

## VÕRO DEMONSTRATIVES: CHANGING OR DISAPPEARING?

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**Abstract.** The paper deals with the changes occurring in the system of demonstratives and personal pronouns in the Võro language, the present-day variety of the South Estonian Võro dialect. In the Võro language the third person pronoun is *timä/tä* and there are three demonstrative pronouns (*sjoõ~seo*, *taa*, and *tuu*) and three series of demonstrative adverbs (*siin:siia:siit*; *taha:tan:tast*; *sinna:seal:sealt*) are in use. The data for the study come from the newspaper *Uma Leht* (2012–2014) and mini-series produced by Estonian Public Broadcasting in 2011. The data show that the former addressee-centered system of South Estonian demonstratives has disappeared. At the same time, the language has retained all of the pronouns, although their frequency and context of use differs in the written and the spoken data.

**Keywords:** demonstratives, personal pronouns, Võro language

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### 1. Introduction

The present paper takes a look at a system of demonstratives which is in the process of changing and, for that reason, exhibits considerable variation. The main question is how the system of demonstratives and personal pronouns changes in a bilingual (Estonian-Võro) situation, in which the same demonstrative stems perform different functions and the whole system is built on different categories. I describe the use of nominal and local adverbial demonstratives (see Dixon 2003: 62 for terminology) and third person pronouns in the present-day Võro language (the present-day common language spoken mainly in the area of the historical Võro dialect). The objective is to establish how the archaic, relatively complex system of three spheres is changing into a new system with fewer distinctions due to the influence of the simpler system of Estonian (cf. also Tammekänd 2015).

Demonstratives and third person pronouns, together with zero-forms, make up the set of minimal (Laury 2005) or reduced (Kibrik 2011) referential devices. Describing such a system requires taking syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors into account (Diessel 1999, Dixon 2003, Hanks 2009). From the perspective of syntax it is important that while demonstratives can be used as determiners, third person pronouns can not (Dixon 2003: 69, Kibrik 2010: 125). From the semantic perspective, a number of properties of the referent are vital, mainly the quality of the referent (animate/inanimate, human/nonhuman) and the location of the referent, a property traditionally used for describing demonstratives (deictic categories such as, for example, distal/proximal and visible/invisible; Diessel 1999). The most versatile is the set of properties derived from the communicative situation: the devices of minimal reference differ, for example, with respect to the properties of the referents (contrastive/non-contrastive, precise/vague; see Diessel 1999), cognitive (information) status (*in focus*, *activated*, *familiar* etc.; Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski 1993, Gundel et al. 2010), and the role they play in different communicative activities (e.g. Etelämäki 2009, Priiki 2014, Hint, Reile and Pajusalu 2013).

The traditional account of demonstratives based on a merely spatial principle is clearly too primitive (Hanks 2009). There is no sharp difference between spatial deictic reference, anaphoric within-text reference and other types of reference. In fact, it is often considered more fitting to study demonstratives on the basis of the dynamic spheres of the speaker and addressee; these spheres can be either spatial, social, informational, etc. (Laury 1997). The most important question for an interactionally oriented study of referential devices is how speakers use demonstratives to construe the referent (Hanks 2009: 21).

The focus of the present paper is the change in demonstratives and personal pronouns due to language contacts. We are interested here in the reduction of the demonstrative system, where an important influence is that of Estonian, which in turn has been influenced earlier by the Germanic system featuring fewer distinctions.

## 2. Overview of the relevant demonstrative systems

### 2.1. Finnic demonstratives

Four demonstrative stems have been reconstructed for the Finnic languages: *\*tämä*, *\*taa*, *\*too* and *\*se* (Larjavaara 1986: 75). Nowadays, in the Finnic languages the number of demonstratives can vary from three (Finnish *tämä*, *tuo*, *se*, Karelian *tämä*, *tua*, *še*, South Estonian *seo*, *taa*, *tuu*) to one (Livonian *sie*) (Laanest 1982: 197–199, see Nordlund et al. 2013 for a comparison of Estonian and Finnish demonstratives).

The pronoun *tämä*, which used to be a demonstrative, has changed into a third person pronoun in Estonian, Livonian and Votic (Larjavaara 1986: 2): it has the form of *tema/ta* in Estonian<sup>1</sup> and *timä/t(i)ä* in South Estonian. The etymological source of the short form of the third person pronoun of Estonian is thought to be the demonstrative *taa* (Metsmägi et al. 2012: 505). As a demonstrative, *tämä* still figures in the North-eastern dialects that are closer to the Finnish language (Tirkkonen 2007). The other demonstrative stems persist in other Estonian dialects, primarily in South Estonian (Pajusalu 1998, 2009).

The Finnic languages differ from one another not only in the number of demonstratives, but also in whether or not they have a demonstrative referring to the addressee's sphere (addressee-oriented demonstrative, see Anderson and Keenan (1985: 282–286) and Diessel (1999: 39) for terminology). For example, in the spatial domain, the choice of demonstratives in Estonian does not depend on the location of the addressee with respect to the referent (at least according to the existing studies), while in Finnish, the demonstrative *se* may refer to the addressee's sphere, while *tämä* refers to the speaker's sphere. The Finnish system, therefore, has in addition to the relative abundance of demonstratives (three demonstrative stems), also a larger number of distinguishing features.

The devices of minimal reference can be used in the Finnic languages both anaphorically as well as deictically referring to both animate as well as inanimate referents; the Finnic languages do not make a strict distinction between animate/inanimate or human/nonhuman entities (see, e.g., Seppänen 1998, Hakulinen et al. 2004: 1366 for Finnish and Pajusalu 2006 for Estonian). Written languages differ from spoken

<sup>1</sup> *Estonian* here refers to the Estonian common language, historically based on North Estonian dialects and used nowadays all over Estonia.

languages in this respect: most likely under the influence of the Indo-European languages, the specialization of the third person pronoun to refer to humans in Finnish (see, e.g., Hakulinen et al. 2004: 707–708) and animate entities in Estonian has been partly artificially introduced into written varieties. Demonstratives in Finnish and Estonian are in the process of grammaticalizing into articles due to the influence of Indo-European languages, while at the same time retaining the regularities of their own system (Laury 1999, Nordlund et al. 2013).

## 2.2. Demonstratives in Võro and Estonian

This paper looks at the modern Võro language (also referred to as the Võro-Seto language), which has developed on the basis of the historical Võru dialect (one of the three dialects of South Estonian) and which is socially the most prominent regional language in Estonia at the moment. The majority of the Võro people are bilingual Võro and Estonian speakers and Võro is becoming more similar to Estonian in many aspects (K. Pajusalu 2009).

**Table 1.** Demonstratives and 3rd person pronouns in Estonian and South Estonian (Võro)

	3rd prs. sg.	3rd prs. pl.	proximal		distal	definite determiner
North Estonian	tema/ta	nemad/nad		see		see
Estonian	tema/ta	nemad/nad	see		too	see
Võro	timä/t(i)ä	nimä/nä	sjoo	taa	tuu	tuu

Table 1 schematically presents the Estonian and Võro demonstrative systems. In the Võro language the third person pronoun is *timä*, its short version is *tiä* or *tä(ä)*. In addition, three demonstrative pronouns (*sjoo~seo*, *taa*, and *tuu*) and three series of demonstrative adverbs (*siin:siia:siit*; *taha:tan:tast*; *sinna:seal:sealt*) are in use. In general, it can be said that *sjoo* and *siin:siia:siit* are proximal demonstratives (referring to the speaker's sphere), whereas *tuu* and *sinna:seal:sealt* are distal (referring outside the speaker's sphere) and used as the definite determiner. What makes the system of Võro pro-forms interesting, however, is the third series of demonstratives: *taa* and *taha:tan:tast*. In the older Võro language this series was probably used to refer to the addressee's

sphere; there have been traces of it in the recordings from 1995 from Vastseliina parish. In example 1 from (Pajusalu 1998) we can see that speakers use *sjoo* or *taa* depending on whether the object is in their own hands (*sjoo*) or in the hand of the other person (*taa*). Already back then the system was fluctuating: the *taa*-pronoun was used to refer to spatially intermediate entities (intermediate between *sjoo/seo* and *tuu*). The aim of this article is to ascertain what has become of the *taa*-pronoun in the present-day Võro language, under the predominantly Võro-Estonian bilingual circumstances.

- (1) K. holds an object in his hand and shows it to an old lady V., who is looking at it from a distance and trying to remember what it is.

K: a mis **sjoo**-ga tõmma-di?  
 but what DEM-COM draw-IMP  
 What was drawn with this?

V: **taa** um midägi /.../ **taa**-ga vahest tõmma-di  
 DEM be.3SG something DEM-COM maybe draw-IMP  
 midägi ku puu-anom-i-t tet-ti (.) **taa** um  
 something when wood-vessel-PL-PART do-IMP DEM be.3SG  
**tuu**-jaoss jah **tuu** puu-anoma tegemise jaoss  
 DEM-for yes DEM wood-vessel.GEN doing for

This is something /.../ with this probably something was drawn when wooden vessels were made. This is for that, for the making of wooden vessels.

Unlike South Estonian, (Common) Estonian (based on North Estonian) has only two demonstrative pronouns and two series of demonstrative adverbs. The demonstrative pronouns are *see* (traditionally considered proximal) and *too* (traditionally considered distal). *Too* is actually rare in Estonian and there are varieties with only one demonstrative (based on some North Estonian dialects). In spoken varieties there are differences between people from southern Estonia who use *too* productively and people from northern Estonia who do not use *too* at all (Pajusalu 2006). The demonstrative *see* functions as a proximal or neutral demonstrative (depending on whether the speaker has two spatially opposed demonstratives or whether s/he uses *see* in all deictic contexts), as an anaphoric pronoun, definite determiner, and sometimes

as a placeholder (Keevallik 2010). *Too* is a deictic or anaphoric pronoun (mostly referring to a person); it is not used as a definite determiner in Estonian (unlike in Võro). The third person pronoun *tema/ta* refers to a concrete referent on a highly activated level, mostly to animate, but also to inanimate entities. One can find the pronoun *ta* referring to an inanimate referent particularly often in spoken language (Pajusalu 2009).

There are six demonstrative adverbs in Estonian which are based on a deictic contrast of proximal/distal, and they have three forms: *siia – sinna* for GOAL, *siin – seal* for LOCATION and *siit – sealt* for SOURCE. In addition to their deictic function, demonstrative adverbs are used as anaphoric devices for referents that can be characterised (literally or metaphorically) as a place. They can also function as definite determiners, if the head noun of the NP appears in a local case and can be interpreted as a spatial referent.

As can be seen, the demonstrative adverbs used in the Võro language are largely the same as in Estonian, save for the possible phonetic and morphological variants, e.g. *siü* conditioned by vocal harmony and *siih* conditioned by the different inessive case ending. However, the most crucial difference is the existence of the third series in Võro: GOAL *taha*, LOCATION: *tan/tah*, SOURCE *tast*. Thus far, the meaning of this series has not been sufficiently studied.

### 3. Data

The data for the study come from two sources. For present-day written Võro, a random sample of 200 references using a third person pronoun or a demonstrative was collected from random issues of the newspaper *Uma Leht*; the newspaper issues in the sample were published from 2012–2014.

The spoken data come from the Võro language mini-series *Tagamõtsa* (5 episodes: *Tõnõ jõulupüha* ‘Boxing Day’, *Edimäne armastus* ‘First Love’, *Pritsimiis* ‘The Fireman’, *Pottsepp* ‘The Potter’ and *Salakütt* ‘The Poacher’), produced by Estonian Public Broadcasting in 2011. The script writer for the series is Jan Rahman<sup>2</sup> who writes in Võro; the cast is mainly comprised of non-professional actors who speak Võro as their mother tongue. All of the episodes are freely accessible on the Internet (see the archives section of the Estonian Public

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<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Jan Rahman for his help.

Broadcasting website). The original scripts were also sent to me by the script writer. When comparing the scripts and the actual text used in the series, it can be seen that the actors have not learnt their lines by heart word by word. I presume that minimal reference is such a spontaneous domain that the actors have used the pro-forms exactly the way they would use them in their everyday life. In total, there were 308 demonstratives and third person pronouns used in the *Tagamõtsa* mini-series.

Ideal data for the study of demonstratives would naturally comprise audiovisual recordings of spontaneous conversations. To my knowledge, there are no recordings of various situations to such an extent available in the Võro language at the moment. A typical dialect text is a narrative with its own specific patterns (for recent data consisting of Võro narratives see Tammekänd 2015). Since the aim is to study, first and foremost, the pro-forms as part of the linguistic and non-linguistic activities in present-day common language, the *Tagamõtsa* data sample is fit for the purpose. This article could be considered as a pilot study which could be expanded by gathering more data from real conversations in the future.

#### 4. Demonstratives in Võro newspaper texts

In general, the *Uma Leht* Võro-language newspaper uses pronouns according to the model of written Estonian. Personal pronouns refer to persons, animals and other activated concrete referents; demonstratives refer to abstract and less activated referents. The difference lies in the vowels of personal pronouns (in Estonian *tema/ta*, in Võro *timä/tä*), slightly different plural forms of the third person pronoun (in Estonian *nemad/nad*, in Võro *nimä/nä*) and in the demonstrative: instead of the demonstrative *see* common in Estonian, the demonstrative *tuu* is used in Võro. *timä/tä* and *tuu* make up a large proportion of the total number of pro-forms encountered in the sample (see Table 2); *timä/tä* typically stands for an animate referent (example 2), while *tuu* typically refers to an inanimate, most commonly an abstract referent (example 3). However, the dividing line between the two is not that clear: there are a few solitary examples of short personal pronouns that refer to an inanimate referent (in the sample, only plural *nä*-pronouns, as in example 4) and some solitary uses of *tuu* referring to a person (example 5). *tuu* is clearly the definite determiner (example 6). Other demonstratives are considerably more rare and usually do not refer to a person.

- (2) Mu ämm sai ildaigu 101, ja ku **tä**  
 1SG.GEN mother.in.law get.PST.3SG recently 101, and when 3SG  
 mei-le kirutas, ...  
 1PL-ADE write.3SG  
 “My mother-in-law turned 101 recently, and when **she** writes to us, ...”
- (3) Ku tasakaalu ei olõ, tulõ arsti manu tulla  
 if balance.PRT NEG be must.3SG doctor.GEN to come.INF  
 ja mõtõlda, kuis **tuud** tagasi saia.  
 and think.INF how DEM.PRT back get.INF  
 “When you don’t have balance, you have to go to the doctor and think,  
 how to get **it** back.”
- (4) Mu-lle tundu-s, et võro-keelidse teksti omma mahlatsõmba  
 1SG-ADE seem-3SG that võro-language text.PL be.3PL juicier.COMP.PL  
 ja emotsionaalitsõmba – **näid** om hää elävä-s lukõ.  
 and emotional.COMP.PL 3PL.PRTbe good lively-TRANS read.INF  
 “It seems to me that Võro texts are juicier and more emotional – it is  
 good to read **them** lively.”
- (5) Mu iin saisõ järjekõrra-n üts vanõmb meesterahvas,  
 1SG.GEN front stand.PST.3SG line-INE one old.COMP man  
**tuu-l** lätsi ka kõrva verevä-s.  
 dem-ADE go.PST.3PL also ear.PL red-TRANS  
 “An elderly man was standing in front of me in the line; **his** ears went  
 red as well.”
- (6) Ja sis **tuu-d** **ilmatu-t** **rehkendämis-t**, medä  
 and then DEM-PRT big-PRT calculation-PRT, REL  
 statistika-s kutsuta-s!  
 statistics-TRANS call-PASS  
 “And then **that never-ending calculation**, that they call statistics!”

**Table 2.** Demonstratives and 3rd person pronouns in the newspaper *Uma Leht*

	Animate referent	Other referents	Determiner
<i>timä</i> ‘3rd person long’	12	0	–
<i>tä</i> ‘3rd person short’	50	2	–
<i>tuu</i> ‘(distal) demonstrative’	8	59	33
<i>seo</i> ‘(proximal) demonstrative’	0	5	5
<i>taa</i> ‘demonstrative’	0	2	4
<i>sinna:seal:sealt</i> ‘(distal) demonstrative adverb’	–	13	1
<i>siin</i> ‘(proximal) demonstrative adverb’	–	1	–
<i>tan</i> (demonstrative adverb)	–	3	1

Since the use of *seo*, *taa* and *tan* does not follow the model of Estonian, let us look at their usage patterns. First of all, it is clear from Table 1 that *seo* and *taa* do not refer to a person in written Võro. It is hardly impossible, but no such examples could be found in the actual text: reference to person using a demonstrative is done exclusively with *tuu* (this is also common in Estonian, see Pajusalu 2006).

*seo* is first and foremost proximal and is not commonly used anaphorically or as a definite determiner (differently from *see* as its etymological equivalent in Estonian). This explains why *seo* is more often used in reports and/or contexts where the situation being described is not the immediate speech situation (example 7). *seo* is also used relatively frequently as the subject (of the verb *olema* ‘be’) in the predicative construction (example 8).

- (7) ... remondi-mehe mano. Tuu tekk’ mitu proovi-sõitu,  
 ... repair-man.GENTO DEM do.PST.3SG several test-drive.PRT  
 võtt’ eski üte tsõõri alt, a ütäl’,  
 take.PST.3SG even one.GEN wheel.GEN from.down but say.PST.3SG  
 et piduri piässi külh **seo-l** **auto-l** akuraat olõ-ma.  
 that brake.PL must.COND PRCL DEM-ADE car-ADE good be-INF  
 “... to the car mechanic. He made several test drives, he even took one of the wheels off, but said that the brakes on **this car** should be working well.”

- (8) Tuu-st kooli-st tettäs riigi-gümnaasium. Kas **seo** om  
 DEM-ELA school-ELA do.PASS state-gymnasium Q DEM be.3SG  
 mi kandi kõgõ kõvõmb kuul?  
 1PL-GEN place most strong.COMP school

“This school will be converted into a state gymnasium. Is **this** the strongest school in my neighbourhood?”

Judging from the corpus sample, it can be said that *taa* is even less frequent than *seo* in newspaper texts. It seems the context of use is fairly limited: *taa* refers to a text (propositions, narratives, opinions, etc.). In example (9) it occurs together with the adverb *tan*. However, there are a few cases in the corpus sample when *taa* refers to or is used with NP-s referring to other types of referents (e.g. human being in example 10, see also example 11).

- (9) no ja mis **taa targutaminõ tan** avitas-ki  
 PRCL and what DEM lecturing DEM.ADV help.3SG-CLTC  
 “and what did **that lecturing** help **there** anyway?”

- (10) Tä-l ei saa tudõngi üte ja sama jutu /.../. A  
 3SG-ADE NEG get student.PL one.GEN and same story but  
 läbi **taa tudõng** inne ei saa, ku asi om selges tett.  
 through DEM student before NEG get when thing be clear done  
 “Students cannot with one and the same story /.../. But **this student** cannot pass before the matter has been cleared up.”

*tan* is primarily an adverb that refers to an area close to the speaker; the use of *tan* we saw in example (9) is rather exceptional. The demonstrative adverb *tan* is used to talk about the vicinity of the speaker, and depending on the context it may either be an inner room or an area. In newspaper texts it is often used to refer to Võrumaa (as in example 11). At the same time, there are also contexts where *tan* refers to an indicated more specific place, e.g. the shop shelf in example (12). There seems to be no pragmatic difference between *tan* and the adverb *siin*. No examples with *taha* and *tast* could be found in newspaper texts.

- (11) No om tunnõ, et tahassi Võromaa-l inämb ümbre  
 PRTCL be.3SG feeling that want.COND Võromaa-ADE more around  
 kävvü ja kaemist om **tan** pall’o.  
 go.INF and watching be.3SG DEM lot

“I have a feeling that I want to travel around Võrumaa more and there is so much to see **here**.”

- (12) Märkse **taa as’a** pääle poodi-n köögivilä-riioli man.  
 notice.1SG DEM thing.GEN on shop-INE vegetable-shelf.GEN at  
**Tan** olli kõrvuisi Hiina tsesnok /.../ ja Eesti uma.  
 DEM be.PST next China garlic /.../ and Estonian POSS

“I noticed **this thing** in the shop near the vegetable shelf. You can find **there** the Chinese garlic and the Estonian one next to each other.”

## 5. Pronouns in *Tagamõtsa*

The most frequent devices for minimal reference in the series *Tagamõtsa* are *tuu* and *ta(a)*. Phonologically similar pronouns can also be found in Estonian: *too* in the written language is also used as a demonstrative, although relatively infrequently; *ta(a)* in its short form coincides with the short form of the 3rd person pronoun, which is the most frequent pronoun in Estonian overall.

The pronoun *tuu* is typically an anaphoric demonstrative pronoun. It normally has referents which have been previously mentioned but are not present in the ongoing situation. *tuu* may be used either as a noun phrase or a definite determiner. In example (13) *tuu* refers to a man who has been previously mentioned, whereas on the first occasion, *tuu* is used as a determiner of a proper noun, and on the two subsequent occasions as the subject of a predicative construction. In example (14) *tuu* refers to a suitcase which the speaker has just mentioned and which she has at home (i.e. not in the place where she is herself). The pro-form *tuu*, therefore, refers to something that cannot be indicated with a gesture and which is chosen from among the discourse referents (examples 13, 14).

- (13) It has been said that there are poachers in the village. (Salakütt
- <sup>3</sup>
- )

Maive: Sa tiat, **tuu** Vello, **tuu** om üts hirmus  
 2SG know.2SG DEM Vello DEM be.3SG one awful  
 inemise-tükk. Vat **tuu** om salakütt.  
 man-piece PRTCL DEM 3SG poacher

“You know, **this** Vello, **he** is an awful piece of a man. **He** is a poacher.”

- (14) Maive and Marje are at Marje’s place and they are talking about Marje’s impending trip to Finland. (Edimäne armastus)

Maive: Mu-l om koto-n üts kohvri, ma või  
 1SG-ADE be.3SG home-INE one suitcase 1SG can  
 sulle **tuu-d** lainada.  
 2SG.ALL DEM-PART lend.INF

“I have a suitcase at home, I can lend **it** to you.”

In the case of abstract referents, *tuu* also refers to something that is not mentioned in the ongoing conversation or at least not in the focus of attention at the moment. In example (15) *tuu* refers to a misunderstanding which has occurred between the participants earlier; the referent in this case is the earlier situation which has not yet been mentioned in the ongoing conversation. In example (16) *tuu* is a cataphoric demonstrative which refers to the statement made in the following complement clause. Here it is the first mention of the *tuu* referent, followed by a more specific referring device – the proposition of the complement clause (*luulõtaja tõnõ nimi om nälg* ‘hunger is another name for a poet’). Similarly, *tuu*+NP in example 14 (*tuu arstitõend* ‘that medical note’) was also, in fact, the first mention of the referent, but the speaker believes that it should also be accessible to the partner. In the case of abstract referents, *tuu* refers to a relatively new topic in the conversation, which is either recalled from earlier (as in example 15) or introduced as completely new (as in example 16). Below, example (26) is another instance of *tuu*+NP used to introduce a new topic.

3 The examples from the series *Tagamõtsa* have the titles of the episode in the brackets. All names are given in the same form as they appear in the series.

- (15) Marje remembers a difference of opinion that she and Maive have had. (Pottsepp)

Maive: Ah **tuu**, är **tuu** perast muretagu. Egä mi iks  
 PRTCL DEM NEG DEM about worry NEG 1PL PRTCL  
 tülü-n ei ole.  
 quarrel-INE NEG be

“Oh **that**, don’t worry about **that**. We haven’t fallen out.

- (16) (Edimäne armastus)

Agu: A sa **tuu-d** tiiät, et luulõtaja tönõ nimi  
 but 2SG DEM-PRT know.2SG that poet.GEN second name  
 om nälg?  
 be.3SG hunger

“But **do** you know **this**, that hunger is another name for a poet.”

Although a mention of a referent not present in the situation or of a new topic seems to be the main function of *tuu*, there were some isolated examples in the *Tagamõtsa* material where *tuu* referred to a specific referent present in the situation. The only truly clear instance of spatial reference can be found in example (17), where *tuu* refers to a shed door visible to the speaker, next to which the addressee happened to be standing. This solitary example indicates that the referent of *tuu* may be far away from the speaker and visible. At the same time, the door has been mentioned previously both in the present conversation as well as in the conversation Maive had with her husband Tarmo and to which Maive refers. Therefore, the other interpretation could be that the reason to use *tuu* in this case lies in reference to something previously mentioned.

- (17) Maive looks out of the window and talks to Agu who is standing in the yard next to the shed door. She has just said that Agu should take a new pitchfork from the shed. (Salakütt)

Agu: Kuuri uss om luku-n.  
 shed.GEN door 3SG lock-INE

“The shed door is locked.”

Maive: Aa, õigõ jah. Ma käskse Tarmo-l **tuu** enne  
 PRTCL right PRTCL 1SG order Tarmo-ADE DEM before  
 kinni panda.  
 shut put.INF

“Oh, yes, right. I told Tarmo earlier to lock it.”

The most frequent pronoun in the *Tagamõtsa* material is *ta(a)*. The length of the *ta(a)* vowel differs depending on the context. Since it is not always possible to unambiguously distinguish the length of the vowel, different versions of *ta(a)* with different vowel length are treated as instances of the same demonstrative. In the examples, the length of the vowel is marked as it sounds when listening to the material. In example (18) it can be clearly heard that during the first reference the long vowel is used, while during the second reference, the short one is used. This gives reason to assume that *taa* is used as a demonstrative and *ta* as a personal pronoun. At the same time, there are contexts where the short form is used as a demonstrative (example 19). Additionally, there are case inflections where only the short form is used (e.g. the elative singular *tast*). On the basis of the *Tagamõtsa* material, it can be said that the demonstrative *ta(a)* has a tendency to be used with the long vowel when referring to a referent at an accessible level and with a short vowel with (anaphoric) referents at given level; however, since the dividing line is not always clear, such instances are treated as different versions of the same pronoun.

- (18) Marje sits down next to her son and sees that he is looking at the picture of a girl on the computer screen (Edimäne armastus)

Maive: Kes **taa** om?  
 who DEM be.3SG

“Who is she?”

Kaspar-Oskar: Gertrud.  
 “Gertrud.”

./.

Maive: Kas **ta** miildü-s sulle?  
 Q DEM/3SG like-3SG 2SG.ALL

“Do you like her?”

- (19) Kaspar-Oskar has asked her mother for a basket; his mother brings the basket, holds it in her hand and asks: (Edimäne armastus)

Maive: A mis sa **ta** korvi-ga tee-t?  
 but what 2SG DEM basket-COM do-2SG

“But what will you be doing with **this** basket?”

The pronoun *ta(a)* is used more frequently than *tuu* when referring to a concrete referent (both animate and inanimate; as, for instance, reference to the girl in example 18). It is often accompanied by a pointing gesture (example 20), but not always. These referents are usually visible, and sometimes in the hands of the speaker (example 21, see also *ta korviga* ‘this basket’ in example 19 above). The pronoun *ta(a)* is also used as an anaphoric pronoun referring to a person (examples 18 and 23); this is also the most frequent function of *ta* in Estonian.

- (20) Tarmo is standing next to the fire truck and talking to Maive; he is indicating the fire engine with his hand. (Pritsimiis)

Tarmo: **Taa-d** massina-t om ju külla-l vaia.  
 DEM-PRT machine-PRT be.3SG PRCL village-ADE need

“But the village needs this machine.”

- (21) Maive is in the next room and is trying to plug in the battery of her electric car. She calls out to Marje. (Tõnõ jõulupüha)

Maive: **Taa** ei lähe stepsli-he.  
 DEM NEG go contact-ILL

“It won’t plug in.”

- (22) A young woman is sitting in her car and when she is asked to step out, she says (Tõnõ jõulupüha)

Noor naine: Ma ei lää **ta-st** vällä.  
 1SG NEG go DEM/3SG-ELAT out

“I won’t step out of **it**.”

- (23) (Pottsepp)

Marje: Leino ei saa kõnõlda, **ta** om tumm.  
 Leino NEG can speak-INF DEM/3SG be.3SG mute

“Leino can’t speak, **he** is mute.”

At the same time, there are situations where the referent of *ta(a)* is abstract and invisible. In example (24), a strange sound has just been heard to which the speaker refers using the pronoun *taa*. Although the referent here is the sound, it can be said that on a larger scale reference is made to the whole situation which has just occurred and in which both the speaker and the addressee have participated. Similarly below, in example (32), *ta* refers to the cleaning-up which the speaker has been observing for a long time. In example (25) the speaker uses the pronoun *tast* to refer to a situation which has already happened and which the addressee has no notion of. It is possible that what drives the use of *ta(a)* in this context is the fact that the situation referred to took place at the same place where the conversation is being held and in this respect the speaker belongs to the sphere of this moment.

- (24) Maive is cleaning a room at Vello's place and hears a sound. (Pritsimiis)

Maive: Mis **taa** olli?  
 what DEM be.PST  
 "What was **that**?"

- (25) Maive is telling how she went to visit Marje and at the same time the kids who had been left home alone were misbehaving. (Tõnõ jõulupühä)

Maive: Egä ta vaene vana-inemine es tiiä et  
 NEG DEM poor old-person NEG.PST know.INF that  
**ta-st** sääne tramburai tule  
 DEM/3SG-ELA such mess come  
 "The poor old person didn't know that **it** will all result in such high jinks."

There is a general tendency in the *Tagamõtsa* material for *tuu* to refer to referents not physically present, but identifiable, and *ta(a)* to referents physically present or identifiable in the speaker's sphere in the world of discourse. At the same time, the pronoun *ta* is also an anaphoric pronoun regularly used to refer to a person at the level of 'in focus' (examples 18c and 23). The referent is usually not visible in such instances; this usage pattern is somewhat contradictory to the usage pattern of *ta(a)* when referring to a referent that is present, but new in the situation. It is probable that the anaphoric use of *ta* to refer to a person is, at least partly, due to the influence of Estonian.

There are contexts where it is possible to see a stark contrast between *taa* and *tuu*. In example (26), Maive and Marju are talking about a number of problematic situations; *taa* is used to refer to a situation which has been the topic of the conversation for a long time and which has become the main topic by the moment of reference; *tuu*, on the other hand, is used in the NP that refers to a new topic, which both of the participants are aware of, but which has been mentioned at that moment from a new perspective. The analysis is complicated by the fact that in the same extract Marju also utters *seon asjan* ‘this thing’, which refers to the same situation (i.e. that the husband has a lover).

- (26) Marje is consoling Maive, who complains that her husband has a lover. Thereafter she remembers that it is for the best that Maive did not have the pig slaughtered as she had asked some time ago. (Pottsepp)

a. Marje: är vōtku **taa-d asja** nii-muudu /.../  
 NEG take.IMP DEM-PRT thing.PRT this-way  
 “shouldn’t take **this thing** this way /.../”

b. Marje: sa ei saa **seo-n asja-n** midagi tetä  
 2SG NEG can DEM-INE thing-INE nothing do  
 “you can’t do anything about **it** (lit. **this thing**) /.../”

c. Marje: a **tuu** oll iks väega hää, et te tsika  
 but DEM be.PST PRCL very good that 2PL pig  
 mu pärast maha es lüü  
 1SG.GEN because perf NEG.PST hit  
 “but **that** was for the best, that you didn’t slaughter the pig on my account”

The third demonstrative *seo* (*sjo*) occurs in the *Tagamõtsa* material considerably less frequently than *ta(a)* and *tuu*. The referents of *seo* may be different entities: living beings (sheep in example 27), things (a connector in example 28, a sign in example 29a), as well as abstract situations (putting up the sign in example 29b). All of the concrete referents in the *Tagamõtsa* data sample referred to using *seo* are physically present in the situation; the majority of the abstract referents are also identifiable in the physical situation (e.g. putting up the sign in example 29 has just occurred and the sign itself is visible).

- (27) Contra is explaining to Vello what to do with the sheep they have just put into Vello's car (Pritsimiis)

Contra: kui **seo-l** talle suureks kasusi  
 when DEM-ADE lamb.PL big-TRANS grow.3PL

“when **its** lambs grow up

- (28) Marje is holding a connector and passes it to Maive, who needs to charge her electric car (Edimäne jõulupühä)

Marje: **seo** piass kõlbama, proovi **seo-d**  
 DEM must.COND fit.INF try DEM-PRT

“**this** should be ok, try **this** one (gives the connector to Maive)”

Maive: **seo** lätt jah  
 DEM go.PST yes

“**this** will do, yes”

- (29) Vello is putting up the sign “Private property” on the camp site, so as to prevent the camp from taking place. Contra notices that the people from the camp have left and asks Vello what has happened (Edimäne armastus)

a. Contra: Sa pandse-t **seo** **sildi** taha vai?  
 2SG put.PST-2SG DEM.GEN sign.GEN dem.ADV.ILL or

“Did you put **this sign** up?”

b. Contra: Oi Vello, Vello, **seo** nüt küll illos es ole  
 EXCL Vello Vello DEM now PRCL nice NEG.PST be

“Oh Vello, Vello, **this** wasn't a very nice thing to do”

In addition to the demonstratives *tuu*, *taa* and *seo*, the Estonian demonstrative *see* is also, to some extent, present in the *Tagamõtsa* data sample. It is characteristic that *see* only occurs in the predicative construction *see on NP* ‘this is NP’ (example 30), which is also one of the most frequent usage patterns of the Estonian demonstrative *see*. There were also some instances of the long form of the personal pronoun *timä*; in all of these instances, the referent was a human being (example 31).

- (30) Agu is bringing a gift to Maive’s children; one of the children is holding it. (Tõnõ jõulupühä)

Agu: See om tei-le katõ pääle.  
 DEM be.3SG 2PL-ALL two.GEN on

“**This** is for the two of you.”

- (31) Tarmo has just told Hedy what he thinks of Contra.

Hedy: sa är kõnõlgu **timä-st** nii-muudu  
 2SG NEG speak.IMP 3SG-ELAT this-way

“you shouldn’t say such things about **him**”

All three series of demonstrative adverbs are present in the *Tagamõtsa* data sample: *siia:siin:siit*, *sinna:seal:sealt* and *taha:tan:(tast)*. There were no instances of the separative form of the *ta*-stem series. The *siin* series referred to the physical surroundings of the speaker (example 32), the *seal* series to a more distant place under discussion. At the same time, the adverbs from the *seal* series were used to refer to a visible, relatively distant object. The adverbs of the *ta* series were also used to refer to the immediate vicinity of the speaker (example 33). When comparing the *siin* and *tan* series, there seem to be no pragmatic differences: both refer to spatial referents (locations) in the speaker’s sphere.

- (32) Maive is cleaning Vello’s house and is saying that Vello, who has been sitting in the same spot all this time, should do the cleaning himself. (Pritsimiis)

Vello: sa olõ-t **siin** müta-nud tunni ao, olõ-i  
 2SG be-2SG here bustle-PRCPL hour time be-NEG

ta kerge sukki  
 3SG/DEM easy at.all

“you have been bustling around **here** for an hour, it’s not easy at all”

- (33) (from the same scene as the previous example) Maive has just heard a funny sound and is saying to Vello

Maive: näütä ette mis su-l **tan** helü tege  
 show before what 2SG-ADE DEM.ADV sound do

“show me what made that sound **here**”

From the above discussion, it can be seen that although there are three demonstrative pronouns as well as adverbs in the *Tagamõtsa* dataset (Table 3), there are only two distinctions using deictic spheres. *taa*, *seo*, *siin* and *tan* are all used to refer to referents within the speaker's sphere; *tuu* and *seal* generally refer to referents that are outside the speaker's sphere. It seems that the earlier distinction of three spheres, which was still evident in the material recorded in Vastseliina in 1995 (see example 1), is no longer productive in the common Võro language. There were no examples in the *Tagamõtsa* material which would indicate the existence of an addressee-central category. Still, having three demonstratives is a resource that speakers can use to construe a referent and there are situations where there is a division of labour between the three. In example (26) above, one can see the division of labour between *seo* and *taa* on the one hand and *tuu* on the other hand; *seo* and *taa* seem to have been used in this example in identical contexts.

**Table 3.** Demonstratives in *Tagamõtsa*

Total: 261	Human being or animal	Other referents	Determiner
timä	2	0	–
tä	6	0	–
tuu	8	35	84
seo	1	12	7
ta(a)	26	40	30
see	0	10	0
sinna:seal:sealt	–	6	2
siia:siin:siit/siist	–	14	0
taha/tanne:tan/tah:tast	–	24	1

## 6. Comparison of the two data samples

The comparison of the two data samples – the newspaper and the TV series – is given in Table 4. For each referent type, the percentage of references has been given for both data samples. Figures highlighted in grey indicate that the pronoun in question accounts for over 25 per cent of all the instances of the corresponding referent type in a particular

data sample (newspaper or mini-series). The following major differences may be identified:

1. Newspaper texts use the third person pronoun *tä* and sometimes its long version *timä* to refer to a person; in the mini-series, this function is performed primarily by the pronoun *ta(a)*.
2. The pronoun *tuu* is consistently used in newspaper texts to refer to other referents (i.e. a referent other than a person); in the mini-series, *tuu* and *taa* figure more or less equally.
3. By far the most common definite determiner in both data samples is *tuu*; in the mini-series, the pronoun *taa* is also used relatively frequently.
4. Among the demonstrative adverbs (see Table 5), the *taa* series was considerably more often used in the mini-series. The strong bias towards using the *siin* and *tan* series of adverbs in *Tagamõtsa* is definitely caused by the physical situation (as opposed to the newspaper narratives) of language use in the TV show. The interesting thing, however, is that all three series are found in the newspaper texts.

**Table 4.** Comparison of pro-forms in *Uma Leht* and *Tagamõtsa*

	Human or animal		Other referent		Determiner	
	<i>Uma Leht</i>	<i>Tagamõtsa</i>	<i>Uma Leht</i>	<i>Tagamõtsa</i>	<i>Uma Leht</i>	<i>Tagamõtsa</i>
<i>timä</i>	17%	5% (2)	0	0	–	–
<i>tä</i>	72%	14%	3% (2)	0	–	–
<i>tuu</i>	11%	19%	87%	36%	78%	69%
<i>seo</i>	0	2% (1)	7% (5)	12%	12%	6%
<i>ta(a)</i>	0	60%	3% (2)	42%	10%	25%
<i>see</i>	0	0	0	10%	0	0
100%	70	43	68	97	42	121

**Table 5.** Demonstrative adverbs in *Uma Leht* (200 references in total) and *Tagamõtsa* (308 references in total)

	<i>Uma Leht</i>	<i>Tagamõtsa</i>
<i>sinna:seal:sealt</i>	14	8
<i>siia:siin:siit/siist</i>	1	14
<i>taha/tanne:tan/tah:tast</i>	4	25
Total	19	47

## 7. Conclusions

In conclusion, the former addressee-centered system has disappeared from the Võro common language, probably under the influence of the less complex system of Estonian demonstratives. At the same time, the language has retained all of the pronouns, although their frequency of use differs. The personal pronoun *tä* and the demonstrative *tuu* are predominantly used in written Võro. However, the demonstrative *taa* is used in spoken Võro – this pro-form is a blend of the demonstrative, the Estonian third person pronoun *ta* and the Võro third person pronoun *tä*. Two demonstratives – *taa* and *tuu* – are used in spoken Võro, the main difference between the two probably being accessibility: *tuu* is not physically present in anyone's sphere at the moment of speaking, while *taa* is present for both the speaker as well as the addressee. The higher frequency of *taa* in spoken language is supported by the corresponding higher frequency of *taa*-series adverbs in spoken language. The pro-form *seo* seems to be relatively rare in both data samples. The difference between *seo* and *taa* is not clear-cut, but it may be assumed that *seo* is ostensive and stands for a new referent; the referent of *taa*, however, is identifiable without gesturing.

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## Abbreviations

In the glossings appear the following abbreviations not included in Leipzig glossing rules: ADE – adessive, ELA – elative, ILL – illative, INE – inessive, PRT – partitive, TRNS – translative.

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**Kokkuvõte. Renate Pajusalu: Võro keele demonstratiivid: muutumas või kadumas?** Artikkel käsitleb võro keele demonstratiivide süsteemis toimuvaid muutusi. Võro keele kolmanda isiku pronoomen on *timä/tä*, lisaks kasutatakse kolme demonstratiivpronoomenit (*sjoo~seo, taa* ja *tuu*) ja kolme komplekti demonstratiivdverbe (*siin:siia:siit; taha:tan:tast; sinna:seal:sealt*). Uurimuse materjal pärineb ajalehest *Uma Leht* (2012–2014) ja 2011. aastal Eesti Rahvusringhäälingus toodetud lühisarjast "Tagamõtsa". Andmed näitavad, et varasem adressaadikeskne lõunaeesti demonstratiivide süsteem on kadunud. Samal ajal on keeles säilinud kõik pronoomenid, kuigi nende sagedus ja kasutuskontekst kirjalikus ja suulises keeles on erinevad.

**Märksõnad:** demonstratiivid, personaalpronoomenid, Võro keel