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Demonstrative modification of proper nouns: a corpus based study  
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### 1. Introductory remarks

This paper focuses on the use of demonstrative *ten* in modification of proper nouns, in examples such as *ty Liblice* or *ta Praha*. This is a topic that has eluded systematic study in the past, due to the difficulty of obtaining a sufficient sample size for a phenomenon that occurs sporadically and primarily in spoken speech. Occasional examples can be found in literary stylizations of dialogue, but generally at wide intervals that prevent efficient searches. In addition, literary stylizations do not necessarily reflect natural spoken language (Gammelgaard 1997, Bermel 2000, and others). The Czech National Corpus provides a remedy to these issues, with its three purely oral corpora (Oral2006, PMK and BMK) that represent both a variety of spoken situation types, and speakers with a variety of demographical features (age, level of education, region of residence). Oral2006 alone contains over 2000 examples of *ten* + proper noun (in various declensional and gendered forms), while PMK and BMK contribute approximately a thousand.<sup>1</sup> In this study I address two main issues: 1) the basic functions of demonstrative modified proper nouns, and 2) the combinatorial possibilities of demonstrative modified proper nouns with other spoken features.

### 2. The functions of demonstrative modified proper nouns

Demonstrative modifiers prototypically serve to isolate and select a token of the type identified by the head noun (Hawkins: 1978, Lyons: 1999). When a speaker speaks of Liblice as „this castle“, as opposed to „that castle“, for example, the demonstrative „this“ guides the addressee to an understanding of which castle is meant, either deictically, from the speech situation, or anaphorically, by coreferencing to a previous mention of the castle. If the speaker shifts to proper reference, with the name Liblice, the demonstrative function of selectivity becomes irrelevant, since proper nouns automatically select a unique (or at least most prominent) referent within a given context. Furthermore, the use of a proper noun enables the addressee to coindex mentions of the referent without further modification: a speaker can refer to the castle at any time simply as Liblice, and presume on the basis of the noun’s properness that the reference is clear. Thus, the prototypical demonstrative functions of selectivity

and coindexing are at least theoretically irrelevant in examples of demonstrative modified proper nouns.

Looking at actual examples, however, we find that these functions are retained to a certain degree. Demonstrative modified proper nouns are especially common in contexts where the referent has low referential depth: when a new discourse participant is introduced into the discourse and the speaker assumes that the addressee has limited prior familiarity with the referent. Consider the following example:

- (1) to dneska, jak sme byli u *toho Milana*, jak mluvil vo *tý Říše* a vo *tom Slávovi*...  
(Oral2006: 02A021N)

The speaker assumes the addressee to have a sufficiently high degree of familiarity with Milan to be able to identify him by name on the basis of a previous conversation. Demonstrative modified *ten Milan* activates this prior shared context, with the sense of shared familiarity reinforced by further demonstrative modification in reference to key parts of the conversation with Milan, i.e., Říša and Sláva.<sup>2</sup> The speaker expects the referent, Milan, to be familiar to the addressee, but not well known, and provides additional information to compensate for this expected low degree of referential depth. The use of a relative clause to provide clarifying information is very common in examples with demonstrative modified proper nouns. As this example shows, while the demonstrative may not be essential for successful reference, there do remain elements of the basic demonstrative functions of selecting a specific referent (one *Milan* from the set of possible *Milans*), and coindexing it across contexts shared in the knowledge sets of speaker and addressee.

A further demonstrative function stems from its inherent deictic meaning: it selects the correct referent by „pointing“ to it, drawing attention to either its actual existence in the physical context of the discourse (pure deixis) or to its verbal presence in prior discourse (anaphora, or „textual deixis“). Consider the following excerpt from a narration about the movie *Batman*, starring Jack Nicholson. The many mentions of both Nicholson and *Batman* are italicized, as are the mentions of a subordinate referent, the movie *Čarodějky*.

- (2) ...viděl sem tedka v poslední době ve Francii novej film vo, který se menuje *Batman*, no a je to, to je strašně zajímavý, hraje v tom *Jack Nicholson*, kterej hrál ve filmu, kterej tedka sem viděl taky nedávno, tak ten se menoval *Čarodějky z Eastweeku* no a v tom filmu sou strašně podobný věci, *ten Nicholson* je tam, prostě má v podstatě podobnou roli a v tom, *ten Batman* je teda neuvěřitelnej, neuvěřitelnej film... je to strašně podivný a ten, *ten Nicholson* je tam jak blázen. my sme se vo tom možná už bavili, ale von je tam úplně šílenej jako v *tech Čarodějkách*, úplně šílenej, ale přesto se, někdo říká, že ty filmy sou úplně už jako strašný a že sou nemorální, ale já mám naopak pocit, že sou strašně, že tam právě

ta morálka v tom je a že to je tak strašně jako, jemně to tam symbolicky jako postavený v některých momentech, tam je třeba scéna v *tom Batmanovi*, kdy von, kdy *ten Nicholson* prostě se snaží dostat z nějakého baráku, ze střechy nějakého domu, kde se prostě pere se svými nějakými nepřátelama, nevím zrovna jestli s tím Batmanem a teďka nahoře je helikoptéra jeho a von se snaží nějak po nějakém žebříku k ní vystoupit a jak tak leze, tak von vlastně jako stoupá do nebe, von je vlastně jako ďábel... víš a teďka stoupá do toho, do toho nebe a zachraňuje se vlastně von jako ďábel, mně to přišlo děsně symbolický, takovej symbol a ještě v *Čarodějkách* byly takovýdle situace... ale *ten Nicholson*, ten je tam skutečně, von, von tam na začátku řáček prostě se perou s *tim Batmanem* a von do něj strčí na nějakým lešení a von do něj strčí a von spadne, v první chvíli myslíš, že se zabije a von spadne do takový veliký kádě, zřejmě s nějakou kyselinou, nebo s něčím, jo . von *ten Nicholson* tam má roli nějakýho takovýho jako odpůrce *toho Batmana* , von je vlastně jeho , von je vlastně , von je takovej jako nějaký chemik , víš jako, prostě zabývá se chemií a vytváří furt nějaký prostředky proti *tomu Batmanovi* chemický prostě a všelijaký, vymějšlí nějaký plyny a s tím s ním bojuje. a teďka, von do toho spadne, teď najednou vypluje z toho ruka, jo , a potom strhí a von je u *někdyho doktora* a je celý zafačovaný, teď *ten doktor* ho vodmotává a strašně se bojí co bude, jestli ten, jestli ten, jak prostě dopadla plastická operace *toho Nicholsona*. (PMK325)

In the first mention of Nicholson and of the movie title, Batman, the proper nouns are not modified: they are newly introduced into the addressee's consciousness, with unequivocal reference established via relative clauses. In the second mention, both are modified by demonstrative *ten*, as is the movie title *Čarodějky*: the demonstrative serves a coindexing function, reinforcing the sense of identifiability after an initial mention. Note that the same function is filled by *ten* with a common noun in the later mention of a doctor („a von je u *někdyho doktora*... teď *ten doktor* ho vodmotává“). In this narration, *ten* modifies a second mention identically in proper and non-proper reference: functionally, the demonstrative in *ten doktor* is directly parallel to that in *ten Nicholson*, *ten Batman* and *ty Čarodějky*. It clarifies reference to a discourse participant that may have low referential depth in the consciousness of the addressee.

However, further mentions of the referents differ. Nicholson and Batman are consistently mentioned with demonstrative modification: although it is not required and the reference is completely clear without it, the demonstrative serves a highlighting function, focusing the addressee's attention on the two main characters. In contrast, when the movie *Čarodějky* is mentioned again, it is not modified: it fills a subordinate role in the narration and therefore is not highlighted with demonstrative modification. The core deictic function of drawing attention to a specific referent is adapted to a purely pragmatic function of highlighting, even as the other aspects of demonstrative reference (identifiability, selectivity) become completely irrelevant.<sup>3</sup>

This function becomes especially clear in examples from the corpora with forms of *ta Praha*. In these examples, the demonstrative functions of indicating

identifiability and selectivity are clearly irrelevant: *Praha* has uniquely identifiable reference to the Czech capital. Instead, the demonstrative highlights the noun, focusing attention on this referent, as opposed to other things mentioned in the discourse. Many of the examples from PMK involve a contrast: Prague is compared with other places, as the capital, a center of opportunity, a place of social indifference and anonymity as opposed to a small-town sense of community, and so on.

- (3) je tady v Praze . ... to je problém tý nevyrovnaný společnosti , ta *Praha* proudí rychlejc , než se rozvíjí *ten venkov*... (PMK271)

In this example, *ten* highlights the focal points of the contrast: Prague and the countryside. Word order also reinforces the focus on *Praha*: as in this example, it is usually mentioned either clause-initially, as the point of departure, or clause-finally, as the most communicatively dynamic part of the clause.

### 3.0 Combinatorial properties of demonstrative modified proper nouns

This section presents a pilot study of the combinatorial properties of *ten + proper noun*, focusing on features that are stylistically marked as belonging to either Literary or Spoken Czech. A basic premise of this section is that many features of Spoken Czech can be compared on a hierarchical scale: some features are viewed as more or less markedly spoken than others (Townsend 1990: 18, Hronek and Sgall 1992). For example, prothetic *v-* (*von*) is viewed by many native speakers as more markedly spoken than the ending *-u* (*děkuju*) for the first person singular of verbs with the infinitival suffix *-ovat*. This section provides a pilot study of such questions as where proper nouns modified by demonstratives fit into a hierarchization of spoken features, and how they combine with other spoken features. Three features of spoken Czech are examined: spoken forms of relative clauses, prothetic *v-*, and spoken morphological endings of adjectival forms. In order to obtain a sufficient sample size, examples were culled not only from the three spoken corpora, but also from the written corpus Syn2005. The majority of the examples from Syn2005 occurred in translations, even though translations do not constitute a majority of the underlying texts.

#### 3.1. Relative clauses

As mentioned previously, relative clauses are frequent in combination with demonstrative modified proper nouns, since the demonstrative modified noun phrase often introduces a new referent that may require some further clarification, presented

a relative clause. Czech has many variants of relative clauses, from spoken *co* and *jak*, to an intermediary of *který* (with spoken modifications to *ktorej*, *kerej*.) and the highly formal *jenž*. The relativizer *jenž* is completely absent in the the set of examples of *ten* + proper noun, and forms of *který* with purely Literary Czech endings are also very rare. Most frequent are the spoken Czech relativizers *co* and *jak*, and case forms of *ktorej* and *kerej* also appear sporadically. These combinatorial properties indicate that proper nouns with demonstrative modification are considered a part of the highly spoken realm of the language: they combine with *ktorej* and elements that are more markedly spoken (*co* and *jak*), but marginally with the more literary variant *který*, and not at all with the most literary relativizer *jenž*.

### 3.2. Prothetic *v*-

In the combination of the preposition *o/vo* with a proper noun, prothesis predominates in PMK (64.9% of examples) and Oral2006 (63.6%). It is far less common in the Brno corpus (23.1%), reflecting the geographical restrictions on this feature. However, with demonstrative modification we see a significant rise in the insertion of prothetic *v*-regardless of geography: PMK records 78.9% of examples with prothesis, Oral2006 has 90.2%, and BMK has 53.3%. These data indicate that *ten* + proper noun is more compatible with the feature of prothesis, and that demonstrative modification of a proper noun appears to enhance the overarching sense of spokenness.

### 3.3. Morphological endings of adjectives

A third combinatorial feature is literary vs. spoken endings of adjectives. Among proper nouns, we find these endings in names with an adjectival form (*Suchý*), and in adjective-noun compounds (*Pražský hrad*). In all of the oral corpora examined, spoken endings are strongly favored in all cases of *ten* + proper noun except the nominative. Nominative case tokens favor the literary endings: for example, *ten Suchý* predominates over *ten Suchej*. Two examples combine this literary ending in clauses with other adjectives bearing spoken endings:

(4) ale mně je sympatickej ten Dumbrovský (PMK122)

(5) já vim, takovej ten Makovský. ne. Majský. ne. Takový židovský méno  
(Oral2006: 04A049N)

In the first example, *sympatickej* is predicative, but in the second, *takovej* directly modifies *Makovský*. Spoken endings are used in all forms except the names. The converse, spoken endings in a nominative case name juxtaposed to literary endings

for other adjectival forms, does not occur. The findings are limited by the small sample size, but, nevertheless, they indicate a possible hierarchy, whereby the name itself is more likely to carry a literary Czech ending than other adjectival forms. The literary Czech ending *-ý* may in fact be stylistically neutral when applied to names in the nominative case.

#### 3.4. Combinatory properties of *ten* + *proper noun*: Conclusions

The combinatorial properties of *ten* + *proper noun* indicate that it is most compatible with spoken features, though speakers do use this construction to a limited degree in combination with some literary features. This may perhaps explain in part why the majority of examples of *ten* + *proper noun* in Syn2005 occur in translations: *ten* + *proper noun* enables a translator to establish a strongly colloquial tone, while avoiding the use of colloquial morphological endings, which carry different effects of characterization in written language than in spoken. The occurrence of *ten* + *proper noun* in a written corpus, therefore, may be influenced by the relative percentages of different text types (translations versus originals). Any statistical analysis of its occurrence in a written corpus must thus take into consideration very specific features of the corpus.

1 These numbers are not exact: since it is not possible to search directly for *ten* + *proper noun*, I instead conducted a search for forms of *ten* preceding all words beginning in a capital letter, and then applied numerous filters, which may not have eliminated all ineligible forms.

2 See the discussion of *ten* in similar contexts in Zubatý (1917), Mathesius (1926), Křížková-Běličová (1971), Adamec (1983) and Kresin (1994), among others.

3 Interestingly, Epstein (1993, 1994) discusses a similar function in the development of the definite article in French. Likewise, Laury (1997) presents “attentional foci” as a key aspect of the use of Finnish *se*, which appears to be developing into a definite article.

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