

Notes on French and English Demonstratives

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English sentences such as:

- (1) John appreciates that book.
- (2) John appreciates this book.

can both be translated into French as:

- (3) Jean apprécie ce livre. ('Jean appreciates *ce* book')

so that *ce* seems neutral between *that* and *this*. To express the English distinction, French adds *-là* or *-ci*:

- (4) Jean apprécie ce livre-là. ('Jean appreciates *ce* book-there')
- (5) Jean apprécie ce livre-ci. ('Jean appreciates *ce* book-here')

in a way that recalls in part non-standard English:

- (6) John is reading that there book.
- (7) John is reading this here book.

with (6) akin to (4) and with (7) akin to (5).

The difference in word order, whereby English has *there/here* pronominal in (6)/(7) and French has *-là/-ci* postnominal in (4)/(5), was analyzed by Bernstein (1997) in terms of a movement operation that in French moves the noun to the left of *-là/-ci*, starting from an English-like order, in a way that recalls the difference between French and English adjective position, as in Cinque (2005; to appear).

English allows *that* and *this* to occur without any visible noun present, as in:

- (8) John appreciates that.
- (9) John appreciates this.

We take these to involve a silent noun THING (capitals will be used to indicate non-pronunciation), i.e. such examples are to be understood as:¹

- (10) ...that THING
- (11) ...this THING

the idea being that demonstratives invariably require the presence of a noun (whether silent or pronounced) and that THING is appropriate for these cases.

Of interest is the fact that the closest French counterparts of (8) and (9) are:²

- (12) Jean apprécie cela.
- (13) Jean apprécie ceci.

in which the *-là* and *-ci* of (4)/(5) (though orthographically lacking their hyphen and accent) must appear. It is natural to think that, as in (8) and (9), French (12) and (13) contain THING.:

- (14) ...ce THING là
- (15) ...ce THING ci

Of special interest is the fact that *ce* by itself, i.e. without either *-là* or *-ci*, is not possible here:

- (16) *Jean apprécie ce.

unless a relative clause is added:³

¹ Thinking of sentences like:

- i) He appreciates everything you've done.
- ii) He doesn't appreciate anything one does for him.

² There is a third form *ça*, as in:

- i) Jean apprécie ça.

that we plan to discuss in another paper.

³ Close to this is the interrogative example:

- (i) Jean ne sait pas ce que tu as fait. ('J ne knows not the what you have done' = 'J doesn't know what you've done')

and the (prepositional) sentential complement example:

- (ii) Jean tient à ce que tu partes. ('J is-anxious to the what you leave' = 'J is anxious for you to leave')

(17) Jean apprécie ce que tu dis. ('J appreciates ce what you say')

The contrast between (16) and (17) recalls:

(18) *John wants the ones.

(19) John wants the ones you just mentioned.

This point of similarity between *ce* and *the* suggests, thinking especially of Leu (2007; 2008), that we should take French *ce* to in fact be a definite article akin to English *the*, with the difference that *ce* is specialized to require cooccurrence with a deictic element (i.e. *ce* is restricted to (almost always) occurring within a demonstrative structure, unlike *the*).

The facts of (16)-(19) can now be understood in terms of the informal generalization given in:⁴

(20) When a definite article accompanies a light element such as *ones* or *THING*, there must be an overt (reduced) relative clause present.

This characterizes (18) vs. (19) directly. Allowing for the relative to be reduced allows for:⁵

(21) John wants the ones just mentioned.

(22) He wants the ones on the table.

Now for (16) to be possible, it would, as in (12)-(15), have to contain *THING*:

(23) ...*ce* *THING*

But by (20), this is not possible, since (16)/(23) lacks the required relative (which is correctly present in (17)). On the other hand, (12)-(15) is permitted if *-là* and *-ci* are reduced relatives.⁶

The difference between *ce* and *that/this* seen in (16) vs. (8)/(9) indicates that in English the presence of *that* or *this* in the context of *THING* is sufficient to meet the requirement imposed by (20). Thinking again of Leu's (2007; 2008) proposal that demonstratives consist of a definite article plus a deictic element, *that* and *this* are to be understood as:

(24) *th-* + *-at*

(25) *th-* + *-is*

where *th-* is the definite article and *-at* and *-is* are overt deictic elements (bound morphemes corresponding to *there* and *here*) that, by virtue of being reduced relatives, play the crucial role in allowing (8)/(9) to respect (20).

The impossibility of (16) reinforces the idea that in French *ce* itself is not a deictic element capable of playing such a role (but is rather a definite article) and does not itself correspond to a reduced relative.

both of which may involve relative clauses (cf. Pollock (1992) on (i) and Kayne (2008) on (ii)).

⁴ A partially separate question is what licenses silent *THING*. One case of *THING* with other than a definite article is almost certainly:

i) Jean apprécie tout. ('J appreciates all/every')

Why (i) contrasts with:

ii) **John appreciates every.

iii) *John appreciates all.

remains to be worked out, as does the reason for the impossibility of:

iv) *The which you are saying is unimportant.

v) *Le que tu dis est sans importance. ('the what you say is without importance')

⁵ Possibly, even these text examples are demonstrative in some sense, given the similarity between:

i) The ones that are on the table are not worth reading.

ii) Those that are on the table are not worth reading.

From the text perspective, French must have two definite articles (as seems clearly to be the case for the dialect described by Cochet (1933)), namely *ce* and *le* (these are the masculine singular forms). *Ce* appears (almost always) within demonstrative structures, *le* in other definite article contexts.

⁶ We leave open the question why *ce* does not allow for other types of reduced relative, e.g.:

i) *Jean comprend ce écrit dans ce journal. ('J understands ce written in this newspaper')

In all likelihood, (i) is to be related to:

ii) ?We appreciate that *(which is) proposed in your paper.

(That *ce* is not deictic at all (just as English *th-/the* is not) is supported by the neutrality of (3) mentioned above.⁷)

In addition to (16) and (17) falling under (20), so do the following (close French counterparts of (18) vs. (19)):

(26) *Jean veut ceux. ('J wants *ce* them')

(27) Jean veut ceux que tu as mentionnés. ('J wants *ce* them what you have mentioned' = 'J wants those that you have mentioned')

Apart from some archaic examples, the impossibility of (16) is representative of all instances of bare object *ce*, whether direct object or prepositional object. Similarly, bare subject *ce* is usually impossible, in contrast with *cela* and *ceci*:⁸

(28) Cela plaît à Jean. ('that pleases to J')

(29) Ceci plaît à Jean.

vs.

(30) *Ce plaît à Jean.

In all of (28)-(30), silent THING is present. In the first two of these, (20) is satisfied by virtue of the presence of the reduced relative *-là* or *-ci*. In (30), on the other hand, (20) is violated, though it can, as expected, be rescued by the addition of a (full) relative:

(31) Ce que tu dis plaît à Jean. ('the what you say pleases to J' = 'what you say pleases J')

In subject contexts (as opposed to object contexts), though, there is apparently a major exception to (20). Bare *ce* (or its phonologically reduced form *c'*) is possible as the subject of the verb *être* that corresponds to English *be*. There is, for example, a sharp contrast between (30) and the following (with *c'*):

(32) C'est agréable. ('*ce* is pleasant')

(33) C'est un homme agréable. ('*ce* is a man pleasant')

(34) C'est notre ami Jean. ('*ce* is our friend J')

Sentences with *be* and with an unreduced subject *ce* are also possible, e.g.:

(35) Ce n'est pas agréable. ('*ce* neg. is not pleasant')

(36) Ce sera agréable. ('*ce* will-be pleasant')

(37) Ce n'est pas un homme agréable.

(38) Ce n'est pas notre ami Jean. etc.

Conversely, sentences like (30) remain impossible with reduced *ce* - even in a phonologically favorable environment (where the verb begins with a vowel), e.g.:

(39) *C'évite de travailler trop. ('*ce* avoids to work too-much' = 'that avoids working/having to work too much')

(40) *C'impressionne tous tes amis. ('*ce* impresses all your friends')

The unacceptability of (30) and (39)-(40) can be attributed, as in the discussion of (16), to a violation of (20). The question is why (32)-(38) should behave differently. Our initial answer is that these do not contain THING, and so do not run afoul of (20). This answer leads, of course, to the question why (30) and (39)-(40) must contain THING if (32)-(38) do not need to.

Our answer to this further question is in part that the contrast in French between (32)-(38), with *be*, and (30)/(39)-(40) is related to the special status that *be* has in (certain kinds of) specificational sentences in both English and French. Consider in particular the contrast between:

(41) This is my friend Bill.

(42) That's my friend Bill over there.

⁷ French *-là* is itself closer to neutral than is English *that*. Grevisse (1993, sect. 670) mentions:

i) Cela/*Ceci vous plaît, les vacances? ('that/*this you please, the vacations')

French even allows:

ii) Viens là! ('come there')

where English would have:

iii) Come here!

⁸ In an extremely literary register of French, the restriction against subject *ce* is lifted in certain ways with postverbal subject *ce*, even though it remains strong with preverbal subject *ce*, as in the text discussion. This postverbal vs. preverbal contrast, which we will not pursue here, recalls discussions of little 'pro' in Old French - cf. Adams (1987).

in which a (superficially) bare *this* or *that* can be linked to a human DP and the following, in which a human antecedent for bare *this* or *that* is not possible:⁹

(43) This friend of mine often discusses syntax with that *(one).

(44) That friend of mine often discusses syntax with this *(one).

Against the background of (43) and (44), why, then, are (41) and (42) possible, as well as the following?:

(45) This is that friend of mine I was telling you about.

in which *this* is linked to *that friend of mine*, contrasting with (44).

Our answer is as follows. What (43) and (44) show is that bare *this* and *that* cannot cooccur with a silent noun that would, in pronominal fashion, take another lexical noun as antecedent:¹⁰

(46) *...friend...that/this FRIEND...

In (41), (42) and (45), on the other hand, the initial *this* or *that* is not associated with FRIEND in the same way. Thus (41), for example, is, as a first approximation, not simply to be analyzed as:

(47) *this FRIEND is my friend Bill

Consequently there will be no violation of the sort seen in (43) and (44).

To see this more clearly, let us take into consideration:

(48) John has written three papers this year, but Mary has written five.

in which, contrary to (43) and (44), English does allow a silent anaphoric noun, without any need for *one(s)*. (In fact (48) does not even allow *ones* following *five*.) A preliminary proposal might be that (48) should 'simply' be analyzed as:

(49) ...three papers...five PAPERS

but that would make it hard to understand why French does not allow a direct counterpart of (48):

(50) *Jean a écrit trois papiers cette année, mais Marie a écrit cinq.

French requires there to in addition be a pronominal element *en* present:

(51) Jean a écrit trois papiers cette année, mais Marie en a écrit cinq.

This *en* (which occupies a clitic position) can be thought of as equivalent to English *of them*, as in the somewhat marginal:

(52) ?John has written three papers this year, but Mary has written five of them.

This example is modeled on one pointed out years ago to one of the authors by David Perlmutter. His example is more natural:

(53) I need a taxi. That's too bad. Two of them just went by.

The existence of (51)-(53), and in particular the need for pronominal *en* in (51), suggests that an improvement on (49) as an analysis of (48) would be (setting aside the question of *of*):¹¹

(54) ...three papers...five THEM PAPERS

with a pronoun obligatorily present (though allowed to be silent in English in (48)).¹²

⁹ These sentences are to some extent acceptable without *one* if they have a derogatory reading, which we take to involve *this/that* accompanied by THING, akin to:

i) This friend of mine often discusses syntax with that thing (over there).

¹⁰ Possible to some extent is:

i) The table needs to be repainted, but John says he refuses to paint that again.

arguably with the analysis:

ii) ...table...that TABLE THING...

in which silent THING plays a crucial role that it cannot do in the text example since *friend* is +human. (Nor, evidently, is PERSON available in the way THING is, for reasons to be elucidated.)

¹¹ On:

i) Two of *(them) just went by.

cf.:

ii) I just finished the first chapter *(of).

Probably, the question whether a silent NUMBER is present in *five papers* (cf. Zweig (2006)) is orthogonal to the text proposal that a pronoun is necessarily present in (48)/(54).

¹² The presence of the anaphoric silent noun alongside the pronoun recalls Kayne (1972; 2002), Kayne and Pollock (to appear) and Uriagereka (1995) on clitic doubling and extensions thereof.

Rather than *those papers*, non-standard English has *them papers*, which may (possibly with a silent THOSE present) be showing us such a doubling structure directly; cf. Hestvik (1992).

For some/many speakers of English, the plural counterparts of (43) and (44) are acceptable:¹³

(55) These friends of mine often discuss syntax with those.

(56) Those friends of mine often discuss syntax with these.

presumably with an analysis akin to that given in (54), namely:

(57) ...those/these THEM FRIENDS

Other speakers/varieties of English appear to require *ones* in (55)-(56) (which for some/many speakers is in turn not possible); for those speakers who require *ones* in (55)-(56), (57) must not be admissible. The inadmissibility of (57) for them is matched by the general inadmissibility of (43) and (44) without *one*, which now translates into the general inadmissibility of:

(58) *...this/that friend...that/this HIM/HER FRIEND

with HIM/HER here corresponding to THEM in (57).

Returning to (41), (42) and (45), we can now propose that the key difference between them and (43) and (44) is that in (41), (42) and (45) there is no pronominal element corresponding to the THEM/HIM/HER of (57) and (58).

Thus (41), repeated here:

(59) This is my friend Bill.

is not to be analyzed as:

(60) *this HIM FRIEND ... my friend Bill

Nor is the following:

(61) These are my friends Bill and Sam.

to be analyzed as:

(62) *these THEM FRIENDS ... friends Bill and Sam

contrary to (57), which is the proper analysis for (55)-(56), for those speakers for whom (55) and (56) are acceptable.

Our proposal is that (59)/(41) has a derivation in which, in the spirit of Szabolcsi's (1983;1994) analysis of possessive sentences,¹⁴ *this* and *my friend Bill* originate as a complex DP that does not contain the verb. That complex DP splits up in the course of the derivation, with *this* ending up in subject position and *my friend Bill* ending up postverbal.¹⁵ Possibly, this splitting up takes place via the extraction of *this*. More likely, a remnant movement derivation is at issue, in which case we would have, with unpronounced copies here represented with capitals:

(63) [this MY FRIEND BILL] is my friend Bill ... THIS MY FRIEND BILL

The essential difference between (59)/(41), in which *this* and *my friend Bill* are legitimately linked, and (44), repeated here:

(64) That friend of mine often discusses syntax with this *(one).

in which bare *this* cannot be linked to *that friend of mine*, is the one seen by comparing (63) to (58). The essential difference lies in the presence of a pronoun in (58) vs. the lack of corresponding pronoun in (63).

Specificational sentences like (59) are characterized by a derivation in which the two phrases on either side of the copula originate as one. This avoids the need for a pronoun to be present and distinguishes such specificational sentences from run-of-the-mill sentences like (44) in which the two relevant phrases correspond to distinct arguments and do not originate as one complex DP.

Returning to the discussion of French (30)-(40) and to the fact that subject *ce* is possible only if the verb is *be/être*, we see that the generalization in question can more revealingly be understood as:

(65) Subject *ce* is possible only as the subject of a specificational sentence.

The reason that (65) holds has to do with (20), which we repeat here in a form narrowed down to French:

(66) When *ce* accompanies a light element such as THING, there must be an overt (reduced) relative clause present.

¹³ The contrast for some between singular and plural here recalls:

i) The poor are/*is worthy of support.

¹⁴ Our proposal also has something in common with Moro's (1997), insofar as the complex DP idea has something in common with his small clause idea.

¹⁵ The text proposal will require revisions in proposals concerning the semantics of this type of specificational sentence (for example, those in Heller and Wolter (2007) and Moltmann (2009)).

Now bare subject *ce* normally requires THING, since demonstratives require the presence of a noun. But in a French specificational sentence like (34), repeated here:

(67) C'est notre ami Jean. ('*ce* is our friend J')

ce does not need to be accompanied by THING, since it is accompanied by the trace/copy of *notre ami Jean*, given the kind of derivation suggested in (63), which transposes to French (67) as:

(68) [*ce* NOTRE AMI BILL] est notre ami Bill ...CE NOTRE AMI BILL

Ce is here accompanied by the noun *ami* (or its trace/copy),¹⁶ so no THING is necessary, from which the irrelevance of (20)/(66) follows, thereby correctly allowing (67), in a way that is compatible with the general prohibition against bare subject *ce*.

This account of (34)/(67) must be extended to the examples (32) and (33), which we repeat here:

(69) C'est agréable. ('*ce* is pleasant')

(70) C'est un homme agréable.¹⁷ ('*ce* is a man pleasant')

Essentially following Pollock (1983), we take (70) to be specificational (and thereby to fit into the previous discussion) without argument, except to note the similarity between (70) and:

(71) Now that's an intelligent woman (for you)!

which seems straightforwardly specificational. Put another way, if we can show that (69) is specificational, then all of (67)-(70) with subject *ce* will be. Consequently, we turn to the more challenging case of (69).

Before doing so, however, we note briefly that (70) shares the familiar property of (English and French) specificational sentences to the effect that they are incompatible with small clauses:

(72) *I consider this my friend Bill.

(73) *Je considère *ce/ça* un homme agréable.¹⁸

recalling:

(74) *I've always considered my best friend John.

and reinforcing the idea that (70) is an instance of a specificational sentence.

As for (69), which gives rise in French to pairs like:

(75) Elle est belle, la mer. ('she is beautiful, the sea')

(76) C'est beau, la mer. ('*ce* is beautiful, the sea')

with slightly different interpretations, we propose the following, which has interpretive plausibility and allows taking (69) and (76) to be specificational. Such sentences as ((69) and) (76) are to be related to sentences like:

(77) C'est quelque chose de beau, la mer. ('*ce* is some thing of beautiful, the sea')

with (76) to be analyzed as:

(78) *ce* est QUELQUE CHOSE (DE) beau, la mer

in which *quelque chose* is present, but silent.

Looking back to (67)/(68), we have, for (77) a remnant movement type derivation that yields (setting aside *la mer*):¹⁹

¹⁶ *Ce* itself does not agree in number or gender with the head noun:

i) C'est nos amis. ('*ce* is our friends')

ii) Ce sont nos amis. ('*ce* are our friends')

This is presumably related to the non-agreement of *ce* in:

iii) ceux-là ('*ce* them there')

on which, see Kayne (to appear). On the plural verbal agreement in (ii) (and on its impossibility with *ça*), see Pollock (1983).

¹⁷ As discussed in Pollock (1983), this is the normal French counterpart of English *He's a pleasant man*.

¹⁸ With certain restrictions, *ça*, another demonstrative form, occurs in sentences like:

i) *Ça* n'est pas un homme agréable.

yet is excluded from the corresponding small clause sentence. We take (i) to be specificational in the same way as with sentences with subject *ce*.

¹⁹ Alternatively, as above, *ce* might be extracted directly from a constituent of the form '*ce* quelque chose de beau'.

A third possibility might perhaps be movement of such a large constituent, followed by selective pronunciation of subparts; cf. Groat and O'Neil (1996) and for recent discussion Ott (2009).

(79) [ce QUELQUE CHOSE DE BEAU] est quelque chose de beau ...CE QUELQUE CHOSE DE BEAU

For (76)/(78), this becomes:

(80) [ce QUELQUE CHOSE DE BEAU] est QUELQUE CHOSE DE beau ...CE QUELQUE CHOSE DE BEAU

If this proposal for (76) is on the right track, we have a unified account of the exceptions to the generalization that bare *ce* cannot be a subject (or object or prepositional object). The exceptions all have the property that *ce* originates within a post-copula DP constituent, in a way that allows such sentences as (76) to avoid falling under (66), exactly as in the discussion of (67).

As usual, there remain open questions. Our proposal for (76) does not immediately account for the following contrast:

(81) C'est là quelque chose de beau.

(82) *C'est là beau.

The *là* of (81) is the French counterpart of *there* that we saw earlier in (4) and (12). Given (79) as indicating the derivation of (77), it is essentially certain that *là* in (81) originates within the same post-copula constituent that *ce* originates in, i.e. that we start out in the derivation of (81) with something like 'ce là quelque chose de beau',²⁰ with that derivation subsequently splitting that constituent into three parts. (Possibly, thinking of Kayne (2006), the presence of overt *là* in (82) interferes with the silence of (the middle instance of) QUELQUE CHOSE in (80).)

A second, at least partially open question is how best to integrate cases in which *ce* is the subject of auxiliary *be/être*, such as:

(83) C'est arrivé hier. ('ce is arrived/happened yesterday')

The most straightforward proposal would be:

(84) ce est QUELQUE CHOSE (DE) arrivé hier

with *arrivé hier* a reduced relative, such that (83) resembles:

(85) That's something that happened yesterday.

A different kind of question amounts to asking what exactly the relation is between the members of pairs like:

(86) This is John Smith.

(87) My best friend is John Smith.

Put another way, should our proposal for (86), in which *this* originates within the post-copula DP constituent containing *John Smith*, be extended in some fashion to (87)? Of interest here is the fact that an English sentence with a pronoun in place of the proper name in (87):

(88) My best friend is him.

has no direct French counterpart:

(89) *Mon meilleur ami est lui.

Rather, French has:

(90) Mon meilleur ami, c'est lui.

which leads to thinking that the acceptable:

(91) Mon meilleur ami est Jean.

contains a silent *ce*, as in:

(92) mon meilleur ami CE est Jean

in which case so might (87), as illustrated in:

(93) my best friend THIS/THAT is John Smith

If so, then the tack we have taken explicitly for specificational sentences like (86) and (90) may have applicability to all specificational sentences.²¹

²⁰ A separate question is where exactly the demonstrative elements *ce* and *là* originate within that DP. For recent discussion, see Leu (2007; 2008) and Sybesma and Sio (2008).

²¹ We leave open in this paper the question where *my best friend* is first merged in such sentences (it might well be a la Moro (1997)), as also the question why object clitics cannot (with one exception) intervene between *ce* and a following verb, as well as the question why *ce* is usually incompatible with raising of the *seem*-type.

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