

Cheyenne demonstratives: A corpus study

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Overview. This paper investigates the eight demonstratives in Cheyenne, an endangered Algonquian language spoken in Montana and Oklahoma. We discuss what distinctions are made amongst the demonstratives, their frequency, and how they are used, based on a corpus study of 62 texts (Leman 1980b) and the dictionary (Fisher et al 2006).

Background. In English, demonstratives indicate both distance and number, e.g., *this, that* vs *these, those*. English demonstratives have both anaphoric uses (referring to something previously mentioned) and deictic uses (referring to something in the speaker's environment, typically with a gesture).

In Cheyenne, there are eight demonstratives, indicating both distance and animacy, but not number, as in Table 1 below.

	Proximal	Distal
Animate	<i>tsé'tóhe, néhe</i>	<i>tá'tóhe, náhe</i>
Inanimate	<i>hé'tóhe, héne</i>	<i>há'tóhe, háne</i>

Table 1: The eight Cheyenne demonstratives (Leman 1980a)

There are two demonstratives in each cell: the ones on the left have been described as being either deictic or anaphoric, while the ones on the right are only anaphoric (Leman 1984, 1987).

Methodology. We searched a collection of 62 Cheyenne texts (Leman 1980b) and the Cheyenne dictionary (Fisher et al 2006) for all examples of Cheyenne demonstratives. There were 468 total occurrences, which we coded for different features, e.g., order with noun and optionality of noun.

Frequency of the Cheyenne demonstratives. Of the 468 total occurrences of demonstratives in the corpus, the most frequent were the proximal animate ones: *tsé'tóhe* (deictic or anaphoric; 152 occurrences) and *néhe* (only anaphoric; 147 occurrences). The next most frequent were the inanimate proximal demonstratives. Figure 1 shows the frequency for all 8 demonstratives.

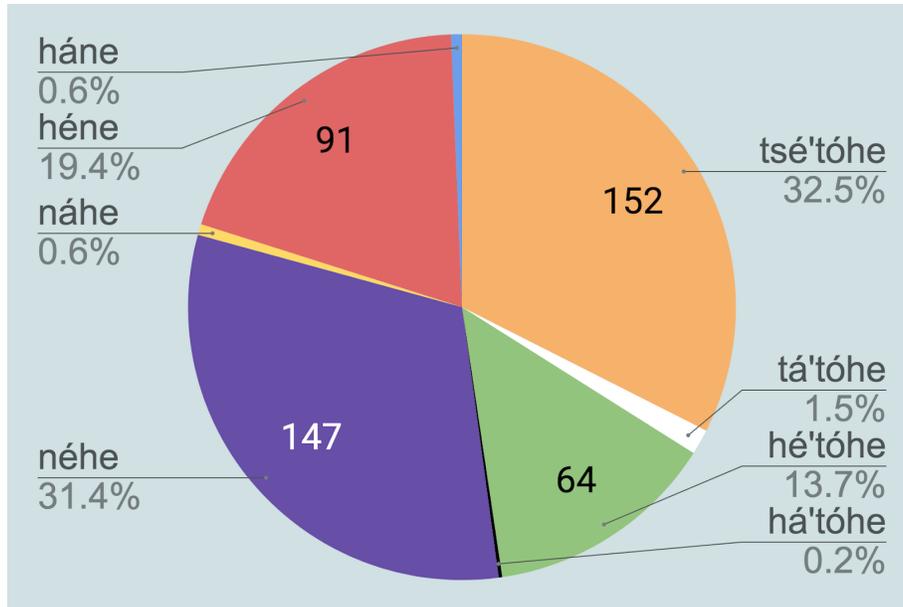


Figure 1: Frequency of Cheyenne demonstratives

Distribution with nouns. In our corpus, the demonstratives always occurred to the left of the noun, as in (1) below.

- (1) *Éme'tónetóhtáho'tánéstse [hé'tóhe menótse]?* (Fisher et al 2006)
 'What color should [these berries] be when ripe?'

In the presentation, we discuss further patterns and details of our findings and connections to recent work on definiteness.

References

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