

**Variations on standard genitive demonstrative pronouns:
a systematization of the function and usage of a group of pronouns
which has not been extensively researched**

The genitive forms of the demonstrative pronouns *dessen/deren/derer* constitute a special category of pronouns which can have different functions. To date, not much research has been published on this topic. Despite the handful of studies, in comparison with other demonstratives, there appears to be little empirical research from a linguistic, language teaching or contrastive perspective. What is more, genitive demonstrative pronouns have not always been paid the attention they deserve in grammatical descriptions, leading, at times, to insecurities concerning usage and cases of doubt. For example, particular problems are associated with the forms *dessen* and *deren* when used attributively as an alternative to possessives as well as the forms *deren* and *derer*, which are accorded the same status in grammatical descriptions. Such insecurities are not only present in grammar books but also in everyday usage. The analysis at hand should contribute to providing both redress and clarity as well as complementing existing literature.

The article is divided into two main sections. After the introduction, the first part continues with explanatory remarks on the grammatical classification of demonstrative pronouns, including a description of the multifunctional inflection forms *der/die/das*, which can be categorized as “definite articles” or “determinatives” as well as a “relative pronouns” and “demonstrative pronouns”. Along with *dieser/diese/dieses* [this, these], as demonstratives they represent the most important means of reference in German: both mark definiteness and indicate familiarity. In other words, they have an important referential function in linguistic and situative contexts alike. These explanations are followed by a comprehensive overview of the function and usage of *dessen/deren/derer* as depicted in recent research. As these forms are not very common in current usage because they differ from the definite articles, although they are mentioned in grammatical descriptions and listed along with other forms, they tend to be treated as an aside and also inconsistently in different sources. Aided by grammatical works, linguistic analyses and empirical data, this article attempts to address these shortcomings and to deal with the special ways in which this group of pronouns is used in a systematic manner. Firstly the formal-functional opposition is discussed between the non-extended and extended genitive forms of the demonstrative determiners. The main difference between them is syntactic in nature, determined by the different position of the noun which the determinative is referring to: the former are used attributively and the latter autonomously and substantively. This is followed by an elaboration of the “pointing function” of genitive demonstrative pronouns, differentiating between “anaphoric/anadeictic” and “cataphoric/catadeictic” usage. Finally, the special ways in which the genitive demonstrative pronouns are used are divided into five main categories and discussed one by one. Particular attention is paid to the use of the genitive pronoun form used attributively, including various contexts of use where the demonstrative pronoun can or must be used as an alternative to possessive articles.

The second part of the article focuses on a quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis with the aim of illustrating the current function and usage of this inadequately investigated group of demonstrative pronouns in contemporary written and spoken German using different corpora (DEREKO, FOLK, GeWiss). Special attention is paid to the phoric or deictic function of the demonstrative pronoun as well as on its special role in outlining an information profile. The first quantitative analysis investigates their frequency by function, revealing that the three pronouns are used to different extents in the three corpora: *dessen* occurs most frequently by far while *derer* is the most uncommon genitive form. The instances taken from the corpora are then used for a qualitative analysis of particularly striking elements. The data reveal, for example, that genitive demonstrative pronouns sometimes also appear before the noun as an attribute even though there is no ambiguity in a specific context concerning two or more competing referents, in other words even when the pronoun has a clear reference which would also have been unambiguous if the possessive had been used. As an initial explanation for this, several pre-conditions are mentioned which relate to different descriptive levels, namely semantic, conceptual and pragmatic. On the semantic level, there are several examples in the three corpora which suggest that when the referent is unambiguous, demonstrative genitive forms are chosen rather than the possessive especially in the case of inanimate abstract referents. On a conceptual level, the data give the impression that genitive demonstrative pronouns used attributively are to be seen as a formal and sophisticated alternative to possessives and their appearance is characteristic of a conceptually written variety of language, or a 'language associated with distance'. On a pragmatic level, in turn, it appears that the adnominal demonstrative pronoun is used to code new information while the possessive article is rather associated with given information. In order to confirm this last hypothesis, the intonation patterns of the examples extracted from the FOLK corpus were analysed in more detail to determine utterance stress and, consequently, categories relating to information packaging. The analysis provides an important piece of evidence that using *dessen* and *deren* attributively is not always related to the intention to disambiguate two or more competing referents. Quite the contrary. Both in written and spoken language in the corpora concerned, there is often a tendency to prefer demonstrative pronouns as functional possessives, particularly when the referent concerned has just been thematized or is new information. In other words, while referents identified with the possessive *sein/ihr* [his/her] can generally be classified as given information, genitive demonstrative pronouns create a clear information profile, ensuring that the reference concerned is more strongly in focus than would be the case if possessive articles had been used. This tendency is not only supported by explicitly marked stress patterns but also by the pre-field position of the demonstrative constituent, that is when the demonstrative pronoun takes on the classic topic position in order to support its focus function by making use of salient word order.

Grammatical descriptions of the phenomena presented here are still inconsistent, if not flawed. This study can only serve to provide an initial systematization which would need to be validated by comprehensive linguistic analyses. Something which has not been covered so far and which would be highly desirable is taking account of second language acquisition or the typical forms of demonstrative pronouns in the field of German as a foreign language. Taken in their entirety, all of these research desiderata provide fertile soil for further investigations in this field.

References

DEREKO = Das Deutsche Referenzkorpus. Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS). ids-mannheim.de/kl/projekte/korpora (last access: 27.11.2020).

FOLK = Forschungs- und Lehrkorpus Gesprochenes Deutsch. Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS). agd.ids-mannheim.de/folk.shtml (last access: 24.11.2020).

GeWiss-Korpus = Gesprochene Wissenschaftssprache. Universität Leipzig. gewiss.uni-leipzig.de/index.php?id=corpus_research (last access: 27.11.2020).