

## On the semantic features of the referent and their influence on the choice of the demonstratives in the Lithuanian subdialect of Kretingišķiai

### *Referenta semantiskās īpašības un to ietekme Kretingas izloksnes norādāmo vietniekvārdu izvēlē*

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This paper aims to investigate the effect of semantic referent features on the choice of deictic words in the Northern Samogitian subdialect, i.e., Kretingišķiai. Based on the study by Rocca, Tylén and Wallentin (2019), the following semantic features were chosen: ‘animate’/‘inanimate’, ‘harmful’/‘harmless’, and ‘big’/‘small’. A questionnaire specifically designed for the study was published on the Qualtrics Experience Management Platform. 783 people representing the chosen subdialect participated in the survey. The analysis of the collected data showed that not only physical or psychological distance determines the choice of deictic words, but also the semantic characteristics of the referent: referents with the characteristics ‘harmful’ and ‘big’ are more likely to be referred to with distal deictics than referents with the characteristics ‘harmless’ and ‘small’. These results confirm the findings presented by Rocca, Tylén and Wallentin (2019) with English, Danish, and Italian speakers.

**Keywords:** demonstrative pronouns; semantic features of a referent; the Northern Samogitians; Kretingišķiai; spatial deixis; adverbs of place.

## Introduction

According to Diessel (1999a, 2), demonstratives fulfill certain syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic functions. The discussion of the syntactic properties of demonstratives is based on the argument that one has to distinguish between the distributional and the categorical status of demonstratives: 1) the concept of distribution encompasses pronominal demonstratives, adnominal demonstratives, adverbial demonstratives, and identificational demonstratives; 2) the concept of category includes demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative determiners, demonstrative adverbs, and demonstrative identifiers. This aspect of deixis has been studied a lot and researchers often look at what phrases

(pronominal, adnominal, etc.) deictic words belong to, what functions they perform, etc. (Fillmore 1982; Himmelmann 1997; Diessel 1999b).

Semantic features are usually discussed in two different domains: 1) deictic features, which indicate the location of the referent in the speech situation; 2) qualitative features, which classify the referent (Lyons 1977; Rauh 1983; Diessel 1999a).

The deictic features comprise features that indicate whether the referent is near, away or far away from the deictic center, whether it is visible or out of sight, at a higher or lower elevation, uphill or downhill, or moving toward or away from the deictic center. According to the traditional view (Fillmore 1997; Lyons 1977), a proximal demonstrative is used to refer to an entity close to the speaker, whereas a distal demonstrative is used to refer to an entity at a distance. This distance-based approach to the choice of exophoric demonstratives has been supported by typological (Diessel 1999a) as well as experimental studies (Coventry *et al.* 2008; Tóth *et al.* 2014; Reile 2015).

The qualitative features indicate whether the referent is an object, person or place, whether it is animate or inanimate, human or non-human, female or male, a single entity or a set, or whether it is conceptualized as a restricted or extended entity. There are fewer of these studies compared to studies that focus on the distance of the referent from the speaker (see Section 1).

According to Diessel (1999a, 94), pragmatic uses can be exophoric and endophoric. As Diessel (1999a) relies on Michael A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan (1976), he uses the term *endophoric* to name three subcategories: anaphoric, discourse deictic, and recognitional uses. The exophoric, anaphoric, and discourse deictic uses are discussed in studies by Lyons (1977), Levinson (1983, 2004), Webber (1991), Fillmore (1997), Himmelmann (1996, 1997), and many others.

Recently, researchers have devoted much effort to proving that the distance-based perception of deictics is too simplistic, with a strong focus on other aspects, some of which are also qualitative features, such as accessibility and recognizability (Hanks 1990, 2005; Jarbou 2010). However, such studies are not very numerous, and in the case of Lithuanian deictics specifically, they do not exist at all.

This paper deals with deictic words (demonstrative pronouns and adverbs of place) in Kretingiškiei subdialect and the motives behind their selection. The aim of the study is to find out how the choice is influenced by semantic referent features.

Lithuanian has two main dialects: Aukštaitian (Highland Lithuanian) and Samogitian (Lowland Lithuanian). Samogitian, also known as Žemaitian, is split into Western, Northern, and Southern subdialects. The Kretingiškiei subdialect is one of the northern Samogitian (Žemaitian) subdialects (Girdenis, Zinkevičius 1966, 139–147). Geographically, the Kretingiškiei subdialect is spoken in the northern part of the ethnographic region of Samogitia, which includes the territory between Kretinga and other nearby areas. This subdialect was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the Samogitian dialects have been scarcely studied in this respect. Secondly, the existing data on Samogitian deictic systems are rather old and tend to generalize across all Samogitian subdialects. Specifically, this subdialect is important because it borders not only the Western Aukštaitians and Southern Aukštaitians but also other Northern Samogitian groups, making it a linguistically significant area of contact. Lastly, one

of the article's authors is a native speaker of this subdialect, which ensures that interactions with speakers do not influence their language use, or more precisely, prevent code-switching effects.

Based on a study by Rocca, Tylén and Wallentin (2019), the following hypothesis has been proposed: it can be argued that referents with the properties 'inanimate'/'harmless'/'small' are more likely to be referred to by proximal pronouns (*this*) and referents with the characteristics 'animate'/'harmful'/'big' are more likely to be referred to by distal pronouns (*that*). Since the deictic pronoun system is closely related to the deictic system of adverbs of place, the 'inanimate'/'harmless'/'small' referents should be identified by the proximal deictic adverb of place (*here*), and the 'animate'/'harmful'/'big' referents by distal one (*there*).

The present paper consists of four parts: the first part briefly introduces the semantic features tested in the study; the second part presents the current situation and research on deictics in the Kretingiškiai subdialect; the third part is a coherent presentation of the experiment; and the fourth part is a presentation of the results and discussion, followed by conclusions.

## 1. Space deixis and semantic properties of the referent

As discussed in the Introduction, it is widely accepted that the distance between the referent and the speaker plays a crucial role in the choice of deictic words. However, this issue remains debated and continues to receive increasing attention in linguistic research. The choice of demonstratives can be influenced by evaluating objects based on their semantic properties. In this context, distance from the speaker is just one important factor among many. Thus, not only physical or psychological distance but also various semantic features contribute to shaping the referent's profile, which in turn affects the selection of deictic words (Rocca, Tylén, Wallentin 2019; Rocca, Wallentin 2020; Todisco, Rocca, Wallentin 2021).

As previously discussed, semantic properties can be classified as either deictic or qualitative (see Introduction). The latter category serves to classify the referent based on its inherent characteristics (Lyons 1977; Rauh 1983; Diessel 1999a).

Coventry *et al.* (2008; 2014; see also Gudde *et al.* 2016) showed that the use of demonstratives is linked to division of space into peripersonal (within reach) and extrapersonal (beyond reach) zones, influenced by factors like tool use, ownership, and familiarity. Further studies revealed that the choice of the demonstrative is sensitive to relative distances and functional properties of objects, with a lateralized bias determined by the dominant hand, highlighting that distance is only one of many influencing factors (Rocca *et al.* 2018).

According to Rocca, Tylén and Wallentin (2019, 3), there is growing evidence that the choice of proximal and distal demonstratives is related to differences in the extent to which referents allow for perception and/or manipulation. The choice is also likely to be influenced by the physical properties of the referent, such as the size of the object, as well as by more abstract properties such as harmfulness or familiarity. Proximal deictic

words are more likely to be assigned to referents whose semantic properties provide more opportunities for manipulation, regardless of their location in space (Rocca, Tylén, Wallentin 2019, 3).

The researchers chose to study size, harmfulness, and animacy because these properties are foundational in shaping how humans perceive and interact with objects in their environment (Rocca, Tylén, Wallentin 2019, 3–5):

- 1) “Referent size (‘big’/‘small’) is one of the most important properties shaping the semantic profile of a referent. [...] The smaller the object, the more often it should be assigned to near-pointing deictic words – smaller objects are easier to manipulate than larger ones.”
- 2) “Referent harmfulness (‘harmful’/‘harmless’) – this property can modulate the perception of space and objects in the peripersonal space. [...] The degree of harmfulness of the referent is likely to influence the choice of spatial deictics – referents perceived as dangerous should lead to a more frequent choice of distal deictics.”
- 3) “Referent animacy (‘animate’/‘inanimate’) – the distinction between animate and inanimate objects is explained by the difference between the sensory processing and the semantic representation of an object. [...] Inanimate objects are much easier to manipulate than animate objects and therefore a more frequent choice of proximal deictic words could be observed for inanimate referents.”

Rocca and Wallentin (2020) replicated the finding that the choice of the demonstrative is influenced by object manipulability and showed that it is also related to additional semantic factors, including valence, arousal, loudness, motion, time, and the self. Todisco, Rocca, and Wallentin (2021) found that demonstratives are influenced by the semantic factors, such as manipulability, valence, and the self.

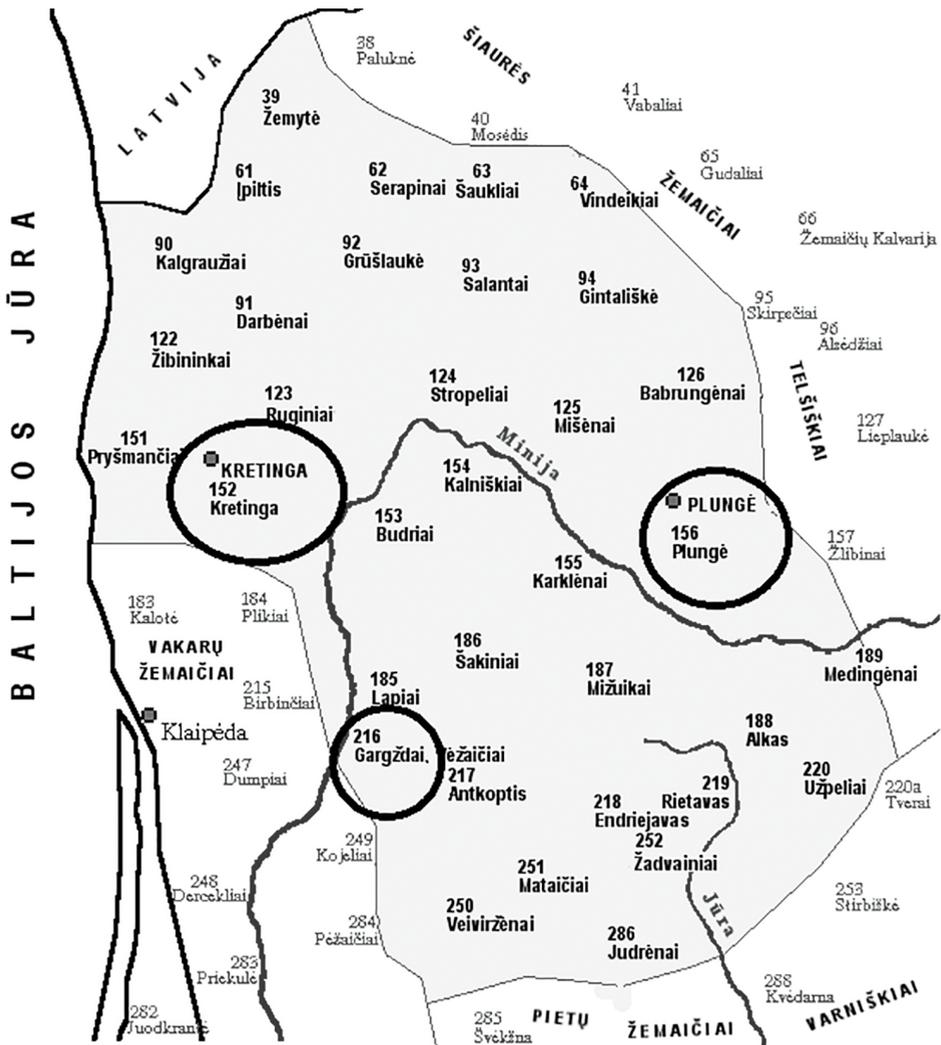
Thus, the choice of deictic words may not only depend on physical and/or psychological distance – the choice of proximal or distal deictic words may be determined by the semantic properties of the referents: ‘animate’/‘inanimate’, ‘harmful’/‘harmless’, and ‘big’/‘small’.

## 2. Spatial deixis in Kretingiškiei subdialect

Pronominal deictic systems in Samogitian have been discussed by Albertas Rosinas (1982). Although there is no specific data on the Kretingiškiei subdialect, the research allows us to conclude that this subdialect uses the same deictic system as other Samogitian subdialects, except in the case of Viduklė: *šitai tas* ‘this’/*antai tas* ‘that’; *tas šitai* ‘this’/*tas antai* ‘that’. Proximity/non-proximity here is expressed by the adverbs of place *šitai* ‘here’/*antai* ‘there’. Rosinas (1982, 152) names these constructs the new deictic system of demonstrative pronouns and states that it can be formed by combining a newly formed adverb of place with a demonstrative pronoun.

However, adverbs of place in the Samogitian dialect have not been studied at all. This is therefore an area that has not yet been explored by researchers.

To find out which deictic words are used in the territory of the Kretingiškiei dialect, pilot research was conducted first: semi-structured interviews with people living in the study area were recorded between 10 February and 9 March 2024. The action took place in three largest towns: Gargždai (a town bordering with the Western Samogitians), Kretinga (the largest and the main town of the area, which gave the name to the sub-dialect), and Plungė (a town bordering with the Northern Samogitians Telšiškiai) (see Map 1). The total number of interviews was 36 (36 respondents: 18 men and 18 women). These respondents aged from 13 to 80 years old talked for 2 hours 35 minutes 26 seconds.



Map 1. Territory of Northern Samogitians Kretingiškiei (the map from the Dialect Archive database of the Institute of the Lithuanian Language ([http://tarmes.lki.lt/F\\_szkmap.htm](http://tarmes.lki.lt/F_szkmap.htm)) was used to indicate the research territory)

The records showed that there are two deictic systems in the Kretingiškiei subdialect: the system of demonstrative pronouns and the system of adverbs of place. As the choice of deictic words was often determined by physical or psychological distance, it was revealed that the deictic system of adverbs of place is quite simple and similar to that of standard Lithuanian: it consists of the proximal member *čia* and *šitai* ‘here’ and the distal one *ten* and *tenai* ‘there’. Other variations of adverbs of place were also identified. These were not included in the study as they were mentioned relatively infrequently in the interviews. Other proximal adverbs of place are *šitai čia*, *čia šitai*, *čia šitai*, *šičia*, *čian*, *čionai*, *čionais*, *šitai čia*, *šitais*, while other distal adverbs of place include *tenai*, *antai*.

The deictic system of demonstrative pronouns is way more complicated – it consists of the proximal pronouns *šitas* (-a) and *šitai tas* (-a) ‘this’ and the distal pronoun *ten tas* (-a) ‘that’. The demonstrative pronoun *tas* (-a) is more often used to express distance, but there are also cases where the demonstrative pronoun is used to express proximity, and its place in the deictic system is questioned. In this paper, however, the pronoun *tas* (-a) is considered to be a distal demonstrative pronoun. There were more variations of demonstrative pronouns in the interviews, as in the case of adverbs of place. These have not been included as they were mentioned relatively few times. Other proximal demonstrative pronouns mentioned are *čia tas* (-a), *tas šitai*, *tas šitas*, other distal demonstrative pronouns include *tasai*, *anas*, *tuodu*, *tas tai*.

### 3. The experiment

The experiment to investigate the influence of semantic referent properties was carried out from 3 to 18 April 2024, and people from the study area were interviewed using an electronic questionnaire. A total of 783 people between the ages of 8 to 80 completed the questionnaire. The largest number of respondents came from Kretinga, Gargždai, and Plungė.

#### 3.1. Participants

In order to find out how the semantic properties of a referent determine the choice of deictic words, an electronic questionnaire was developed and used to interview people from the Kretingiškiei area (see below – section 3.3. The task and procedure). A total of 783 people completed the questionnaire: 180 men, 602 women and one respondent who did not identify with either gender. The age of the respondents ranged from 8 to 80 years. The questionnaire was completed by 330 members of the younger generation (under 30), 275 members of the middle-aged generation (31–49), and 178 members of the older generation (50+). The answers cover almost the entire Kretingiškiei area: from Lenkimai to Judrėnai and from Vydmantai to Plungė.

#### 3.2. The platform

The questionnaire was developed on the Qualtrics Experience Management Platform (the platform is available at [www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)). In the description of the questionnaire,

it was explained to the respondents that the questionnaire was designed for a survey focusing on the Kretingiškiei subdialect – the specific purpose of the survey was not revealed in order to avoid the selection of artificial answers. Thus, it can be assumed that the questionnaire data are based on spontaneous choices and everyday usage habits of demonstrative pronouns and adverbs of place. The description also mentions the time needed to complete the questionnaire (about 5 minutes), so that respondents can assess whether they have the time to do so.

### 3.3. The task and procedure

First, respondents were asked to indicate their gender (options provided: *female/male/other*), age (pen question, the answer is confirmed only by entering a number), and place of origin (99 options – a list of the places falling within the territory of the Kretingiškiei subdialect, presented in the alphabetical order). The questionnaire then included 40 words taken from the study by Rocca, Tylén, Wallentin (2019) and translated from English into Lithuanian. The 40 referent names were presented in the random order, one referent name at a time, and four demonstrative pronouns or four adverbs of place were listed in a column below each referent name as a list of possible response options. The data from the completed questionnaire were analysed based on different semantic properties of the referents. While Rocca, Tylén, and Wallentin (2019) focused exclusively on demonstrative pronouns, their study primarily aimed to understand the relationship between the semantic properties of the referent and deictic reference within a single grammatical category (pronouns). However, spatial deixis in natural languages often involves both demonstrative pronouns and adverbs of place, which work together to convey spatial relationships. By including adverbs of place, this study broadens the scope to explore whether similar semantic factors, such as animacy, harmfulness, and size, influence the choice of both pronouns and adverbs, or whether different patterns emerge. This addition also reflects the deictic system of Northern Samogitians Kretingiškiei subdialect, where adverbs of place are integral to spatial reference, allowing for a more representative and comprehensive analysis of deixis in this linguistic context.

### 3.4. Stimuli

The words in the questionnaire referred to specific referents selected by the researchers (Rocca, Tylén, Wallentin (2019) based on the properties they represented (referent: ‘animate’/‘inanimate’, ‘harmful’/‘harmless’, ‘big’/‘small’) (see Table 1). The researchers selected the target words from a semantic knowledge base (in English) consisting of 1000 specific nouns rated on 218 semantic dimensions from 1 to 5. The experimental words were related to specific objects. The variables of interest were binary: referent animacy, harmfulness and size, thus  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  combinations were formed. Participants were presented with four words from each possible combination, so a repeated measures design was chosen. The fillers denoted abstract entities: out of the 40 referents 32 were experimental and were included in the analysis of the study, while the remaining eight were fillers (abstracts) not included in the analysis of the study.

<b>Animate</b>		
	<i>Big</i>	<i>Small</i>
Harmful	Bull, shark, hyena, snake	Bee, flea, spider, rat
Harmless	Camel, goose, lamb, penguin	Cricket, kitten, robin, shrimp
<b>Inanimate</b>		
	<i>Big</i>	<i>Small</i>
Harmful	Bomb, jail, rocket, rifle	Burner, dagger, needle, thorn
Harmless	Bench, couch, cradle, tent	Coin, comb, cookie, soap
<b>Fillers</b>		
Deal, dawn, hurry, loss, quarrel, rise, rest, stress		

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**Table 1.** Names of referents (Rocca, Tylén, Wallentin (2019)) that were used in the present research

As mentioned before, all these words were translated from English into Lithuanian and presented in the questionnaire. In the study by Rocca, Tylén, Wallentin (2019), one out of 40 referent names given was *robin*. This referent name was replaced by another one (Lithuanian *zylė* ‘tit’) in this study because the word *liepsnelė* ‘robin’ is ambiguous in Lithuanian. According to the Lithuanian Language Dictionary (LKŽ), *liepsnėlė* is 1. a small red-breasted songbird, red-breasted nuthatch (*Erithacus rubecula*); 2. a plant of the family *Lychnis* with brightly colored flowers. It is also known that this word can be understood as a diminutive of the word *liepsna* ‘flame’.

The authors of the paper decided to use abbreviations for combinations of referents. The abbreviations used in the article are: AHB for ‘animate’, ‘harmful’, ‘big’; AHS for ‘animate’, ‘harmful’, ‘small’; ALB for ‘animate’, ‘harmless’, ‘big’; ALS for ‘animate’, ‘harmless’, ‘small’; IHB for ‘inanimate’, ‘harmful’, ‘big’; his for ‘inanimate’, ‘harmful’, ‘small’; ILB for ‘inanimate’, ‘harmless’, ‘big’; and ILS for ‘inanimate’, ‘harmless’, ‘small’.

### 3.5. Demonstratives

Participants had to assign one of four proximal or distal demonstrative pronouns *šitas* (-a) ‘this’, *šitai tas* (-a) ‘this’, *tas* (-a) ‘that’, and *ten tas* (-a) ‘that’, or the adverbs of place *čia* ‘here’, *šitai* ‘here’, *ten* ‘there’, and *tenai* ‘there’ to each given referent name (see Figure 1). These deictic words, as the analysis of the recent study showed, are the most frequently used in the Northern Samogitians Kretingiškiei subdialect. In this task example, the referent word is a *kitten* (Lithuanian: *kačiukas* ‘kitten’), which requires one of the following deictic words (in this case, a demonstrative pronoun): *šitas* / *šitai tas* / *tas* / *ten tas*.



Figure 1. The task of the experiment

## 4. Results and discussion

The data from the completed questionnaire were analysed on the basis of different semantic properties of the referents. Initially, each referent was analysed according to three properties: animacy, harmfulness, and size.

It is important to mention that Rocca, Tylén, and Wallentin (2019) performed a logistic regression analysis to analyse the data in their study. In this work, the analysis method was adapted and simplified by calculating the differences between the choices of the distal and proximal deictic words and comparing the results with each other according to different aspects.

When analysing the choice of demonstrative pronouns, the demonstrative pronoun *tas* (-a) and the demonstrative pronoun *šitas* (-a) were chosen most frequently (45.21% and 27.91% of the cases respectively). The compound pronouns *ten tas* (-a) and *šitai tas* (-a) were chosen less frequently (13.76% and 13.13% respectively). The means of assignment of each demonstrative pronoun to each combination of referents in the experiment is shown in the Table 2:

	AHB	AHS	ALB	ALS	IHB	IHS	ILB	ILS
<i>šitas</i> (-a)	187.5	201.25	224	235.25	176.5	222.75	242.5	258.25
<i>šitai tas</i> (-a)	90.75	99	105.25	103.25	90.5	109	110.25	114.25
<i>tas</i> (-a)	369.75	372.25	339.25	351	360.25	357	337.75	344.75
<i>ten tas</i> (-a)	135	110.5	114.5	93.5	155.75	94.25	92.5	65.75

Table 2. Means of assignment of demonstrative pronouns to combinations of referents

It has been noted that in most cases, when the referent is ‘inanimate’, ‘harmless’, and ‘small’, the difference between the choice of the pronouns of the far and the near display is smaller than when the referent is ‘animate’, ‘harmful’, and ‘big’. Figure 2, illustrating the choice of pronouns in terms of animacy, shows that among the first 16 referents, there are 11 referents with the property ‘inanimate’ with the smallest difference between the choice of distal and proximal pronouns (and among the next 16 referents, there are 11 referents with the property ‘animate’ with the largest difference between the choice of distal and proximal pronouns).

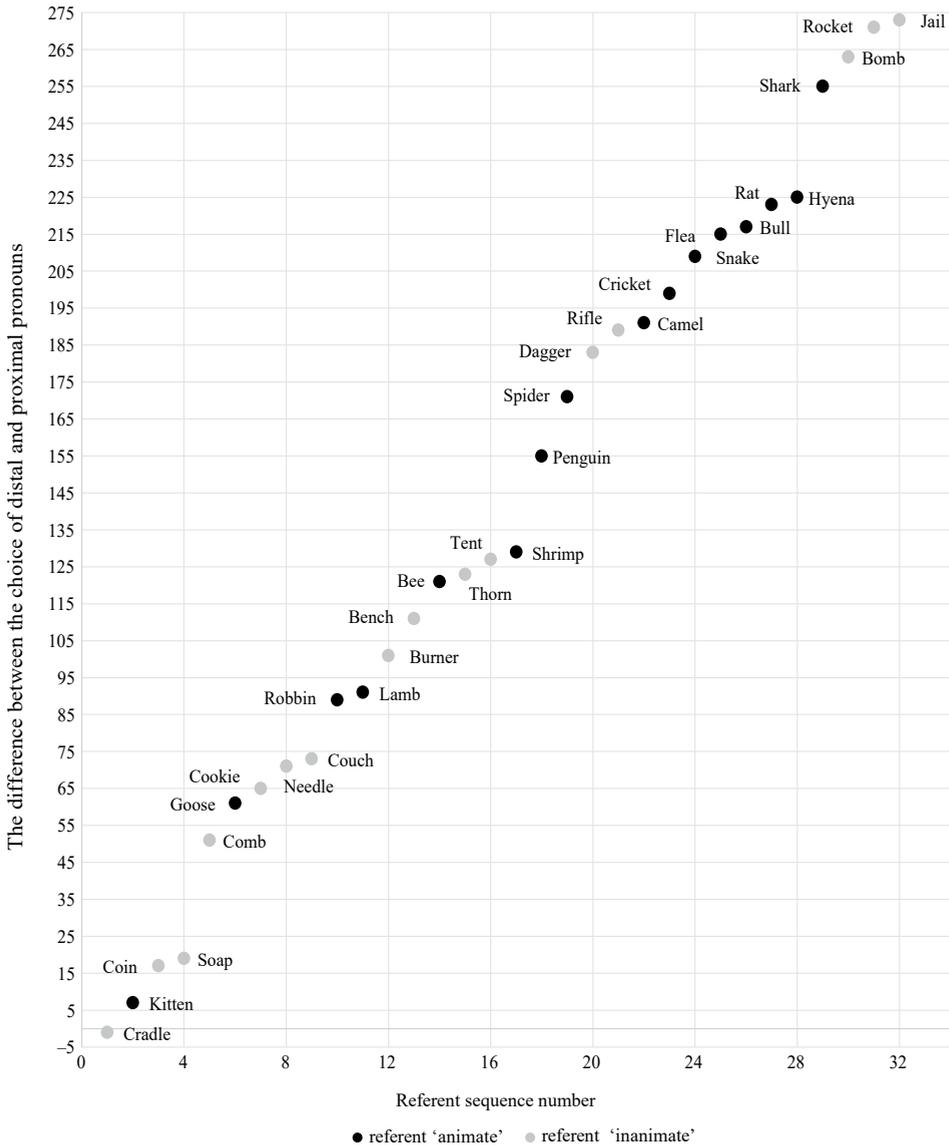


Figure 2. Choice of demonstrative pronouns from the aspect of animacy of referents

Figure 3, illustrating the choice of demonstrative pronouns in terms of harmfulness, shows that among the first 16 referents, there are 12 referents with the property ‘harmless’, with the smallest difference in the choice of distal and proximal demonstrative pronouns (and among the next 16 referents, there are 12 referents with the attribute ‘harmful’, with the biggest difference in between the choice of distal and proximal pronouns).

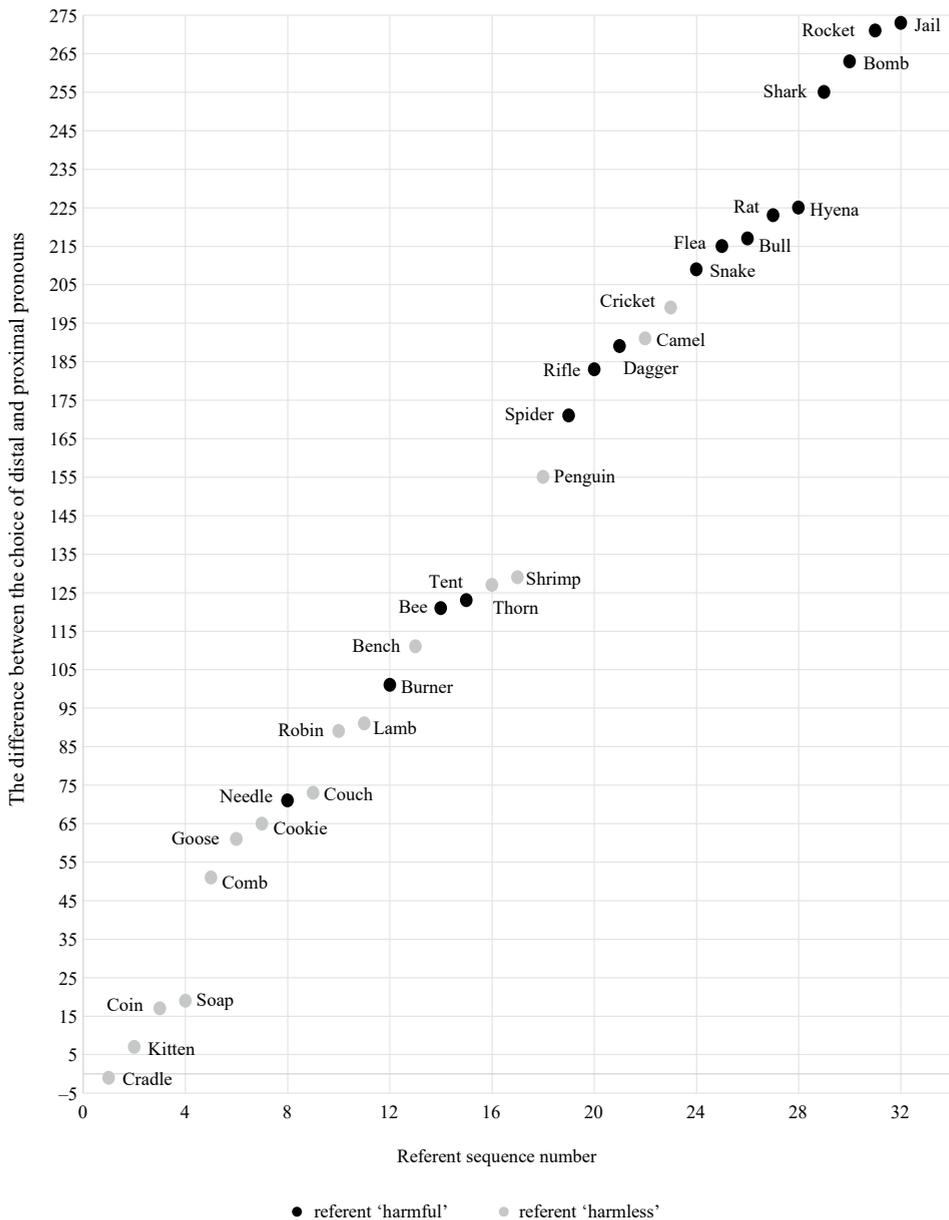


Figure 3. Choice of demonstrative pronouns from the aspect of harmfulness of referents

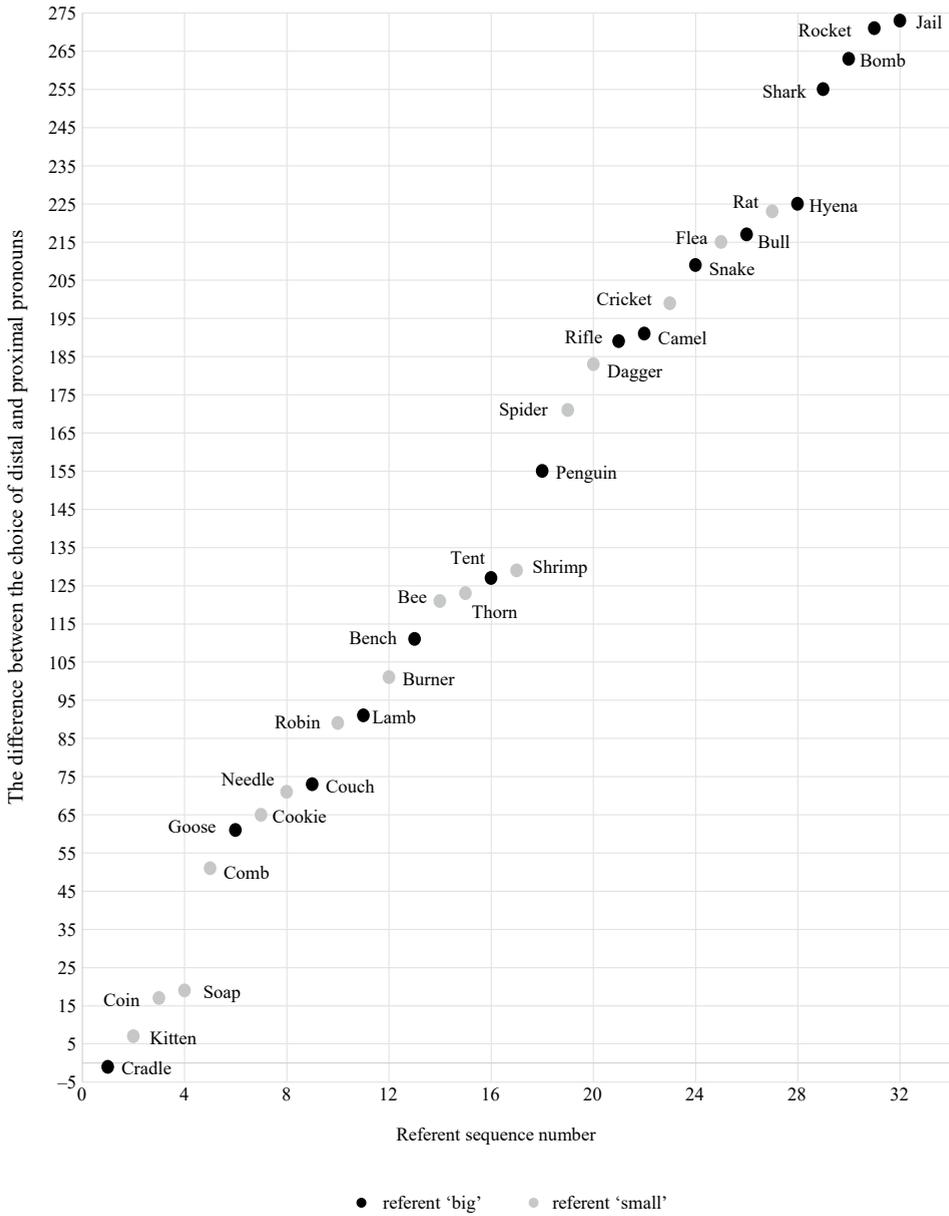


Figure 4. Choice of demonstrative pronouns from the aspect of size of referents

Figure 4, illustrating the choice of pronouns in terms of size, shows that among the first 16 referents there are 10 referents with the attribute 'small' with the smallest difference in the choice of pronouns between distal and proximal (among the next 16 referents there are 10 referents with the attribute 'big' with the largest difference between the choice of distal and proximal pronouns).

When analysing the choices of adverbs of place, there is no single dominant adverb. The most frequent choices were the proximal adverb *čia* (37.37% of cases) and the distal adverb *ten* (31.76% of cases). The adverbs of place *šitai* and *tenai* were chosen less frequently (16.56% and 14.31% respectively). The means of assignment of each adverb of place to each combination of referents in the experiment is shown in the table below:

	AHB	AHS	ALB	ALS	IHB	IHS	ILB	ILS
<i>čia</i>	221.25	272.5	261	313.75	230.5	320.75	348.5	372.5
<i>šitai</i>	104.5	136	120	131.25	101.75	153.75	126.5	163.5
<i>ten</i>	312.5	264.5	274.75	233.5	295.75	220.25	214.25	174.25
<i>tenai</i>	144.75	110	127.25	104.5	155	88.25	93.75	72.75

**Table 3.** Means of assignment of adverbs of place to combinations of referents

As the difference between the choice of distal and proximal pronouns had been calculated previously, it was decided to do the same for the adverbs of place to establish when distal adverbs of place were chosen more often and when they were chosen less often (see Figure 9).

It was found that when the referent is ‘inanimate’, ‘harmless’, and ‘small’, the difference in the choice of the distal and proximal pronouns is smaller than when the referent is ‘animate’, ‘harmful’, and ‘big’. Figure 5, illustrating the choice of adverbs of place in terms of animacy, shows that among the first 16 referents there are 10 referents with the attribute ‘inanimate’ with the smallest difference between the choice of distal and proximal adverbs of place (among the next 16 referents there are 10 referents with the attribute ‘animate’ with the largest difference between the choice of distal and proximal adverbs of place).

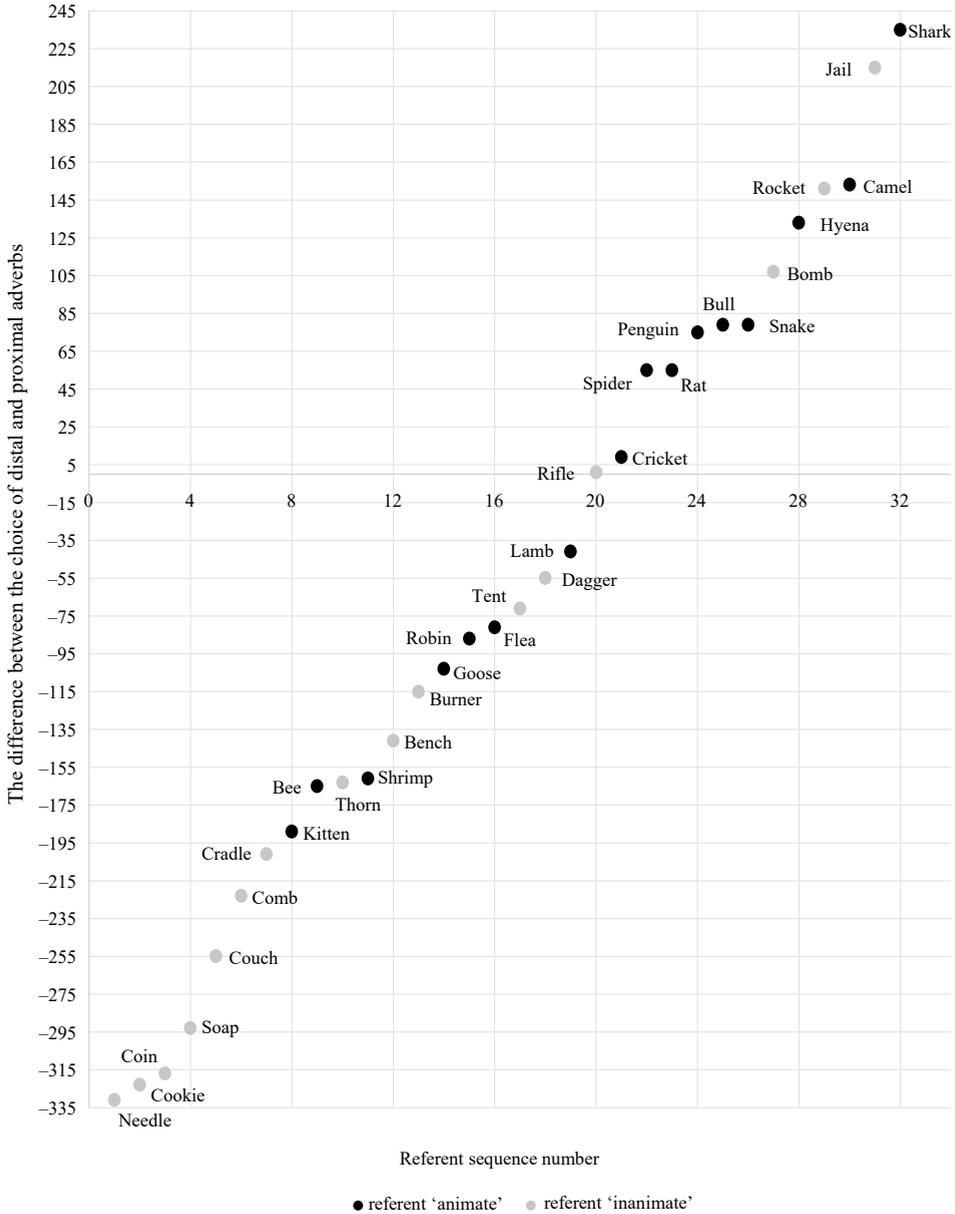


Figure 5. Choice of adverbs of place from the aspect of animacy of referents

Figure 6, illustrating the choice of adverbs of place in terms of harmfulness, shows that among the first 16 referents there are 12 referents with the attribute 'harmless', with the lowest difference between the choice of distal and proximal adverbs of place (among the next 16 referents there are 12 referents with the attribute 'harmful', with the highest difference between the choice of distal and proximal adverbs of place).

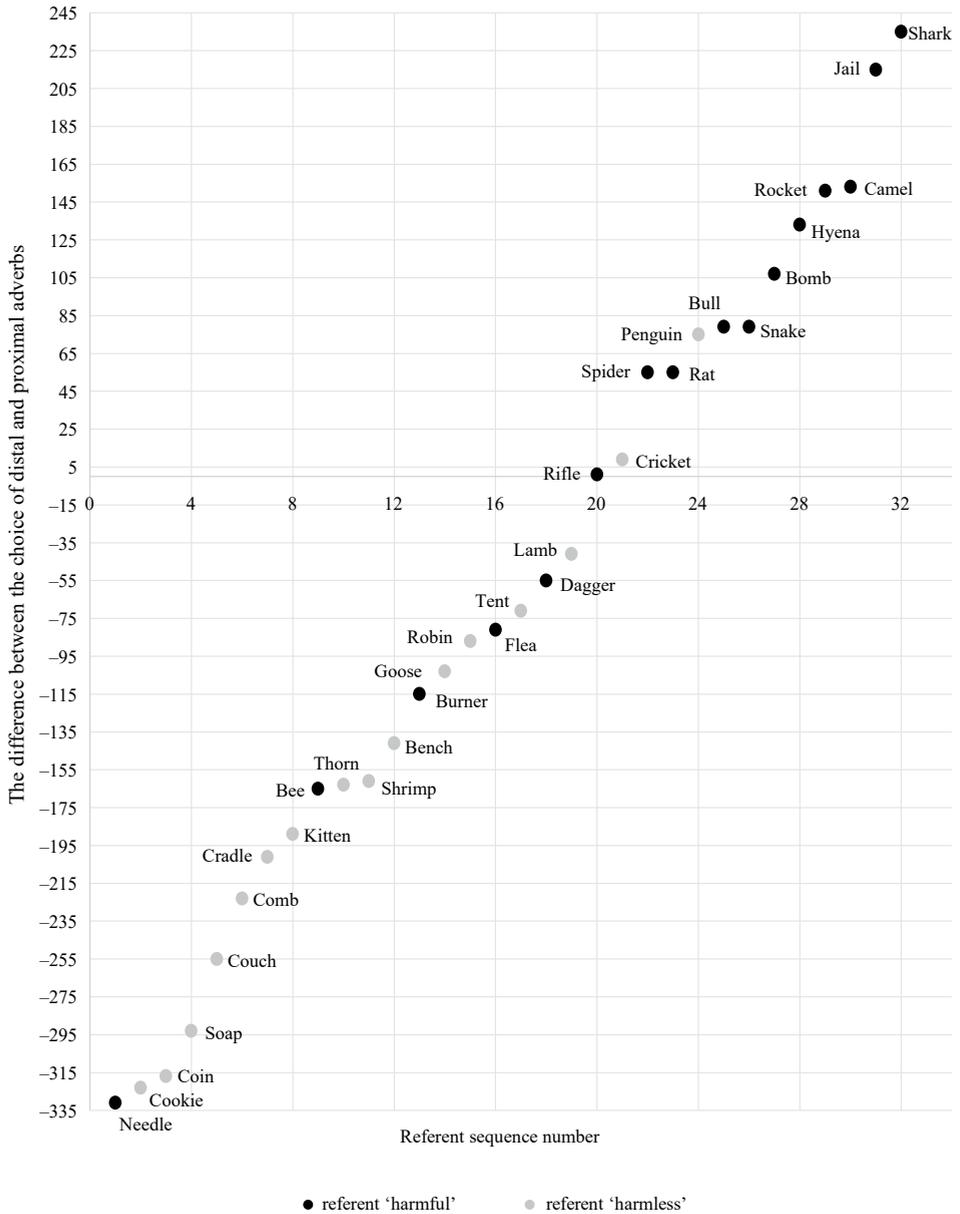


Figure 6. Choice of adverbs of place from the aspect of harmfulness of referents

Figure 7, illustrating the choice of adverbs of place in terms of size, shows that among the first 16 referents there are 12 referents with the attribute 'small' with the smallest difference between the choice of distal and proximal distance adverbs of place (among the next 16 referents there are 12 referents with the attribute 'big' with the largest difference between the choice of distal and proximal adverbs of place).

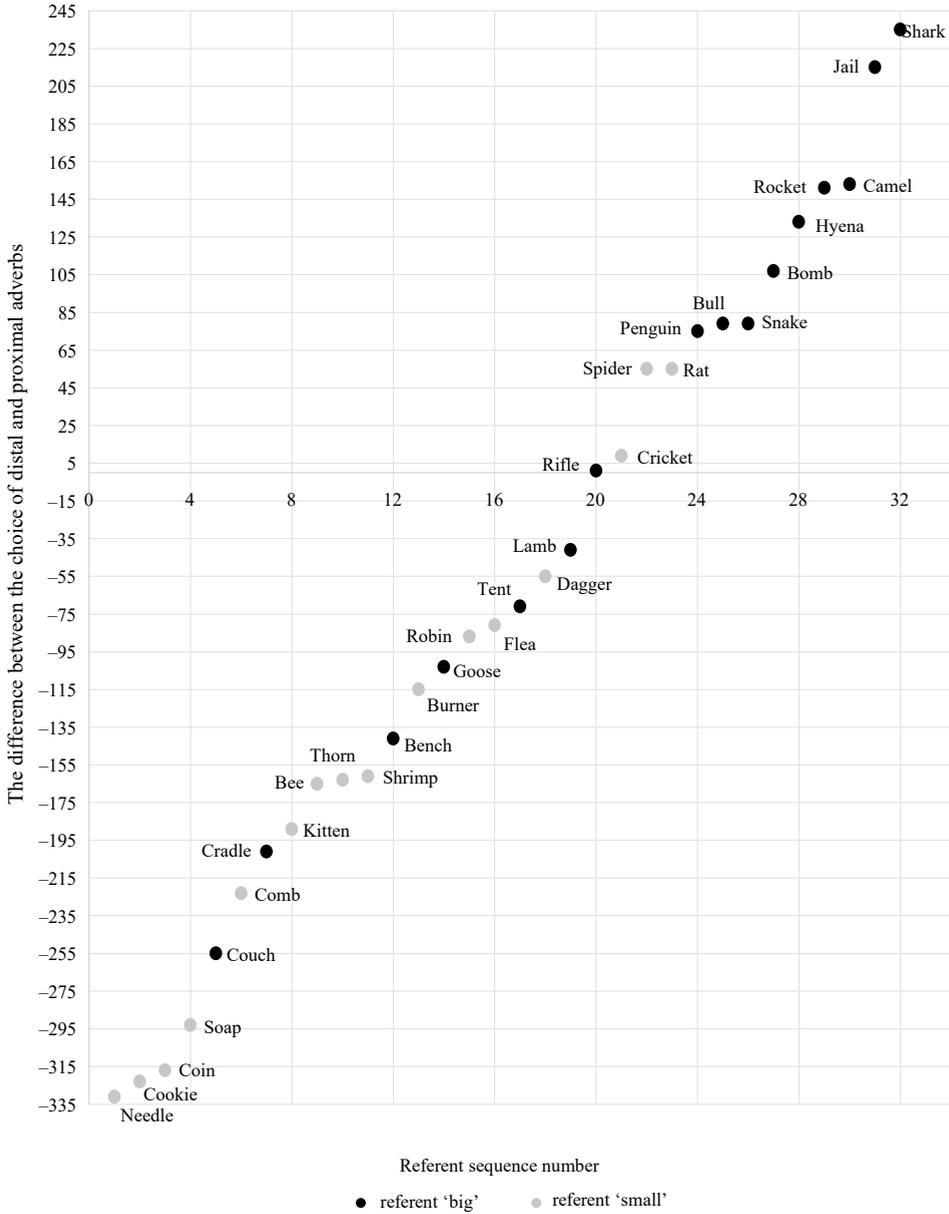


Figure 7. Choice of adverbs of place from the aspect of size of referents

An analysis of assignment of deictic words to individual referents shows that, for both the choice of demonstrative pronouns and the choice of adverbs of place, the most frequent assignment of distal deictic words is to referents with the features 'animate', 'harmful', and 'big', and proximal deictic words are assigned to referents with the features 'inanimate', 'harmless', and 'small'. This shows that individual semantic features of the referent can indeed determine the choice of spatial deictic words.

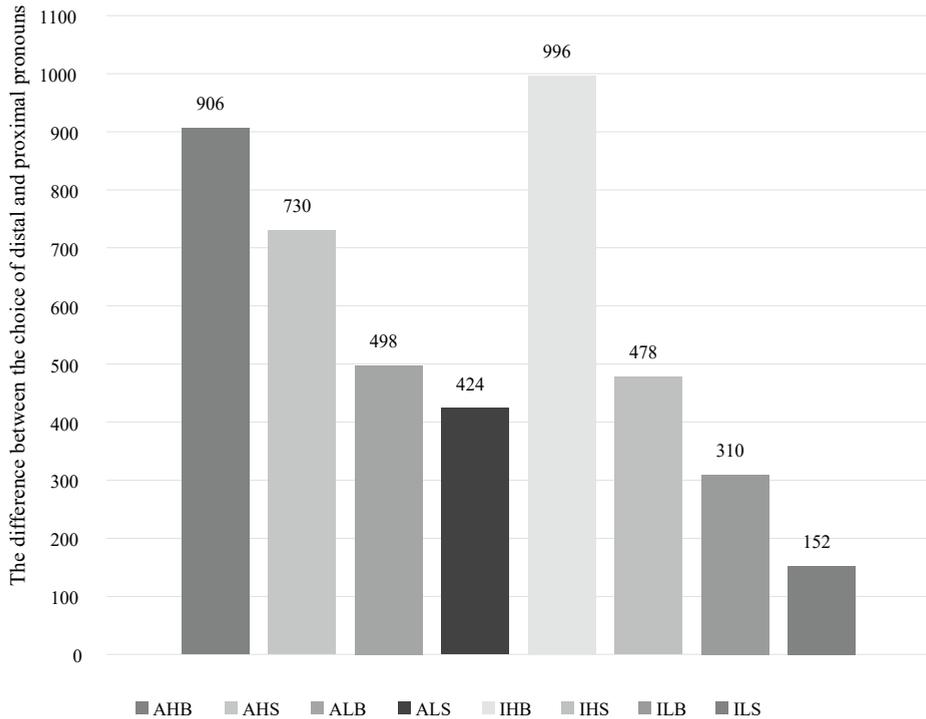


Figure 8. Assignment of demonstrative pronouns to different combinations of referents

Since this paper analyses the influence of referents and their features on the choice of spatial deictic words, not only for individual referents, but also for referents and their features in eight combinations (see Table 1), it is important to look at the choices that dominate in each of the combinations. Assignment of demonstrative pronouns to different combinations of referents is shown in the figure below (see Figure 8):

Figure 8 shows that in all cases there is a positive difference between the far and near demonstrative pronouns assigned to referent combinations. This means that the choice of distal pronouns dominates in all cases. The most frequent demonstrative pronoun chosen by the respondents was *tas* (-a).

It is noticeable that the highest number of distal pronouns and the lowest number of proximal pronouns were assigned to referents that belonged to the combination IHB ('inanimate', 'harmful', 'big') (the difference between the choices of distal and proximal pronouns is 996) and for the combination AHB ('animate', 'harmful', 'big') (the difference between the choices of the pronouns of distal and proximal pronouns is 906). The highest number of pronouns in the close pronoun category and the lowest number of pronouns in the far pronoun category were assigned to referents belonging to the combination ILS ('inanimate', 'harmless', 'small') (the difference between the choices of distal and proximal pronouns is 152).

Assignment of adverbs of place to different referent combinations is shown in the figure below (see Figure 9):

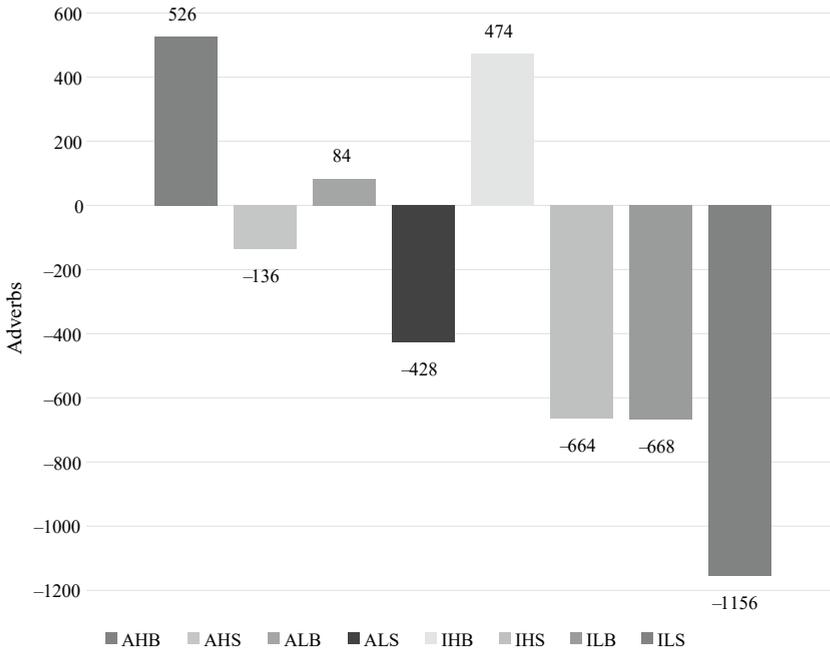
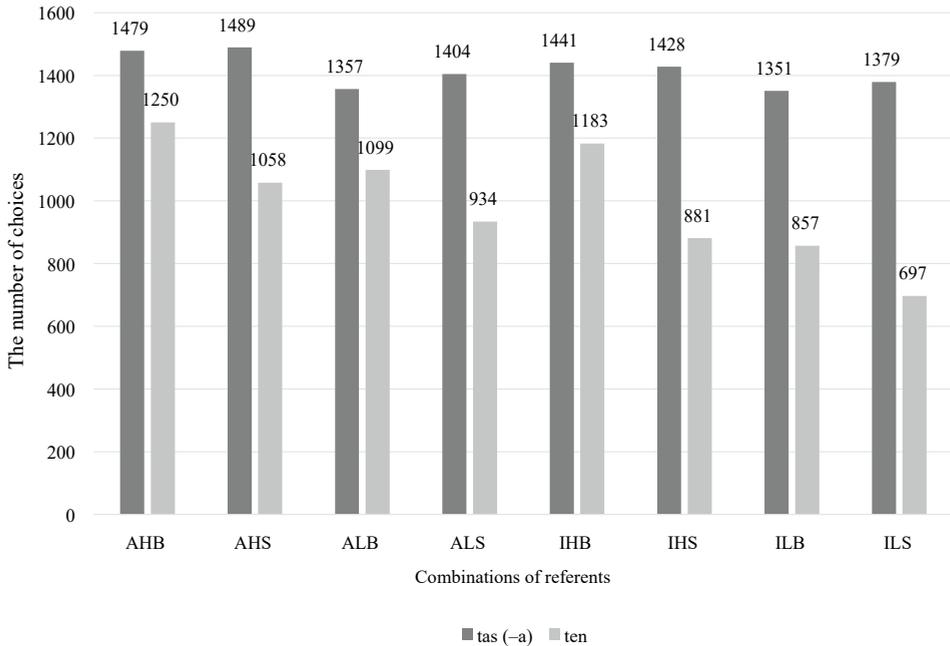


Figure 9. Assignment of adverbs of place to different combinations of referents

Figure 9 shows that, unlike in the analysis of demonstrative pronouns, there is no consistently dominant use of proximal or distal demonstrative pronouns in this case. In some cases, the difference between distal and proximal adverbs assigned to referent combinations is positive, in some cases it is negative.

It is noticeable that the highest number of distal and the lowest number of proximal adverbs were attributed to the referents which belonged to the combination AHB ('animate', 'harmful', 'big') (the difference between the choices of distal and proximal adverbs of place is 526) and the combination IHB ('inanimate', 'harmful', 'big') (the difference between the choices of distal and proximal adverbs of place is 474). The highest number of proximal adverbs of place and the lowest number of distal adverbs of place were assigned to referents belonging to the combination IHL ('inanimate', 'harmless', 'small') (the difference between the choices of distal and proximal adverbs of place is 1156).

The data in Figures 8 and 9 show that the largest number of distal deictic words were assigned to referents with the properties 'animate' / 'inanimate', 'harmful', and 'big', while the largest number of proximal deictic words were assigned to referents with the properties 'inanimate', 'harmless', and 'small'. However, when analysing assignment of demonstrative pronouns to referents, the dominance of the distant demonstrative pronoun *tas (-a)* was noted. In order to find out whether this demonstrative pronoun really dominates in Kretingiškiiai subdialect and can be attributed to both near and far objects or places, it is necessary to compare the frequency of its use with the most frequently chosen distal demonstrative adverb of place *ten* (see Figure 10):



**Figure 10.** Assignment of the demonstrative pronoun *tas (-a)* and the adverb of place *ten* to different combinations of referents

The data in Figure 10 show that, although the same referent names were given to demonstrative pronouns and adverbs of place, assignment of the demonstrative pronoun *tas (-a)* to different combinations of referents is much more frequent than assignment of the adverb of place *ten*. It was observed that the demonstrative pronoun *tas (-a)* was assigned to different combinations of referents between 229 and 682 times more often than the adverb of place *ten*. This suggests that the demonstrative pronoun *tas (-a)* is the dominant pronoun in Northern Samogitians Kretingiškiiai speech – it can be used to express not only distance, but also proximity.

Thus, in the second stage of the study, it was observed that assignment of deictic words to referents varies according to semantic features of the referents. The results of this phase showed that the more the referent can be manipulated, the more often proximity deictic words are assigned to it, regardless of the context. In all cases, the harmfulness and size of the referents influenced the choice of deictic words: respondents were more likely to use proximal deictic words when they were presented with words meaning smaller compared to larger referents, and harmless compared to harmful referents. It was also observed that the difference between animate and inanimate referents is not always substantial. Although the animacy of the referents influenced the choice of proximal deictic words, there is insufficient evidence that inanimate referents are more likely to be assigned to proximal deictic words compared to animate referents.

According to the analysis, assignment of deictic words to referents varies according to their semantic properties. The results of this study showed that the more the referent can be manipulated, the more frequently proximal deictic words are assigned to

the referent, regardless of the context. The harmfulness and size of the referents influenced the choice of deictic words in all cases: respondents were more likely to use proximal deictic words when they were presented with words meaning smaller compared to larger referents, and harmless compared to harmful referents. It was also observed that the difference between animate and inanimate referents is not always crucial. Although the animacy of the referents influenced the choice of proximal deictic words, there is not enough evidence that inanimate referents are more likely to be assigned to proximal deictic words compared to animate referents.

## Conclusions

In addition to distance, the choice of deictic words can also be determined by semantic properties of the referent. This study advances the understanding of semantic influences on spatial deixis by confirming the findings of previous research by Rocca, Tylén, and Wallentin (2019) on demonstrative pronouns in English, Danish, and Italian. However, unlike these studies, the present analysis also includes adverbs of place, thereby extending the scope of the investigation into deictic systems.

The analysis of the 783 responses to the questionnaire shows that deictic words are most often chosen based on the ability of the respondent to manipulate the referent. The results confirm the proposed hypotheses that referents with the properties ‘harmful’ and ‘big’ are predominantly associated with distal deictics, whereas those with the properties ‘harmless’ and ‘small’ are more frequently associated with proximal deictics. There is insufficient evidence that animacy of referents influences the choice of deictic words, so this property is not distinguished as essential. The data analysis also shows that the demonstrative pronoun *tas* (-a) is indeed dominant in the Kretingiškiei subdialect and can be attributed not only to distant but also to nearby objects and places.

This comprehensive approach highlights the multidimensionality of spatial deixis and suggests that semantic properties of referents significantly influence the choice of both demonstrative pronouns and adverbs of place. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of deictic expressions, particularly within the Kretingiškiei subdialect, and provide a foundation for future comparative studies.

## Abbreviations

AHB	animate, harmful, big
AHS	animate, harmful, small
ALB	animate, harmless, big
ALS	animate, harmless, small
IHB	inanimate, harmful, big
HIS	inanimate, harmful, small
ILB	inanimate, harmless, big
ILS	inanimate, harmless, small
LKŽ	<i>Lietuvių kalbos žodynas</i>

## Source

Naktinienė, Gertrūda (ed.). *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas 1–20 (1941–2002)*, e. version. Vilnius: Lietuvių kalbos institutas, 2005 (updated version, 2018). Available at: <http://www.lkz.lt/>

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## Kopsavilkums

Šī raksta mērķis ir izpētīt semantisko referenta īpašību ietekmi uz deiktisko vārdu izvēli Kretingas izloksnē. Balstoties uz Robertas Rokas (*Roberta Rocca*), Kristiana Tilēna (*Kristian Tylén*) un Mikēla Valentīna (*Mikkel Wallentin*) (2019) pētījumu, izvēlētas šādas īpašības: *dzīvs/nedzīvs, kaitīgs/nekaitīgs, liels/mazs*. Pētījuma pamatā ir anketa, kas publicēta platformā „Qualtrics Experience Management Platform”. Aptaujā piedalījās 783 respondenti, kas pārstāv izvēlēto izloksni. Iegūto datu analīze atklāj, ka deiktisko vārdu izvēlē nozīmīga ir ne tikai fiziskā un psiholoģiskā distance, bet arī referenta semantiskās īpašības: referenti ar īpašībām *kaitīgs* un *liels* biežāk tiek saistīti ar deiktiskiem vārdiem, kas norāda uz lielāku attālumu nekā referenti ar īpašībām *nekaitīgs* un *mazs*. Šie rezultāti apstiprina Robertas Rokas, Kristiāna Tilēna un Mikēla Valentīna (2019) secinājumus, kas iegūti angļu, dāņu un itāļu valodas runātāju izpētē.

**Atslēgvārdi:** norādāmie vietniekvārdi; referenta semantiskās pazīmes; Ziemeļzemaitija; Kretingas izloksne; telpiskā norāde; vietas apstākļa vārdi.



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