] extent'
MANNER s- (first register)/ v- (second register)	sao 'however'	vầy 'this way, thus'	vậy 'that way, so'

Table 1. Basic demonstratives (Thompson 1965)

Thus Thompson is the first—if not the only author so far—to have arranged demonstratives according to their morphological features, so as to show their semantic interrelationships. In doing so, he points out the existence of subsyllabic

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morphemes in Vietnamese, a fact that the vast majority of students of Vietnamese have hardly recognized.

However, Thompson seems to be so preoccupied with the morphological regularity of the system he posits that he misses some important points, i.e. such frequently occurring items as $(n)\acute{a}y$, $d\acute{o}$, kia, are not to be found in Table 1. To integrate these additional items, Thompson's table (with manner and proportion demonstratives deleted) may be modified as follows:

	\mathbf{D}_{ullet}	D1	D2	D3
	(Indefinite)	(Proximal)	(Medial)	(Distal)
+NOM(inal)	đâu place-what ⁽²⁾	đây place-this	<i>ďáy</i> place-that ₁	
±NOM(inal)	1	1	đó (place-)that ₁	<i>kia</i> (place-)that ₂
-NOM(inal)	<i>nào</i> what	<i>này</i> this	(n)ấy that ₁	no that ₂

Table 2. Basic demonstratives (modified)

Table 2 makes clear the following points:

- 1) The opposition of the initials d-/n- correlates with the opposition of Place+Reference vs. Reference instead of Thompson's Place vs. Reference. My English glosses stress this difference: $d\hat{a}y$ bears the same contrastive relationship with $n\hat{a}y$ as 'Place-this' does with 'this'. In other words, all the demonstratives in the +NOM series are semantically broken down into two components (Place and Position) whereas those in the -NOM series have only one component, namely Position.
- 2) A +NOM demonstrative is a free morpheme. A -NOM demonstrative is a bound one. Consequently, the phonological contrast of d-/n- also reflects the syntactic contrast between free and bound, except in the case of $d\delta$ where this opposition is neutralized.
- 3) By labelling his columns $-ao/-\hat{a}u$, 3 $-ay/-\hat{a}y$ and $-\hat{a}y/-o$, Thompson implies that -ao and $-\hat{a}u$ are in fact two variants of a single morpheme (let us transcribe it abstractly as /-Aw/), and that -ay, $-\hat{a}y$, and -o may be interpreted as three variants of another underlying morpheme, say /-Ay/. There is indeed other evidence for the alternation of $-ao/-\hat{a}u$ as in:

tao, tau 'I'; rào, giậu 'fence'

¹ In fact, Thompson did mention and discuss them as "other forms" (p.253) implying that they are not basic demonstratives.

² The Vietnamese order Noun-Dem is maintained in our translation.

³ The difference -ao/-âu cited by Thompson in the Vietnamese standard orthography is merely a difference between /a/ and /â/ since the pronunciation of ao and âu is respectively /aw/ and /âw/. My postulated /-A/ is realized as either -a or -â in the context of /nasal__ y/ so we can have này/ này. Otherwise /-A/ is realized as -â.

But there is no morphophonemic evidence for any alternation among -ay, -ây and -o.

So, instead of two, I postulate three subsyllabic morphemes, namely /-Aw/, /-Ay/ and /-o/ [5]. Moreover, we also find these three forms in the system of personal pronouns: tao/tau 'I', may/may 'you', no 'he, she, it'.

4) In place of a two-term system, there should be a three-term system (the unspecified D° not included) with:

-Ay in D1 and D2 -o in D2 and D3 kia in D3

Notice that D2 is the term where we have at the same time -Ay and -o. As we will see later, this is because D2 occupies an intermediate morphological/semantic position between D1 and D3.

- (5) Following Fillmore (1982:48), I have labeled D°, Dl, D2 and D3 respectively as Indefinite, Proximal, Medial and Distal but, as it will become clear in the following pages, such semantic categorization does not fully reflect other interpretations of deictic markers.
- (6) For lack of a one-to-one correspondence between Vietnamese and English, I translate kia and no in D3 as 'that₂'. While 'that₂' corresponds to 'over there', 'that₁' corresponds to 'there'.

2. Interpretation and functioning

2.1 A reexamination

Semantic interpretation of Vietnamese demonstratives so far has not been entirely satisfactory. Take for instance dây which is translated by the English 'here' (Thompson 1965: 142). However, The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Oxford, gives the meaning of 'here' as 'in, at, to this point or place'. Therefore the meaning of 'here' can be broken down into three elements:

Location/Direction Position/Deictic orientation Place in, at, to this point/place

In contrast, dây has only two of these three elements, namely Place and Deictic orientation. Let us examine an English sentence and its translation into Vietnamese such as:

(1) 'he arrives at the market' nó đến chợ

The verb den is equivalent to 'arrive-at', i.e. the semantics of den incorporate the location/direction element expressed by 'at'. So when we replace cho by day we

obtain a grammatical sentence where dây is a nominal exactly like cho 'market'. (This fact also accounts for the use of verbs like den 'arrive', di 'go', etc. as coverbs of direction). Moreover, dictionaries give the meaning of dây as chỗ này, lit. 'place, this'; the substitution of cho này for dây is possible in many cases (see also ex. 3 infra). Taking account of this semantic interpretation of demonstratives, we can now return to Table 2. where in the +NOM category we have e.g. dó glossed as '(place-)that₁' 'place' being a notional concept and 'that₁' a deictic marker. The parenthesized notation (place) means that the demonstrative can be interpreted either as having incorporated the component place or not. So the presence or absence of the semantic component place justifies the division of demonstratives into three lexico-syntactic series: +NOM, -NOM and +NOM. The morphemes of the +NOM series have each a referent of their own and can function as independent NP's. Those of the -NOM series have no referent of their own: they are only indexical terms which, added to a noun, permit us to single out the referent designated by the noun, either ostensively, or by relative ordering, or by reference to knowledge shared by the participants in the speech act—in short, with the internal or external parameters of the utterance.

So the +NOM demonstratives refer to a place and at the same time situate it in space/time. On the other hand, the -NOM demonstratives, since they are not free morphemes, require a noun whose referent they situate in space/time. The two items do and kia are not involved in this distinction:

- (2) do là anh no (dó +NOM) place-that₁ be brother him 'That is his brother.'
- (3) người đó là anh nó (đó -NOM) person that, be brother him 'That person is his brother.'

So far, the semantic interpretation of Dl, D2, D3 is quite clear. But how about D°? D° can be considered as the neutral term with respect to Dl, D2, D3. As such, D° may have two different semantic interpretations:

- a) Intrinsically neither as Dl, nor as D2, nor as D3 but, it can be contextually interpretable as any of them. Thus D^{*} is an unspecified term that is used as a question-word:
 - (4) chỗ nào/đâu mưa? place-what rain 'Where does it rain?'
- b) Alternatively D^o may incorporate the positions of Dl, D2 and D3, all at the same time. In this case, the 'what' must be translated as 'every':
 - (5) chỗ nào/đâu cũng mưa place-every also rain 'it rains everywhere.'

In order for D° to have the interpretation 'every-place', the presence of the preverb cũng 'also' is necessary. Cũng like every is a quantifier. The difference is that every is part of the NP whose head is 'place', whereas cũng is a verbal modifier and part of the predicate. It is interesting to note that it is only in this usage of dâu in collocation with the quantifier cũng that we have the possibility of reduplicating dâu: dâu cũng mưa > dâu dâu cũng mưa 'It rains everywhere'.

2.2 The distinction no/kia inside D3.

The distinction $n\phi/kia$ is best explained in terms of bidirectional time-reference vs. unidirectional time-reference. For the former kia may be used; for the latter only $n\phi$ is appropriate:

ngày kia (day, kia) 'the day after tomorrow, a day to come' or 'a day in the past, once upon a time' ngày no (day, no) 'the other day (in the past)'

Kia refers to a point of time in the past as well as in the future, while no is a unidirectional time-reference morpheme: it always indicates a point of time in the past. This time-reference contrast related to the couple no/kia somewhat overlaps the contrast between reference in absentia and reference in praesentia. One way of looking at the past is by using a spatial metaphor—the past is behind us—it is then out of our visual field, so no refers to persons or things not visible to us whereas kia may refer to persons or things either present or absent.

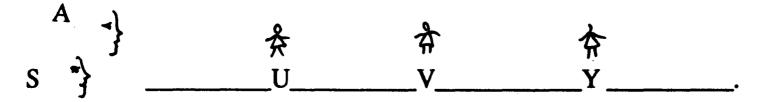
2.3 Proximity and distance

Leaving aside the notion of place, the demonstratives operate according to a three-term system based on proximity/distance, with respect to the position of the speaker considered as the deictic center. Thompson characterizes dây, dấy (p. 142) and kia (p.253) as follows:

dây here, close to the speaker or newly introduced dây there, remote or already identified kia that, there (more remote than dây)

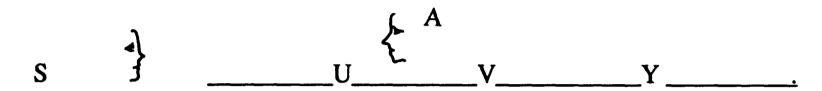
Examples can be found to illustrate Thompson's statement:

(6) đây là bà U; đấy là bà V; kia là bà Y
Dl be Mrs. U D2 be Mrs. V D3 be Mrs. Y
'Here is Mrs U; there is Mrs V; over there is Mrs Y.'



However counter-examples can be found to challenge this 'egocentric' point of view. The interpretation of the example above is correct if the speaker S and the addressee A are side by side, looking in the same direction (they are in tandem). Yet if we suppose that they are face to face, and U, V and Y retain the same positions, but only U is in the visual field of both the speaker S and his addressee A, then the example above should be modified as follows:

(7) đây/đấy là bà U; kia là bà V và bà Y 'Here/there is Mrs. U; over there are Mrs V and Mrs Y.'



In (7), dây will be used if U is closer to the speaker than to the addressee; other than that, dây would be more appropriate.

As we see from this simple example, we have a dichotomy D1,D2/D3 instead of a trichotomy D1/D2/D3. The dichotomy is made in accordance with the distinction between inside space (the space shared by the speaker and his addressee in the utterance situation) and outside space (i.e. space beyond the speaker and addressee).

2.4 Inside space/ Outside space

We have seen that the relative positions of the participants in an utterance situation are important factors in interpreting the demonstratives.

In tandem, the I and the YOU become a WE, and the interpretation of demonstratives should be based on this WE.

Face to face, the space shared by I and YOU is different from the space when they are in tandem. But in both cases the parameter involved should not be I (the speaker) but WE (speaker and addressee):

I // YOU (in tandem) dây dấy, đó kia WE inside space outside space I <-> YOU (face to face) dây đấy, đó kia

It follows from this representation that (a) D1dây is always in the inside space, (b) D3 kia is always in the outside space, (c) the D2 dấy, đó are sometimes part of the inside space (and can then be used as 2nd personal pronouns YOU, see Sec. 2.5), but sometimes they are part of the outside space (then they are anaphoric, see Sec. 2.8). The choice in D2 is predictable from the morphology of its components: dấy goes with dây-D1; đó goes with no-D3 and nó 'he, she, it'.

2.5 Place and person

Place can be used (metaphorically) for person. It is easy now to understand why +NOM demonstratives can replace personal pronouns. Dây 'the place where I am' may refer to the person that occupies that place, namely 'I'. Similarly, dây 'the place where you are' may mean 'you'. Example:

(8) đây đi chợ, đấy có đi không?
D1 go market D2 aff. go neg.
'I'm going to the market. What about you?'

2.6 Space and time

Space and time are related. The Vietnamese demonstratives illustrate this relationship on both the morphological and the functional levels.

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a) Morphological:

nây/này 'this' (Place-Dem)

nay 'now' (Time-Dem) hôm nay 'today' (hôm 'evening')

(n)ấy 'that' (Place-Dem)

nãy 'recent' (Time-Dem) khi nãy 'a moment ago' (khi 'moment')
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b) Functional:

Kia is a Time-Place demonstrative. Compare chỗ kia 'the place over there' and ngày kia 'the day after tomorrow'.

Dây can have a spatial as well a temporal reference. For example, (9) Tao đi đây has the reading of 'I am going somewhere (to a place I know)' if it is the answer to the question: Mày đi đâu? 'Where are you going?', but can be interpreted as 'I am going right now' if the corresponding question is Mày chưa đi à? 'Aren't you going yet?'.

2.7 Contrastive distances/spaces

In Table 2., kia seems to be an isolated form among morphemes having -Ay and -o as roots. Yet this morphophonemic isolation is only superficial—actually kia can be used as a base to derive several other deictic morphemes indicating different time/place positions. Since kia is exclusively a marker for non-participant space, its derived morphemes then refer to positions in that space. The derivation should obey a certain tonal ordering: we start with the ngang (high level)

tone of the base, then go to the huyền (low level) tone:⁴ kia 'over there'; kià 'farther than over there'

These two forms are found in dictionaries. However, the possibility of tonal derivation does not quite end there. Consider the expression:

(10) ngày kia, ngày kià, ngày kia, ngày kia 'on and on into the future'

It seems clear that the terms must be in order of increasing remoteness, nevertheless we also find:

(11) ngày kia, ngày kià, ngày kia, ngày kia, ngày kia or (12) ngày kia, ngày kià, ngày kia, ngày kia, ngày kia

Indeed, the last three terms may be in any order at all. Thus we have an expression a bit like the English "farther and farther and farther ..." in which each term is taken as more extreme than the one preceding. However, unlike the English example, the terms in the Vietnamese expressions are all different, with the first two fixed and with the requirement that any further term must each be on a different oblique tone. Contrastive tones result in contrastive distances/spaces.

2.8 Tonal morpheme and Anaphora

Demonstratives locate and identify individuals not only by their position in the extra-linguistic situation but also by reference to the correlated expression in a textual context. In the last case, demonstratives are anaphoric. Example:

- (13) Mày có biết ông A không? ông ấy/đó là ai?
 you aff. know Mr.A neg Mr. that be who
 'Do you know Mr. A? Who is he?'
- In (13) it is possible in the Southern dialects (from Danang southward) to replace $\partial ng \, dv / dv$ by ∂ng . To explain this phenomenon, we postulate the existence of a tonal morpheme.

Note that on the morphological level, Dl is contrasted to D2 as ngang/huyên (level) tones to sac (high rising) tone. As the vocalic nuclei are unstable (we have the alternation day/db, and in some dialects (n) ay can be replaced by nb, and ay by i), the -NOM D2 can then be realized only by its most prominent and charac-

⁴ The present Vietnamese (Northern dialects) tonal system is:

		level	oblique]
register	high	ngang()*	sắc (´)	ngã (~)	* unmarked
	low	huyền (`)	nặng(,)	hới (9)	

In the Southern dialects, the *hôi* and *ngã* tones are collapsed into one oblique mid rising tone that may be marked either by the sign \circ or the sign \sim in writing.

teristic feature, the sác tone, which thus becomes a morpheme by itself. This sác tone combines with the tone of the word it modifies to give a mid rising broken tone which has all the features of the tone resulting from the collapse in the Southern dialects of the hói and ngã tones from the Northern dialects (See note 4). For this reason the resulting tone may be marked either by the sign? or ~ in writing.

(14) bên (ấy) bến 'that side'

(15) bà (ấy) bá 'that grandmother, she'.

One exception should be pointed out: a sắc tone cannot combine with another sắc tone. This fact explains why with a base like $ch\dot{u}$, it is impossible to derive $ch\dot{u}$ ($\dot{a}y$)—* $ch\dot{u}$.

That the sắc tone combined with any of the other three tones (ngang, huyền, nặng) results in a neutralized ngã/hỏi tone is very understandable since (i) the combining tones are shorter than the long resulting tone; (ii) the hỏi/ngã tone is mid rising in the Southern dialects, so that its register is neutralized with respect to high and low. The Southern hỏi/ngã thus has the contour, height and length appropriate for the combination of these tones.

The segmental partners of this tonal morpheme are nouns that can be used as substitutes for personal pronouns such as kinship terms and locative nouns, i.e. items that can incorporate a deictic marker so as to refer to individuals whether these are specified with respect to person, place or time.

3. Conclusion

In these few pages, it is impossible to accomplish an exhaustive study of demonstratives in Vietnamese. My aim is merely to "revisit" the morphology in relation to the lexico-syntactic and conceptual features of this category. In doing so, I have pointed out (a) the need to integrate other demonstrative forms into Thompson's table; (b) the importance of the distinction between Place and Position (deictic orientation); (c) the interrelationship between Space and Distance, and between Place and Person; (d) and the close connexion of Space with Time (through morphological and functional features). (e) A tonal derivational morpheme is also postulated.

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