

The different functions of the Khalkha-Mongolian demonstrative *nögöö*

Dolgor Guntsetseg – Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich
dolgor.guntsetseg@lmu.de

1 Introduction

Khalkha-Mongolian, an agglutinative SOV language without an article or gender system, has two basic demonstratives: *ene* ‘this’ and *ter* ‘that’ that are used for spatial deixis as well as for intra-discourse deixis, both as pronominal and adnominal.¹ There is one more demonstrative pair, *önöö* and *nögöö*, which has received very little attention in relevant Mongolian grammars (cf. Poppe 1951, OCM 2004 among others), although particularly *nögöö* is found in several pragmatic functions. The difference between *önöö* and *nögöö* is visible within temporal adverb pairs such as *önöödör* ‘today’ vs. *nögöödör* ‘the day after tomorrow’, indicating that *önöö* refers to temporally proximal and *nögöö* to temporally distal deixis. Note, however, that *önöö* should be classified as archaic or literary as it is barely used in the spoken language. If used, it almost exclusively occurs before temporal nouns such as *önöö šönö* ‘upcoming night/tonight’, *önöö üje* ‘this era/nowadays’, etc. For this reason, this contribution focuses on *nögöö* in a first attempt to sketch its different pragmatic functions.

2 Different pragmatic functions of demonstrative *nögöö*

In the monolingual Dictionary of Mongolian², *nögöö* is explained as a word that a) refers to one of two different entities, or b) expresses the meaning *öör* ‘different’, *busad* ‘other(PL)’. In Mongolian grammar studies (Byambasan 1975: 101, Unurbayan 1994: 215, OCM 2004: 178, Munkh-Amgalan & Kan Shin 2014: 288), *nögöö* and words like *bügd* ‘all, every’, *zarim* ‘some, certain’, etc. are defined as ‘differentiating pronouns’ (Kh.-Mong. *jalgax tölөөний үг*) that refer to entities as a group or by separating them into different groups. The examples in (1) and (2) largely confirm the definitions above.

- (1) ... *neg čix-eer-ee sons-ood nögöö čix-eer-ee gar-ga-dag* ...
one ear-INSTR-RFL hear-CV.PRF DEM ear-INSTR-RFL get.out-CAUS-PC.HAB
‘(There are many people that) hear (what other people are saying) with one ear and let (it) out through the other ear (= to ignore)’ (INT³)

- (2) ... *gež neg-ees nögöö-d damž-san jaria*
COMP one-ABL DEM-DLOC pass-PC.PST talk
‘a rumor saying “...” that passed from one to the other’ (LTT)

In (2), *nögöö* serves as an indefinite pronoun and in (1) as a determiner referring to the second of two things. For the latter use, though, (3) shows that it rather refers to a second subset of a set of two and the two subsets do not need to contain an equal amount of individual entities.⁴

¹ Khalkha-Mongolian exhibits an extensive demonstrative system based on the *e-/t-* stems that refer not only to entities but also to location, direction, amount etc. In addition to these speaker-centered demonstratives, there are also the addressee-centered demonstrative stems, namely: *naa-* ‘this near you’ and *caa-* ‘that behind you’, used mainly for spatial deixis but also, in some special cases, for intra-discourse reference.

² <https://mongoltoli.mn/dictionary/detail/63375>, Accessed on 10.01.2022.

³ <http://nclp.mn/content/120>, Accessed on 10.01.2022.

⁴ In this use, *nögöö* has to be differentiated from *busad* ‘other(PL)’ that only refers to the remainder of a set, whereas *nögöö* can refer to both, a second subset and to the remainder.

- (3) *Ter xüüi gol gatal-snaa nögöö xojor-oos-oo tasra-n*
 DEM boy river cross-CV.SUCC DEM two-ABL-RFL separate-CV.MOD
gol ögsö-v.
 river ascend-PRF
 ‘After the boy crossed the river, (he) went up alongside the river, separating from the other two.’ (DN)

As an interim summary, we can state that *nögöö* can serve as an indefinite pronoun expressing the meaning ‘other’ and as a determiner referring to a subset relation expressing the meaning ‘the other’. In the latter function, *nögöö* often occurs with possessive markers like the 3rd person possessive *n'* or reflexive-possessive suffixes as in (3) in order to exclusively express the part-of relation to a greater set.

Having outlined the basic understanding of *nögöö* in Mongolian grammars, I will now turn to the anaphoric function of *nögöö*, i.e. to pick out a referent introduced in the previous discourse (cf. Lyons 1999: 113, Diessel 1999: 95ff.) In this function, even its counterpart *önöö* shows up, if mainly in the written texts. In the spoken language, anaphoric *önöö* can hardly be found, while anaphoric *nögöö* is more frequent.

- (4) *Bügd nom-oo ög-nö. Nögöö nom-yg n' nee-xe-d*
 all book-RFL give-NPST DEM book-ACC 3POSS open-PC.FUT-DLOC
xamgijn gojo üg-s-ijg bič-sen baj-na. Ger-t-ee
 most nice word-PL-ACC write-PST be-NPST home-DLOC-RFL
xar-iad nögöö nom-oo unši-na.
 return-CV.PRF DEM book-RFL read-NPST
 ‘All (the authors) give me their books. When (I) open those books, (they) wrote the most beautiful words. When (I) get home, (I) read those books.’ (INT⁵)

- (5) *Bi ug_n' neg nom-ny talaar biči-x jumsan*
 I actually a/one book-GEN about write-FUT PRT
gež ix bodo-x jum daan_č (...) önöö nom-oo
 COMP much think-FUT PRT unfortunately DEM book-RFL
unši-ž duusa-x-güj l baj-na.
 read-CV.IMPF end-PC.FUT-NEG PRT be-NPST
 ‘Actually, I think a lot about writing about a book, but unfortunately (...) I still haven’t finished reading this book yet.’ (INT⁶)

The difference between *önöö* and *nögöö* in the anaphoric use is not obvious, except for the fact that in (4) *nögöö* can be replaced by *önöö*, but in (5) *önöö* cannot be replaced by *nögöö*. Besides, since the demonstratives *ene/ter* ‘this/that’ basically serves an anaphoric function in Khalkha-Mongolian, it is not clear when speakers use *önöö/nögöö* in the anaphoric function, a question which I must partially leave open to future research. A clear functional difference can nevertheless be shown in contexts with two potential antecedents in the preceding discourse. Following Comrie (1997), Diessel (1999: 96) has pointed out that in German the third person pronoun *er* is used for a topic referent (i.e. topic-continuing), whereas the anaphoric demonstrative *der* refers to the non-topical referent in the previous discourse indicating topic-shift, providing the example in (6):

⁵ <http://baabar.mn/article/407>, Access on 10.01.2022

⁶ <http://ezorgil.blogspot.com/2007/11/>, Access on 10.01.2022

- (6) *Der Anwalt_i sprach mit einem Klienten_j. Da er_i/der_j nicht viel Zeit hatte, vereinbarten sie ein weiteres Gespräch nächste Woche.*
 ‘The lawyer talked to a client. Since he didn't have much time, they agreed to have another meeting next week.’ (Diessel 1999: 96, ex. (5))

In the Khalkha-Mongolian adaption in (7), the demonstrative *ter*, which also serves as 3rd person pronoun, is used to refer to *ömгөөлөгч* ‘lawyer’, whereas *нөгөөдөх* (the pronominal form of *нөгөө*) refers to *үйлчлүүлегч* ‘client’. This can be explained from the original function of *нөгөө*, i.e. referring to the second subset of a set.

- (7) *Ömgөөлөгч_i önөөдөр үйлчлүүлегч_j-tei-gee uulza-x baj-san*
 lawyer today client-COM-RFL meet-PC.FUT be-PC.PST
bolovč ter_i / нөгөөдөх_j n' zav-güj bol-son
 although DEM DEM 3POSS time-NEG become-PC.PST
tul uulzalt-aa xojšl-uul-žee.
 because meeting-RFL postpone-CAUS-DIR.EVD.PST
 ‘The lawyer_i had planned to meet with his client_j today, but because he_{i/j} was busy, (they) postponed the meeting.’

Interestingly, the pronominal *нөгөөдөх n'* can be replaced by *өнөөдөх n'* without any difference in meaning. However, if one were to use the adnominal form instead, one would have to say *өнөө үйлчлүүлегч*, while *нөгөө үйлчлүүлегч* would barely be acceptable. The fact that *нөгөө* can easily be replaced by *өнөө*, but not vice versa, may be explained from the fact that *нөгөө* has, in contrast to *өнөө*, the basic meaning ‘other/the other’. Most commonly, however, *нөгөө* is used as a recognitional demonstrative, as has been mentioned in von Heusinger (2012: 446) and Guntsetseg (2016: 38). In the following, I will discuss this function in more detail.

According to the definitions of the recognitional use of demonstratives in the literature (cf. Himmelmann 1997: 61, Diessel 1999: 105, and references therein), the respective demonstratives are used to introduce a new referent into the discourse that both speaker and hearer are familiar with, or that at least the speaker assumes the hearer is able to identify based on their specific shared knowledge. Ahrenholz (2007: 350) has pointed out, based on his study on German recognitional *dies-*, that it can also be used to reactivate a referent, which has already been introduced into the discourse. Khalkha-Mongolian *нөгөө* serves both uses. In the recognitional use, the *нөгөө*-phrase often occurs with more descriptive materials such as attributives and relative clauses, as in (8) and (9), a pattern that Himmelmann (1996: 61) observed for recognitional demonstratives in other languages, too.

- (8) *Nөгөө devxreg Itgelt-ijn-d zara-gda-ž baj-san*
 DEM hopper Itgelt-GEN-DLOC serve-PASS-CV.IMP be-PC.PST
Erdene.
 ‘(It is) that Erdene who was working as a servant for “grasshopper” Itgelt.’ (LTT)

- (9) *türüün nögöö, nögöö, ene šatan deer suu-ž baj-san nögöö*
 early DEM DEM this stairs on sit-CV.IMPF be-PC.PST DEM
neg övgön ene baj-na šd
 a/one old_man this be-NPST PRT
 ‘This is, indeed, that one old man that was sitting on the stairs in the earlier [picture].’
 (SCOPIC⁷)

- (10) *Nögöö nōxör ene üü? Nögöö xüüxed n' ijm bol-čix-son.*
 DEM man this Q DEM child 3POSS so become-INT-PST
 ‘Is this that guy (we know him from other pictures, we have seen earlier)? That
 child of his became so (=grew up).’ (SCOPIC)

Diessel (1999: 106) characterizes the specific shared knowledge of the interlocutors, which the recognitional demonstratives are based on, as ‘private’ and distinguishes it from cultural knowledge of a particular speech community. As for *nögöö*, it is not restricted to private knowledge of the speech act participants, but on the contrary, it is often used to recall shared community knowledge, e.g. when the speaker is not able to recall the word for a particular entity/concept or expresses her/his uncertainty about the name of that entity/concept, as in (11)–(12).

- (11) *Nögöö xan_borgocoj biš üü?*
 DEM pineapple NEG Q
 ‘Isn’t it that [thing that people call] “pineapple”?’ (SCOPIC)

- (12) *Ene nögöö juu n' ene lager-yn nögöö süüdrevč bajšin l*
 this DEM what 3POSS this vacation-GEN DEM pavillon house PRT
baj-san baj-na l daa ene.
 be-PST be-NPST PRT PRT this
 ‘This must have been that, what (was it), that summer-pavillon-house.’ (SCOPIC)

3 Conclusion

In spoken Khalkha, speakers use *nögöö* incessantly in the different uses described above, but most frequently in the recognitional use, sometimes referring to the shared knowledge of the interlocutors and sometimes to recall their own and the interlocutors’ knowledge about the respective entity. Considering this fact, the pair *nögöö* and *önöö* can perhaps be discussed within the concept of ‘cognitive proximity’ introduced by Consten & Averintseva-Klisch (2012: 274), who define it as “specific mental closeness relations between speakers and referents” and subsume German recognitional demonstrative *dies-* under this notion. Similarly, Khalkha-Mongolian *nögöö* and *önöö* can be further investigated whether they had been developed to cognitive proximal and distal demonstratives, and how this function of *nögöö* was affected once *önöö* dropped out of use.

Author note

This contribution was written as part of my research project “Grammar of Social Cognition in Khalkha-Mongolian”, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German

⁷ SCOPIC: The “Social Cognition Parallax Interview Corpus” is a naturalistic and cross-linguistically-matched corpus with enriched annotations of grammatical categories relevant to social cognition. For more information, see <https://scopicproject.wordpress.com>.

Research Foundation) – Project-ID 417675039, whose financial support I gratefully acknowledge. I also want to thank Benjamin Brosig for his helpful comments and suggestions.

References

- Ahrenholz, Bernt. 2007. *Verweise mit Demonstrativa im gesprochenen Deutsch. Grammatik, Zweitspracherwerb und Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Byambasan, P. 1975. *Orčin cagijn mongol xelnij ügijn бүтэц, нер үгсийн ажмаг* [The morphological structure of contemporary Mongolian and nouns as a wordclass]. Ulaanbaatar.
- Comrie, Bernard. 2000. Pragmatic binding: Demonstratives as anaphors in Dutch. In Matthew L. Juge & Jeri L. Moxley (eds.), *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society (1997)*, 50–61. Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistics Society.
- Consten, Manfred & Maria Averintseva-Klisch. 2012. Tentative reference acts? Recognitional demonstratives as means of suggesting mutual knowledge – or overriding a lack of it. *Research in Language* 10(3). 257–277.
- Diessel, Holger. 1999. *Demonstratives: Form, function, and grammaticalization*. (Typological Studies in Language 42). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Guntsetseg, Dolgor. 2016. *Differential case marking in Mongolian*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- von Heusinger, Klaus. 2012. Referentialität, Spezifität, und Diskursprominenz im Sprachvergleich. In Lutz Gunkel & Gisela Zifonum (eds.), *Deutsch im Sprachvergleich – Grammatische Kontraste und Konvergenzen*, 417–456. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Himmelman, Nikolaus P. 1996. Demonstratives in narrative discourse. In Barbara Fox (ed.), *Studies in anaphora*, 205–254. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Himmelman, Nikolaus P. 1997. *Deiktikon, Artikel, Nominalphrase: Zur Emergenz syntaktischer Struktur*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Lyons, Christopher. 1999. *Definiteness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Munkh-Angalan, Yumjirijn & Kan Shin. 2014. *Orčin cagijn mongol xelnij бүтэвэр судлал* [The morphology of modern Mongolian]. Ulaanbaatar: Soyombo Printing.
- OCM 2004. *Orčin cagijn mongol xel* [Contemporary Mongolian]. Ulaanbaatar: MUBIS, Department of Mongolian Linguistics.
- Poppe, Nikolaus. 1951. *Khalkha-Mongolische Grammatik*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.
- Unurbayan, Tsedev. 1994. *Orčin cagijn mongol xelnij үгзүй* [Contemporary Mongolian morphology]. Ulaanbaatar: MUBIS, Department of Mongolian Linguistics.

Primary sources

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| DN | D. Namdag. Cag төрийн үжмөөн. |
| LTT | Ch. Lodoidamba. Tungalag Tamir. |