

Neither Here nor Here: The Problem with the Russian Adverbs *Zdes'* and *Tut*.

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Abstract: The Russian adverbs *здесь* *zdes'* and *тут* *tut* are often taught as more or less synonymous words that mean "here," with the former being more general and the latter being more colloquial. However, an examination of the usage of these two adverbs of location reveals that the two adverbs differ in deictic meaning. The use of these adverbs establishes the general situational context and communicates the sense of the speaker's "here-now." Further, they can help distinguish between object versus context, identify the speaker's emotional closeness to the environment, style, and degrees of intimacy between the S_1 and S_2 . This study demonstrates that there is much more going on in the use of these adverbs than simply a degree between standard and more colloquial forms of speech.

Keywords: Russian semantics; pragmatics; adverbs; deixis; speech environment)

1. Introduction

Every speaker of Russian, native or not, is aware that in the lexicon of the Russian language, there exist two words for what would be rendered in English as the adverb of location here: *здесь* *zdes'* and *тут* *tut*. What is not known, however, are the rules governing their distribution: are the two interchangeable, and if not, what accounts for this difference? In this paper, I shall attempt to explore this problem, though by no means conclusively, and lay the groundwork for further study.

It is apparent from studying the two occurrences of these two words that there are indeed differences between *здесь* *zdes'* and *тут* *tut* and that these differences operate on two different levels.

2. The Physical Dimension: The More Specific "Here"

The first level on which these words operate is a purely physical one in which *здесь* *zdes'* and *тут* *tut* serve to describe the deictic location, that is, the physical space that is closest to the speaker (S_1) in a speech event. In this way, they both serve as an opposition to the word *там* *tam* "there," which is used deictically to represent that which is away from the speaker. Observe the very number of phraseologisms present in Russian about this contrast:

- (1) Одна нога здесь, другая там.
Odna noga zdes', drugaia tam.
One leg here, the other there.
- (2) Одна нога там, другая тут.
Odna noga tam, drugaia tut.
One leg there, the other here.
- (3) Там и тут.
Tam i tut.
There and here.



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- (4) То там, то тут.
To tam, to tut.
 One there, one here.
- (5) Там... а здесь...
Tam... a zdes'...
 There... but here...

It is here where they begin to diverge in their meanings. While both *здесь zdes'* (“here”) and *тут tut* (“here”) do stand in opposition to some *там tam* “there,” *тут* often conveys a much more specific “here” in relation to the speaker (S_1), allowing one to set off a ‘here-there’ type of contrast within a given *здесь zdes'*. Witness the following example from Pushkin:

- (6) Здесь зачинитель Варклай, а здесь совершитель Кутузов. Тут Аполлон—идеал, там Ниобея печаль.
Zdes' začinitel' Varklai, a zdes' soveršitel' Kutuzov. Tut Appolon—ideal, a tam Niobeya pečal'.
 Here (*zdes'*) is the pioneer Varklai, and here (*zdes'*) is the performer Kutuzov. Here (*tut*) Apollo—the ideal; there (*tam*) Niobe’s sorrow.

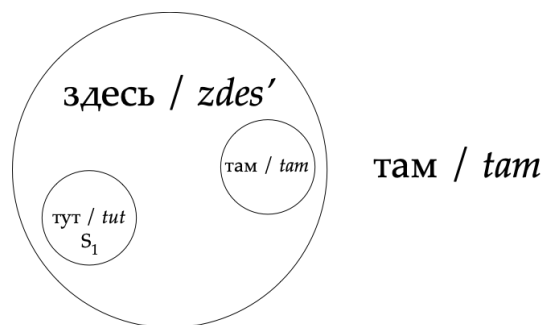


Figure 1. The use of *тут* can create a here–there relationship within a given *здесь* “here” relative to the S_1 .

In (6) above, we see that there can exist within a given deictic “here” various degrees of proximity to the S_1 . When such a need arises, *тут* is utilized to represent this relative relationship, as seen in Figure 1.

3. The Speakers’ Knowledge of the Here–Now

This raises the question of the role of what people know in any given conversation, what we refer to as the “knowledge sets” of the participants in a “speech event.” To establish such a contrast as *тут* and *там* within a given *здесь* or “here,” it is necessary that the knowledge of the ‘here–now’ be the same in the minds of both the speaker (S_1) and addressee (S_2). If the S_1 and S_2 do not share the same perceptions as to what the ‘here–now’ of a speech event is, then it is necessary to establish one. In order to reorient an addressee’s perceptions of the ‘here–now,’ *здесь* is used.

- (7) Здесь в Москве, они держали Совет, и Юрий, по словам летописца, дал гостью «обед силен.»
 Here (*zdes'*) in Moscow, they held a Council, and Yuri, in the words of the annals, gave a

guest a “strong lunch.”

- (8) «А зори здесь тихие...» [B. Vasiliev]
But the dawns are quiet here (*zdes'*)
- (9) Мне здесь одно непонятно.
One thing is not clear to me here (*zdes'*)

Note well that in (9), the word *здесь* serves to direct the attention of the S_2 , to refer him to some object, to bring him into some context. If that sentence were rendered with *тут*: *мне тут одно непонятно*, it would not refer so much to some object but rather to a situational context. *здесь* is used to bring an interlocutor into a physical, deictic locational frame of reference.

4. Object versus Context

More evidence of this dichotomy is found in the following, where *здесь* implies an actual reference to some object, and *тут* implies a contextual referent:

- (10) Я тут стихи написал.
I've written poems here (*tut*).
- (11) Я здесь стихи написал.
I've written poems here (*zdes'*).

In (10) above, there is no actual spatial referent. The utterance indicates the existence of poems in some situational context (perhaps a writer submitting some works to an editor)—What have I done? I've written some poems here—whereas (11) would focus on the physical presence of the poems in question: Where did I write? I've written some poems here.

5. Characterization of the Speaker

In addition to the actual spatial references that both *здесь* and *тут* present, there is yet another level that must be dealt with: characterization of the S_1 in a speech event. It becomes apparent that the choice of words on behalf of the speaker says as much about the speaker himself as it does about the physical reality surrounding him.

5.1. The Speaker's Emotional Closeness to the Environment

One of the most important things it relates is the closeness or personal attachment the speaker feels toward the place she describes as “here.” The more emotional attachment a person feels toward a given “here,” the more likely she is to use *тут* to refer to that “here.”

- (12) —Позвольте узнать... здесь живут Наи-Турс?
“Please let me know... do the Nai-Turs live here (*zdes'*)?”
—Никаких Турс тут нету. [1]
“There isn't any Turs here (*tut*).”

The use of *тут* here shows the emotional closeness felt by the speaker to the place she calls “here.” Using *здесь*—Никаких Турс здесь нету—would indicate a greater emotional distance between the speaker and her environment. This is most likely the reason why it is rather

offensive for an addressee to hear her home referred to as *здесь*, as if it were merely some public place, lacking the personal intimacy of *тут*.

Conversely, when a lack of an emotional attachment is expressed, *здесь* is used. In the following example taken from Bulgakov's *Belaia Gvardia*, the location is a morgue:

- (13) —Нам нужно найти убитого... *здесь* он, вероятно?
 “We need to find the deceased... He’s probably here (*zdes’*), right?”
 —...А где же профессор?...
 “But where’s the professor?”
 —Они *здесь*, только они заняты...
 “They’re here (*zdes’*), but they’re busy.”

Here it is unlikely that the speakers would feel any closeness toward the morgue, and this is reflected through their use of the word *здесь*. It puts some emotional distance between them and their deictic “here.” Such a choice to reflect intimacy or the lack thereof is also related to the question of style.

6. Style

The choice of *тут* over *здесь* is often a stylistic variant. Witness the following question asked by a patron of a hotel to a clerk in that hotel:

- (14) Какое *здесь* напряжение?
 What’s the voltage here (*zdes’*)?
 (15) *Какое *тут* напряжение?
 What’s the voltage here (*tut*)?

Utterance (15) is a stylistic violation. One would never use *тут* with a perfect stranger, just as one would never ask the following question of someone on the street:

- (16) *Где *тут* телефон?
 Where is a telephone here (*tut*)?

Such a question, which would normally be *Где здесь телефон? Gde zdes’ telefon?*, would, through the use of the word *тут*, imply greater intimacy between S_1 and S_2 . When one needs to indicate greater specificity (as *тут* was shown to demonstrate above), the word *ближайиции bližaiščii* (“nearest”) is added to convey the concept of immediacy. Likewise, directions given to a cab driver are indicative of this phenomenon:

- (17) Остановите *здесь*, пожалуйста... Вот как раз *тут*.
 Stop here (*zdes’*), please. Right here (*tut*).

Note that here we have an instance of the case mentioned above where *тут* cannot be used to describe a ‘here–now’ unless it has already been defined by some *здесь*.

7. Closeness between the Speakers

Through all of this, we see that usage of the word *тут* not only conveys the closeness of the speaker to the deictic “here,” but also the closeness of the S_1 to the S_2 in a given speech event. In this way, we see the stylistic effects of the choice of words to describe the deictic center.

- (18) Какое тут напряжение?
What's the voltage here (*tut*)?
- (19) Где тут телефон?
Where's the telephone here (*tut*)?

The above sentences (18) and (19) would express stylistically a level of intimacy impermissible in the earlier contexts. Here, such a question is most likely asked by someone on very close personal terms with their collocutor. These utterances show a higher level of intimacy between S_1 and S_2 . To wit, observe the following:

- (20) —Что вы тут делаете?
“What are you doing here (*tut*)?”
—Мы тут играем в карты.
“We're playing cards here (*tut*).”

Here a level of intimacy between the person asking the question, “What are you doing here?” and the person answering, “We're playing cards here,” is clearly expressed. This explains the contention of many Russian language texts that the word *тут* is just a more conversational variant of *здесь*. Indeed, *тут* is more conversational than *здесь* if for no other reason than the fact that one tends to speak conversationally with those with whom one is closest. Furthermore, this explains the fact that the word *тутошний* *tutošnii* “local” is far more colloquial than its near synonym, the neutral sounding *здешний* *zdešnii*. It only stands to reason, then, that usage of *тут* brings about a closing of the distance between S_1 and S_2 . Distance is often purposely increased or decreased between two people for politeness.

7.1. Inverting Intimacy: Taking Offense

People who speak to each other на ты (*na ty* “on thou,” i.e., using *ty*, the intimate second person pronoun) will switch to speaking на вы (*na vy* “on you,” i.e., using *vy*, the formal second person pronoun) and vice-versa when in a confrontational situational. In the same way, the stylistic usage of *тут* versus *здесь* can be adjusted to fit similar situations.

- (21) —Проша! Где вы?
“Prosha! Where are you?”
—Кто вам тут «Проша»?
“Who here (*tut*) is ‘Prosha’ to you?”

In the above example, we witness a violation of a politeness code on behalf of the first speaker. She has become too familiar with her conversant by addressing him as *Проша* *Prosha* instead of *Прохор* *Prokhor*, and he responds in kind by using *тут*. This is the process of style-matching at work. Had he answered “Кто вам здесь «Проша»?” *Kto vam ‘Prosha’?* it would have been as stylistically absurd as a comparable English retort, “Please go to hell, sir.” Here, the sudden closeness between S_1 and S_2 evidenced by the use of *тут* is in direct reaction to the disregard of standards of politeness on behalf of the first speaker addressing the second speaker by a familiar nickname.

8. Conclusion

As we have seen, the words *здесь* and *тут* operate on different levels. On the one hand, they describe an actual physical deictic location relative to the speaker; on the other, they

characterize the speaker who uses them in a given speech event. This is perhaps the most fascinating characteristic of the entire phenomenon that two words that seem so similar can convey quite different messages regarding the physical reality, the speaker's perception of emotional closeness, and stylistic effect. These apparently simple words are truly remarkable.

We have seen that on a purely physical deictic level, in addition to being synonymous with *здесь* in its opposition to *там* *там* "there," *тут* is often used to differentiate a 'here–there' distinction within a predefined *здесь* (see, Figure 1). Furthermore, *тут* is utilized to express both the S_1 's emotional closeness to the 'here–now' of a speech event, as well as their emotional closeness to the S_2 .

While this examination is by no means complete nor exhaustive, I trust that it has served, to some extent, to define both the problem of the words *здесь* and *тут*, to provide some clues, and to establish a direction for further study.

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