

The typology of demonstratives clarified: verbal demonstratives in Ju

Abstract category: oral/poster

The present paper is concerned with the rare category of verbal demonstratives, its exact definition, and the place it deserves in the typology of demonstratives.

In his typology of demonstratives in the world's languages, Diessel (1999) distinguishes four syntactic categories of demonstratives (pronominal, adnominal, adverbial and identificational demonstratives), none of which has verbal or predicative status. Dixon's (2003) typology of demonstratives, relatively close to Diessel's, does acknowledge the existence of a separate category of verbal demonstratives, but does not propose a clear and convincing definition of this category. His typologically extremely rare "verbal demonstrative" category indeed covers two different types of verbs expressing some degree of deixis: an action verb expressing manner deixis ('do thus, do like this') in Boumaa Fijian and Dyirbal, illustrated in (1) below, and the exophoric proximal and distal deictics in Jul'hoan (Ju, formerly known as Northern Khoisan), illustrated in (2).

(1) 'Do thus/like this' (abbreviations and glosses are the author's):

a. Boumaa Fijian

[o	'ae] _s	['eneii	tuu	gaa	'eneii] _{PREDICATE}	
ART	3SG	do.like.this	ASPECT	just	do.like.this	
'He did just like this.' [narrator mimes a spearing action]						(Dixon 2003:72)

b. Dyirbal

bala _o	baja!	ɲaja _A	[yalama-n	baja-n] _{PREDICATE}	
there:N	chew:1MP	1SG	do.like.this-NON.FUT	chew-NON-FUT	
'Chew it [the spear grass]! I'm chewing (it) like this.'					(Dixon 2003:102)

(2) Exophoric deictics (Jul'hoan):

a. jũ hẽ

person **PROX**
'This is a person.'

b. n!ðh tð'ǎ

orange **DIST**
'That is an orange.'

(Dickens 2005:49)

The present paper, on the basis of a thorough analysis of the available Ju data, in particular Dickens' (2005) description of Jul'hoan, aims at 1) showing that the unusual category of verbal demonstratives does exist, and defining its properties, 2) showing that verbal demonstratives are so far only attested in Ju languages (cf. Jul'hoan in (2)), while the Boumaa Fijian and Dyirbal verbs illustrated in (1) do not qualify as demonstratives. I further show, based on the predictions of a slightly updated version of Stassen's (1997) typology of intransitive predicates, that both the existence of verbal demonstratives and their rarity are typologically expected. Finally, I propose a modified version of the typology of demonstratives, which, at last, includes a well-defined category of verbal demonstratives, and also propose ways to identify verbal demonstratives in other languages, potentially including well-described languages where they might have gone unnoticed.

References:

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