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## Cross-Cultural Practices:

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### A Comparison of Demonstrative Pronouns

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#### in Japanese and Thai

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SAOWAREE W. NAKAGAWA

*This paper attempts to find similarities and differences between Japanese and Thai demonstrative pronouns. In Japanese, the meaning of demonstrative pronouns can be divided into three categories; a) distance, b) belonging and c) cognition. Demonstrative pronouns in the Thai language share the first two categories. However, although Thai demonstrative pronouns do not function with the meaning of c), the notion of cognition is expressed by other elements. This indicates that the two languages differ in surface structure but share the same notion in deep structure. Although Japanese and Thai demonstrative pronouns have some differences in meaning and usage, both languages have similarities in deep structure and surface structure. The so in Japanese and nǎn are an example; they are similar both in deep and surface structure.*

In learning a foreign language, learners often make mistakes or have difficulty in understanding the linguistic structures or the meaning of words or expressions. This is generally due to the fact that a learner is influenced by his native tongue; especially when he or she finds differences in grammar or expressions between the language he or she is learning and his or her own language. Unlike the language acquisition of a child, an adult who learns a foreign language has a tendency to compare his or her language with the language being learned.

As Robert J. Di Pietro (1971) stated: “Regardless of the psychological theory of language learning to be adopted, important differences can be observed between the child’s acquisition of language and that of an older person who is learning a language other than his own. The child must acquire the rudiments of human communication via language along with the specifics of language or languages spoken around him. The adult, on the other hand, has already acquired the essentials of language communication as well as one or more particular language.... Whatever new language the adult may learn, he will inevitably make comparisons with the language or languages he already knows.”

There is no exception for learners of Japanese and those who learn Thai; it is possible for learners of Japanese or Thai to confront difficulties in understanding some grammatical problems, or meaning and usage due to this effect. This paper will compare demonstrative pronouns in Japanese and Thai in order to find the similarities and the differences in the two languages. It is necessary to mention here that the aim of this paper is not to find the meaning or expressions uttered by an ideal speaker and an ideal listener as proposed by Chomsky (1972), rather it is to compare the meaning and the usage of expressions in both languages for

the purpose of communication. The analysis will, therefore, be carried out from the standpoint of speech acts. As A. H. Gardiner (1951) pointed out, there are four factors to be considered in speech; the speaker, the listener, words and things at the place where the interlocution is made.

### Universals of Language

Although languages are individually different from each other, it has been pointed out by many linguists that all languages share various aspects in common. Di Pietro (1971) stated the following on the universals of language:

“... Whatever our interests in linguistics, we have to agree that the grammar of individual languages must contribute, in some way, to the grammatical theory of all languages....”

Bernard Comrie (1981) explains that there are two major methodological approaches to language universals in linguistic work, namely the approach in which linguists carry out research through data from a wide range of languages and the approach in which linguists argue that the best way to learn about language universals is by the detailed study of an individual language. In the former approach, linguists tend to concentrate on universals in terms of relatively concrete rather than very abstract analysis while in the latter approach, linguists advocate stating language universals in terms of abstract structures such as deep syntactic structures within transformational-generative syntax.

Comrie also states that the representative works of the two approaches are those of Joseph H. Greenberg and Noam Chomsky respectively. However, Comrie agrees with Greenberg's idea that in order to establish that something is universal in language one would need to look at a wide range of languages. This paper will adopt the notion on language universals of Greenberg and Comrie.

As Comrie points out linguists are interested not only in universals of language but also the differences in languages, he states on language universals and differences in languages as follows<sup>1</sup>:

“At first sight, the study of language universals and the study of language typology might seem to be opposites, even in conflict with one another: language universals research is concerned with finding those properties that are common to all human languages, whereas in order to typologize languages, i.e. to assign them to different types, it is necessary that there should be differences among languages. The contrast can thus be summed up as one between the study of similarities across languages and the study of differences among languages. Yet, in practice, the two studies proceed in parallel: typically, linguists who are interested in language universals from the viewpoint of work on a wide range of languages are also interested in language typology....”

Comrie's remark implies the fact that all languages share common aspects of grammar in many ways as well as having differences among them.

In order to find the similarities and the differences, or in other words, to find the universals shared by Japanese and Thai and to find the differences in the two languages, some examples of expressions such as demonstrative pronouns will be discussed in this paper. It is significant that although some linguists such as Noam Chomsky treat language universals in terms of abstract structures i.e. deep syntactic structures, this paper takes the point of view

that universals of language can be found in surface structures as well. Furthermore, differences in individual languages can also be found in both deep and surface structures. In this paper, the terminology of similarities will be referred to as universals and the differences will be referred to as the typology of the two languages.

### Demonstrative Pronouns

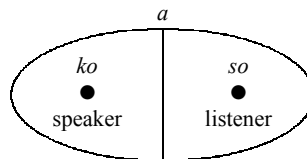
When we talk about demonstrative pronouns in English, we would think of *this*, *that*, *these* and *those*, for example. In Japanese the demonstrative pronouns or *shijigo* (指示語) are often referred to as *ko·so·a·do* since the representatives of demonstratives are *kore* (this), *sore* (that), *are* (that over there) and *dore* (which). In the Thai language, the demonstrative pronouns are *nîi* (this), *nân* (that), *nôon* (that over there). The primary use of demonstrative pronouns of these languages is to indicate things that are close to the speaker or far from the speaker. In other words, demonstrative pronouns are used to indicate things existing at various distances. It can be assumed that demonstrative pronouns in many languages, if not all, are expressions of universality.

### Demonstrative Pronouns in Japanese

Japanese demonstrative pronouns are basically used in two ways, namely the Place Demonstrative or *Genba shiji* (現場指示) and the Contextual Demonstrative or *Bunmyaku shiji* (文脈指示). The former type of the demonstrative pronoun is that being used at the site of the interlocation and the latter type is the demonstrative pronoun that is used to indicate things mentioned in the interlocation.

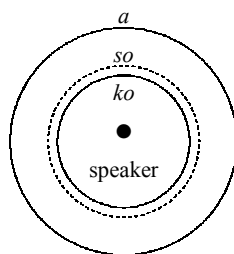
Matsuoka (2000) divides Place Demonstrative into two subcategories; one where the speaker and listener face each other, *Tairitsu* (対立) and the other where they are in the same place, *Yugo* (融合). The first type refers to the interlocation being made where the speaker and the listener face each other in the same area but at a distance.

Matsuoka illustrates this type as follows:



Matsuoka explains that *ko* is used to indicate things which are close to the speaker while *so* is used to indicate things which are close to the listener. And *a* is used to refer to things that are far away from both speaker and listener.

The second type refers to the interlocation being made where the speaker and the listener are close to each other in the same area or when there is no listener. Matsuoka explains that when referring to things near both speaker and listener, *ko* is used, when referring to things far from both parties, *a* is used and when referring to things that are neither near or far, *so* is used. This is illustrated as:



In *Tairitsu*, when one refers to the same thing, the demonstrative pronouns used by the speaker and the listener are different as shown in the example below:

- (1) A: Sore wa hon desu ka. (Is that a book?)  
 B: Hai, kore wa hon desu. (Yes, this (it) is a book.)

This example shows that even though the speaker and the listener are pointing at the same thing which is near the listener, the speaker will use *sore* and the listener will use *kore*. *Kore*, *sore* and *are* can be used to refer to things but not a human being: this is not a problem of grammar but a problem of being impolite, or a pragmatic problem. Consider the examples below:

- (2) × *Kore* wa Yamada-san desu.  
 (3) a. *Kono* hito wa Yamada-san desu.  
 b. *Kono kata / Kochira* wa Yamada-san desu.

When one introduces a person to the listener he would use either (3) a or b but not (2). In (3), b is more polite than a. This is the pragmatic use of honorific expressions. Matsuoka also points out that when the speaker refers to several things; plural nouns, the words *korera*/*sorera* and *arera* are used. However, this is not restricted because *kore/sore* and *are* which are normally used for singular nouns can be used. Therefore the English sentence: *These are my dolls* can be expressed in Japanese as:

- (4) a. *Kore* wa watashi no ningyo desu. (This is my dolls.)  
 b. *Korera* wa watashi no ningyo desu. (These are my dolls.)  
 c. *Kore* wa zenbu watashi no ningyo desu. (These are all my dolls.)

Matsuoka compares with the English as follows:

- (5) a. This is my doll.  
 b. × This is my dolls.  
 c. These are all my dolls.

We can see that b is ungrammatical.

In English, *this*, for example, can be used as a modifier as well as a pronoun. In other words, even though the deep structures are different, the surface structures of *this* are the same. In Japanese, however, the surface structures are different as well; that is, when the pronouns of *kore*, *sore* and *are* are used to modify nouns, they must be changed to demonstrative prefixes as *kono/konna*, *sono/sonna* and *ano/anna* respectively. *Kono*, *sono*

and *ano* are used to specify nouns while *konna*, *sonna* and *ana* are used to express attribution of the nouns.

For example,

- (6) a. *Kono* hito (this person)
- b. *Kono* hon (this book)
- c. *Kono* neko (this cat)
- (7) a. *Konna* hito (a person like this)
- b. *Konna* hon (a book like this)
- c. *Konna* neko (a cat like this)

As shown above, the demonstrative prefixes can be used for human beings, things and animals. In Japanese, *ko•so•a•do* also refer to places or directions as follows:

*Koko* (here), *soko* (there) *asoko* (over there)  
*Kochira* (this way) *sochira* (that way)  
*Achira* (direction towards that over there)<sup>2</sup>

For example a conversation at the department store:

- (8) A: Sumimasen, erebeetaa wa *doko* desu ka. (Excuse me, where are the elevators, please?)
- B: *Achira* desu. (That way over there.)

One typical feature of Japanese demonstrative pronouns is that they develop into *dore* (which one), *dono/donna* (which, what kind), *doko* (where), *dochira* (which direction) as question words while such phenomena do not occur in English and Thai.

Moreover, *ko•so•a•do* can be used as adverbs; *koo* (like this), *soo* (like that), and *aa* (like that). For example,

- (9) *Koo* shite kudasai. (Please do it like this.)

Matsuoka illustrates *ko•so•a•do* in the following chart<sup>3</sup>:

		demonstrative			question words
		ko	so	a	
noun modifier		kono	sono	ano	dono
attribute		konna	sonna	anna	donna
pronoun	thing	kore (ra)	sore (ra)	are (ra)	dore, nani, (nan)
	person	koitsu	soitsu	aitsu	doitsu, dare, donata
	place	koko	soko	asoko	doko
direction		kochira, kochi	sochira, sotchichi	achira, atchi	dochira, dotchi
adverb		koo	soo	aa	doo

Matsuoka does not give details on what he calls *Bunmyaku Shijishi* (Contextual demonstrative). For this type of demonstrative, Alfonso (1974) explains by illustrating various situations of the interlocutions. He uses *Referents* for the terminology of demonstrative pronouns and explains their meaning and usage as follows:

*Ko-Referent*:

When the speaker, in referring to some existing condition or an act done before his eyes, connects such conditions or facts with HIMSELF. *Ko-Referent* is used as illustrated by the

following example:

- (10) A: Baka ni samuku narimasita ne. (It has become terribly cold, right!)  
 B: Soo desu ne. *Koo* samuku naruto sutoobu ga sorosoro hosiku narimasu ne. (Indeed. When it is cold, we feel we want to have a stove soon.)

*So-Referent*:

1. *So-Referent* refers to things that are near, or to things connected with the second person. (11) is the example:

- (11) A: Okaasan, watashi no seeta wa doko ni arimasu ka. (Mammy, where is my sweater?)  
 B: Tansu no ue ni hako ga aru deshoo. *Sono* naka ni haitte imasu. (There is a box on the wardrobe, isn't there? It is inside that box.)

This example indicates that the mother is referring to the box near the son who is the second person of the interlocution.

2. *So-Referent* is used to refer to what was said, for example:

- (12) A: Ishihara san no okosan wa asa goji ni okite taisoo o suru soo desu yo. Erai desu ne. (I heard that Ishihara's son gets up at five in the morning and does exercise. How wonderful!)  
 B: *Sore* wa ii desu ne. (That's great.)

3. *So-Referent* is used to indicate adding more information, for example:

- (13) Anata wa hito no warukuchi bakari iimasu ne. *Soko* ga anata no ketten da to omoimasu ga ne. (You always speak ill of people and that's your bad point.)

Alfonso also points out that *Ko* indicates "This thing I am telling you about Now" while *So-Referent* indicates "That which I told you about", "That which I just mentioned" or "That which you just mentioned". (14) is the example.

- (14) A: Boku no kuni wa Satsuma-Fuji to yuu yama ga aru no desu ga, *kono* yama wa Fujisan ni totemo yoku nite irun desu. (There is a mountain called Satsuma-Fuji in my home town. This mountain really resembles Mt.Fuji.)  
 B: Soo desu ka. *Sono* yama wa takasa ga dono kurai arun desu ka. (Is that so? How high is that mountain?)

*A-Referent*

1. *A-Referent* refers to things that are far, remote, or to things connected with the third person. For example:

- (15) A: *Ano* hito wa mata kaisha o hajimeru soo desu ne. (I heard that that guy is managing a company again.)  
 B: Soo desu ka. Shikashi *soo* shinai hoo ga iin ja nai desu ka ne. (Really! I don't think he should be doing that.)

2. *A-Referent* is used to refer to things not present, such as:

- (16) A: Yanase san no goshujin wa zuibun nomu rashii desu ne. (It seems that Yanase's husband drinks heavily.)  
 B: Sore jaa, *asoko* no okusan wa taihen deshoo ne. (Then I think the wife there must have a hard time.)

### 3. *A-Referent* refers to past events:

- (17) Kinoo densha no naka de boku ni ojigi o shita hito ga ita deshoo. Ano hito ga yuumei na Mifune san desu yo. (Did you see the man who bowed to me on the train yesterday? That man is the famous Mifune.)

### 4. *A-Referent* is used to refer to something known to both the speaker and listener of the interlocution. (18) is an example of this:

- (18) Kinoo densha no naka de boku ni ojigi o shita hito ga imashita ne. Boku wa *ano* hito ga dare da ka omoidasenai desu. (Do you remember the man who bowed to me on the train yesterday. I can't think who he is.)

Alfonso gives another example in which *So-Referent* is used when only the speaker knows the thing he is mentioning:

- (19) Kinoo densha no naka de boku ni ojigi shita hito ga itan desu ga, boku wa *sono* hito ga dare ka omoidasenai desu. (A man bowed to me on the train yesterday. I can't think who he is.)

There is one thing in what Alfonso has explained about demonstrative pronouns, that is *A-Referent* refers to past events. When we look at the following examples, we can see that what he has explained cannot be applicable to all cases:

- (20) A: Yanase san no goshujin wa zuibun nomu rashii desu ne. (It seems that Yanase's husband drinks heavily.)  
 B: Sore jaa *asoko* no okusan wa taihen deshoo ne. (Then the wife there must have a hard time.)

This example refers to things that are not present, however, it is a fact which is not a past event. Also, the things mentioned are known to both speaker and listener. (18) and (19) are other examples. In (18) the event is shared by the speaker and the listener; the event is known to both parties. Thus, *ano* is used in (18). In (19), only the speaker knows the event, therefore *sono* is used. Both (18) and (19) are past events, however, they use *A-Referent* or *So-Referent* depending on the cognition of speaker and listener towards the things mentioned.

From the explanation of Matsuoka and Alfonso, we can conclude that demonstrative pronouns in Japanese; *ko*, *so*, *a* are used with the meaning of referring to:

#### a) Distance

- When referring to things near the speaker, *ko* is used.
- When referring to things near the listener, *so* is used.
- When referring to things that are far from both speaker and listener *a* is used.

#### b) Belonging

- Things connected to the first person, *ko* is used.
- Things connected to the second person, *so* is used.
- Things connected to the third person, *a* is used.

#### c) Cognition

This refers to things that are not present.

- When referring to things known to only the speaker, *so* is used.
- When referring to things known to both speaker and listener, *a* is used.

### Demonstrative Pronouns in Thai

As far as I know, there has been very little literature on Thai demonstrative pronouns. Therefore in this paper, demonstrative pronouns in Thai will be discussed based on the three categories of meaning; namely, a) Distance, b) Belonging and c) Cognition. The representative demonstrative pronouns in Thai are *nîi* (this), *nân* (that) and *nóon* (that over there). They are used as pronouns, however, when they modify a noun, the tones will be changed to *~nîi* (this~), *~nân* (that~), and *~nóon* (that~over there). Before further discussion, let us look at the meaning of these words in the dictionaries. Raatchabandittayasatan Dictionary (1996) defines *nîi*, *nân* and *nóon* as follows.

*nîi* is a pronoun used to refer to a person or something which is near<sup>4</sup>.

example:

(21) *nîi* khray (Who is this?)

(22) *nîi* à-ray (What is this?)

*nîi* is also used as a modifier to a noun or a verb<sup>5</sup>.

example:

noun modifier: (23) *nǎŋ-sǔu nîi tǎæŋ dii*. (This book is well written.)

(24) *khà-nǒm nîi à-rǎy*. (This dessert is delicious.)

verb modifier: (25) *yuu nîi* (To be here)

(26) *maa nîi* (Come here)

*nîi* is a modifier to things which are near. There are no examples given in this dictionary, however, one can find it being used in sentences such as:

(27) *dǎk-máy nîi hǎm*. (This flower smells good.)

(28) *rót khan nîi khǎŋ khun maa-ná*. (This car belongs to Mr.maa-ná.)

It is also mentioned in this dictionary that *nîi* is used to specify a noun such as:

(29) *thúk-wan nîi* (nowadays)

(30) *chaay khon nîi* (this guy)

*nân* is a pronoun used to refer to things, persons that are further than *nîi*.

example:

(31) *nân* à-ray (What's that?)

*nân* is also used to refer to things mentioned. However, examples of this are not given. *nóon* is used as a pronoun referring to things that are far and the modifier of this word is *~nóon*. Examples of these words are not given. However, if we replace *nân* by *nóon* in (31), the sentence will be:

(32) *nóon* à-ray. (What's that over there?)

examples for *nóon* can be:

(33) *bān lǎŋ nóon khǎŋ khray*. (Whose house is it over there?)



Osamu Matsuyama (1998) explains *nîi*, *nân* and *nôon* as follows:

—*nîi* is a demonstrative pronoun used to refer to things, direction and place which are in the area of the speaker.

Example:

(34) *nîi* khuuu à-ray. (What is this?)

—*nîi* is used as a noun modifier for *nîi*

(35) khon *nîi* (this person)

(36) khuuun *nîi* (this night→tonight)

—*nân* is a pronoun used to refer to something or a place that are either near the listener or in between the speaker and the listener.

Examples:

(37) *nân* à-ray (What's that?)

(38) thîi *nân* (that place)

As Matsuyama explains, *nân* can be used to refer to something that is far.

Example:

(39) *nân* phuuk-khău-fay fuu-ci chây mǎy. (Is that Mt. Fuji (over there)?)

—*nân* is the modifier for *nân*

—*nôon* is a demonstrative pronoun used to refer to things or places far from both speaker and listener.

Example:

(40) thîi *nôon* (that place over there)

When it modifies a noun, *nôon* is used.

Example:

(41) fâak *nôon* (that side over there)

We have seen some explanations and examples mainly from the dictionaries mentioned above. However, further discussion with some more examples will give a total picture of the meaning and usage of demonstrative pronouns in Thai.

### a) Distance

In Japanese, *ko*, *so*, *a* are used clearly to refer to things near the speaker, the listener and far from both parties respectively, as mentioned previously. However, as Matsuoka explains, *so* is used when the location of the thing from the speaker and the listener's point of view is not clear. For *nîi*, *nân* and *nôon*, as mentioned above, refer to things which are near to the speaker, the listener and far from both parties respectively. However, as Matsuyama explains, *nân* can be used to refer to things that are far from both speaker and listener like *nôon*. For example:

(42) *nân* phuuk khău fay fuuci chây mǎy. (Is that Mt. Fuji (over there)?)

In (42) the speaker refers to the mountain he sees at a distance from both him and his partner

of interlocution. However, it is worth noting that if the mountain he sees is quite remote, he would use *nōon*. This indicates that *nân* is primarily used for things nearer than *nōon*. The meaning and usage of this kind is similar to *so* of the *Yugo* demonstrative where *so* is used to refer to things that are not near and not far from the speaker and listener.

### b) Belonging

As mentioned before, Raatchabandittayasatan Dictionary explains that *nân* is also used to refer to things mentioned in the conversation. (43) and (44) are examples of this kind.

(43) A: phǒm cà tâng-cay rian khráp. (I will study hard.)

B: *nân* pen sǐj thǐi dii. (That's a good thing to do.)

(43) implies the meaning that what you said is good. This indicates that *nân* is also used to refer to things connected with the listener and this has the similar meaning to *so* in Japanese.

(44) A: rúu mǎy khun sù-châat dǎy pen khá-ná-bǔu-dii. (Do you know that Mr. Suchat has been appointed Dean of the Faculty.)

B: *nân* khǎu pen khon kèetj yùu lǎæw. (That guy was already a great man.)

(44) refers to the third person mentioned in the interlocution, in other words, when referring to things connected with the third person, *nân* is used. This indicates that there is a concept of belonging in Thai language as in Japanese.

### c) Cognition

When (18) and (19) are translated into Thai, they will be as follows:

(18') mǔaa-waan-nǐi mii khon sà-wát-dii phǒm bon rót-fay chǎy mǎy lâ. phǒm núk mây ðók wǎa phǔu-chaay khon *nân* pen khray. (Do you remember the man who bowed to me on the train yesterday? I can't think who he is.)

(19') mǔaa-waan-nǐi mii khon sà-wát-dii phǒm bon rót-fay. phǒm núk mây ðók wǎa phǔu-chaay khon *nân* pen khray. (A man bowed to me on the train yesterday. I can't think who he is.)

Alfonso pointed out that in Japanese (18) is something known to both speaker and listener and therefore *a* is used while (19) refers to the speaker's knowledge about the event therefore *so* is used. In Thai language, both (18) and (19) use *nân* (as shown in 18' and 19') referring to the man being mentioned, no matter whether the speaker alone or both speaker and listener have knowledge of the event. (18') and (19') can also be expressed by *nǐi* (18'), for example, will be:

(18'') mǔaa-waan-nǐi mii khon sà-wát-dii phǒm bon rót-fay. phǒm núk mây ðók wǎa phǔu-chaay khon *nǐi* pen khray.

By using *nǐi* in (18'') *phǔu-chaay khon nǐi* is topicalized. This analysis matches what Raatchabandittayasatan Dictionary explains about *nǐi* as specifying a noun. We can see that demonstrative pronouns in Thai are not fixed to one word like Japanese.

### Conclusion

As we have seen above, the meaning of Japanese demonstrative pronouns can be divided into three categories; a) Distance, b) Belonging and c) Cognition. Demonstrative pronouns in the Thai language share the first two categories. However, although Thai demonstrative pronouns do not function with the meaning of c), the notion of cognition is expressed using other words. Thus, we can assume that the two languages differ in surface structure but share the same notion of cognition in deep structure. And we can conclude that although Japanese and Thai demonstrative pronouns have some differences in meaning and usage, both languages have similarities in deep structure and surface structure and vice versa. The *so* in Japanese and *nân* in Thai are an example; they are similar both in deep and surface structure.

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### Notes

1. In this paper Difference is used for Typology but not in the sense of Typology by Comrie.
2. Achira is used to refer to direction other than the direction towards the speaker and listener.
3. This paper uses *ko*, *so*, *a* and *do* as representatives of all the words on the chart since they have a compound syllable of *ko*, *so*, *a* and *do* in common.
4. This paper uses [-] to indicate that the syllables on both sides of - belong to the same word, for example: à-ray is equivalent to àray.
5. In Thai grammar, the terminology of *verb modifier* is used in terms of *adverbs*.

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