Demonstrative and Wackernagel’s law in the East of the Circum-Baltic area

This paper presents an alternative approach to the use of demonstratives as sentence clitic in Finnic and Slavic varieties, spoken in the East of the Circum-Baltic area. The focus is on demonstrative that comes in the sentence-second position after the first stressed lexical unit of a sentence. This resembles Wackernagel’s law (1892) on syntax of sentence clitics in Indo-European languages, suggesting a similarity across language families. In previous studies of Finnic languages, scholars have defined this type of clitics with many different terms:

1. Resumptive pronoun, Finnish toistopronomini (Larjavaara 1986)
2. Enforcing clitic particle, Finnish vahvistava liitepartikkeli (Hakulinen 1999)
3. Tonational particle, Finnish sävypartikkeli from German Anbetönugspartikel (ISK)
4. Modal particle (Sorjonen 2017)
5. Discourse marker (Duvallon & Peltola 2017)

The only multilingual comparison by Larjavaara (1986) exclusively deals with Northeast Finnic languages (Finnish, Karelian proper, Olonets Karelian, Lude and Veps), while this paper will include into investigation also the rest of spoken Finnic varieties as well as North Russian dialects.

So far there is no study that associates Wackernagel’s law – which is originally specific for Indo-European languages – with clitics in Finnic languages. In this paper, I argue that the similar tendency is also present in spoken Finnic varieties in which demonstrative is used to reorganise the information structure of a sentence in topic-comment scheme (Andrews 2007, Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011), similar to topic marker in Altaic and East Asian languages. In other words, the topic – be it whatever part of speech (except conjunction) – is placed in the sentence-initial position. Topic is, then, followed by an unstressed demonstrative clitic that functions as a boundary between topic and comment phrase thereafter (see ‘Examples’ for realisation of the construction in different languages).

Diachronically, such an adpositional use of demonstrative after noun might be an initial development stage of the postposed definite article, e.g., in Balkan Slavic, North Russian, Mordvin and the on-going development in Veps (Itkonen 1966). However, this use of demonstrative was already present, e.g., in Mikael Agricola’s Old written Finnish (16th century) sporadically. In terms of areality, this function of demonstrative seems to be missing from the Finnic varieties in Estonia. Explanation might be that Estonian and South Estonian have language-internally renewed systems of demonstrative and deixis into different directions than the others. Instead, a particle siis seems to take over the reorganising function which is expressed by demonstrative in other Finnic varieties.

Beyond Finnic languages, a similar element is also observed in North Russian dialects. Among several functions, reorganising information structure is one function of the historically peculiar postposed demonstrative whose origin has been attempted to associate with Finno-Ugric substrate (Kiparsky 1967 & 1969, Veenker 1967). Not only the modern dialects but also the Old Novgorod Slavic dialect (11th–15th century) frequently use this type of sentence clitics. Especially, a clitic ti used in the majority of Birch Bark documents might, in one perspective, be originated from t-demonstrative series, even though ultimately, its etymology still remains unclear (cf. Zaliznjak 2008). Thus, this paper raises the question of clitic demonstrative, in the sense of Wackernagel’s law, being an areal pattern that covers the majority of the East of Circum-Baltic area.
Examples

Livonian  
*u’d-jemà | se | vo̞lloD nănnD rānda pāl sel̄ī ő’gi nāist-pūoll a̞lZ voñD,* ...  
"The Holder of fog was such a grizzled lady,…" (Suhonen 1975: 112)

Votic  
*mo-nikosan | se | on tā’- a ke-rittā pe-rē | se | on pe̞xē sā-ŋki,*  
"Der Krumme [dies] ist ein Weg, der gesicherte Arsch aber ist der Stoppelacker." (Mägiste 1959: 150)

Old Finnish  
*Hyowyzde ) Evagelium | se | ombi meiden hyowyzden,*  
‘Goodness; Gospel is our goodness’ (Agricola 1548)

Finnish  
*minunkin lapseni | ne | pisti jo kädet suoraksi kun ne nāki ettā,* ...  
‘My children, too, stretch their hand when they saw that …’ (Mielikäinen 1980)

Ingrian  
*piiřileikki no se oli meiļā se on jo se. meiDā leikki | se | on sitā,*  
‘The circle game, we had such thing. Our game was such a thing.’ (Kokko et al. 2003: 149)

Karelian  
*minun akku | se | kuwendelov, a sinun akku ei kuwendelah,*  
‘My wife listens, but your wife did not listen [to her husband].’ (Makarov & Rjagoev 1969: 45)

Lude  
*ku mi-nā | se | suaim me-īšat kāvumāi ka, hi-muoīti, inšerešo-vatse a-mbuda he-iD,* ...  
‘When I got to hunt, I was pleased and interested to shoot them [the bears], …’ (Virtaranta 1984: 43)

Veps  
*Dūnān Kuudunjan vaihetno kuwen, a šīgupūi | se | mīda pagižēp ka ei ku̞v,*  
‘I listen to D-K, but from there, what he says, I do not hear.’ (Zaitceva & Mullonen 1969: 186)

Old Novgorod  
*prisvili mi grivonu a Davyd | tē | mi ne vzdab velito vnožati u vežnik,*  
‘I received money; Davyd did not give me, but orders to take from the guards.’ (Zaliznjak 2004: 365)

North Russian  
*vodā | to | idjēd, dak vot vodā | to | eto koliše to i ver’tīt,*  
‘The water flows, so the water also spins that wheel.’ (Nacional’nyj korpus russkogo jazyka 1994)

References


