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Edited by Stephen Levinson , Sarah Cutfield , Michael Dunn , Nick Enfield , Sergio Meira , David

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Frontmatter
More Information

Demonstratives in Cross-Linguistic Perspective

Demonstratives play a crucial role in the acquisition and use of language. Bringing together a team of leading scholars, this detailed study, the first of its kind, explores meaning and use across 15 typologically and geographically unrelated languages to find out what cross-linguistic comparisons and generalizations can be made, and how this might challenge current theory in linguistics, psychology, anthropology and philosophy. Using a shared experimental task, rounded out with studies of natural language use, specialists in each of the languages undertook extensive fieldwork for this comparative study of semantics and usage. An introduction summarizes the shared patterns and divergences in meaning and use that emerge.

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Language, culture and cognition

Editor Stephen C. Levinson, Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics

This series looks at the role of language in human cognition – language in both its universal, psychological aspects and its variable, cultural aspects. Studies focus on the relation between semantic and conceptual categories and processes, especially as these are illuminated by cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies, the study of language acquisition and conceptual development, and the study of the relation of speech production and comprehension to other kinds of behaviour in cultural context. Books come principally, though not exclusively, from research associated with the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, and in particular the Language and Cognition Group.

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Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

Contents

List of Figures *page* vii
List of Tables x
List of Contributors xiii
Preface xv

1 Introduction: Demonstratives: Patterns in Diversity 1
STEPHEN C. LEVINSON

2 The Demonstrative Questionnaire: "THIS" and "THAT" in Comparative Perspective 43
DAVID P. WILKINS

3 Lao Demonstrative Determiners *Nii*^{4} and *Nan*^{4}: An Intensionally Discrete Distinction for Extensionally Analogue Space 72
N. J. ENFIELD

4 Dalabon Exophoric Uses of Demonstratives 90
SARAH CUTFIELD

5 Brazilian Portuguese: Non-contrastive Exophoric Use of Demonstratives in the Spoken Language 116
SÉRGIO MEIRA AND RAQUEL GUIRARDELLO-DAMIAN

6 "See This Sitting One": Demonstratives and Deictic Classifiers in Goemai 134
BIRGIT HELLWIG

7 Tzeltal: The Demonstrative System 150
PENELOPE BROWN AND STEPHEN C. LEVINSON

8 Yucatec Demonstratives in Interaction: Spontaneous versus Elicited Data 176
JÜRGEN BOHNEMEYER

9 Lavukaleve: Exophoric Usage of Demonstratives 206
ANGELA TERRILL

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Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

10 Tiriyó: Non-contrastive Exophoric Uses of Demonstratives 222
SÉRGIO MEIRA

11 Trumai: Non-contrastive Exophoric Uses of Demonstratives 242
RAQUEL GUIRARDELLO-DAMIAN

12 Saliba-Logea: Exophoric Demonstratives 257
ANNA MARGETTS

13 Warao Demonstratives 282
STEFANIE HERRMANN

14 Chukchi: Non-contrastive Spatial Demonstrative Usage 303
MICHAEL J. DUNN

15 Yélî Dnye: Demonstratives in the Language of Rossel Island, Papua New Guinea 318
STEPHEN C. LEVINSON

16 Tidore: Non-contrastive Demonstratives 343
MIRIAM VAN STADEN

17 The Jahai Multi-term Demonstrative System: What's Spatial about It? 361
NICLAS BURENHULT

Index 381

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Edited by Stephen Levinson , Sarah Cutfield , Michael Dunn , Nick Enfield , Sergio Meira , David

Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

Figures

1.1 Idealized model of speaker-anchored radial spatial categories *page* 7
1.2 The distinct uses of demonstratives (after Levinson, 2004) 10
1.3 Cardioid shape of proximal space in some languages 20
1.4 Extensions of demonstratives in some European languages (in the scenes, S labels speaker, A addressee and X the referent where not clear) 21
1.5 Some two-term oppositions in this book 22
1.6 Unmarked versus marked oppositions in Yélî Dnye demonstratives 24
1.7 Three ways in which 'medial' terms may actually be unmarked terms (dotted extensions show areas where a neutral functions like a medial because it is not pre-empted by other terms) 25
1.8 Sketch of the core proximity oppositions in nominal demonstratives in the 15 languages (N = Neutral or unmarked, Far is far distal, S&A is a joint speaker-addressee anchor) 26
1.9 Sketch of Jahai notion of 'exterior' space 28
1.10 The nominal systems in this book laid out as a tree of increasing semantic complexity (S-Prox = speaker-based proximal term, S-Dist = speaker-based distal term, S-Far = speaker far-distal term, N = neutral term unmarked for proximity, A-Prox = addressee-based proximal, S&A-Prox/Dist = speaker and addressee based proximal/distal) 36
3.1 Two scenes with no contrast between spacing of speaker, addressee, and referent, but with contrast in the status of the interactional space. (Dotted line represents interactionally defined 'engagement area') 82
3.2 Hypothetical scenario, with speaker (stall attendant) and addressee (customer) on either side of a market stall table, both contained within the space defined by the market stall. Division of HERE-space between speaker and referent is possible, and

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Edited by Stephen Levinson , Sarah Cutfield , Michael Dunn , Nick Enfield , Sergio Meira , David

Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

given accessibility to addressee of the relevant information, *nan*[4] may be used. 85
3.3 Scenario from video recording (Enfield, 2003a), with speaker (stall attendant) at one market table, and addressee (older woman) at another market stall some 15 metres away. While division of HERE-space between speaker and referent is possible, the information relevant for the speaker's having made such a division (e.g. due to interactional dynamics) is not accessible to addressee – thus, due to the principle of 'recipient design' (see text), *nan*[4] may not be used. 86
4.1 Approximate boundaries of languages of the Top End of the Northern Territory (based on Harvey, 2009) 93
4.2 Depiction of scene 9, when the speaker's here-space equates to speaker-addressee shared space and includes the speaker, addressee and the referent 101
4.3 Arrangement of speaker and two or three referents in table-top space 110
5.1 Areas covered by *esse* and *aquele* (speaker and addressee relatively far from each other) 127
5.2 Areas covered by *esse* and *aquele* (speaker and addressee relatively near) 128
5.3 Areas covered by *esse* and *aquele* (speaker and addressee relatively near) 129
7.1 Demonstratives used for three objects on a table, all within speaker's reach 165
7.2 Demonstrative and directionals in time reference 172
8.1 Demonstrative scenes 13 and 16 191
8.2 Demonstrative scenes 9 and 12 191
8.3 Accessibility in the demonstrative scenes 195
8.4 Demonstrative scene 11 196
8.5 Anchoring and attention calling in Yucatec spatial deictics 198
10.1 Oppositions in Tiriyó third-person pronouns (inanimate forms only for convenience) 238
12.1 Circle schema of results presented in Table 12.5 273
13.1 Scenes where no demonstrative pronoun was used 289
14.1 The exophoric demonstratives in Chukchi along a proximal–distal cline 314
15.1 Demonstratives used (with pronoun *n:ii*) for *single* objects on a table 323
15.2 Demonstratives used (with pronoun *n:ii*) for *two* objects on a table 323

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978-1-108-42428-8 — Demonstratives in Cross-Linguistic Perspective
Edited by Stephen Levinson , Sarah Cutfield , Michael Dunn , Nick Enfield , Sergio Meira , David

Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

15.3 Demonstratives used (with pronoun *n:ii*) for *three* objects on a table 323
15.4 When addressee is opposite speaker 324
15.5 The three dimensions of Yélî Dnye deictic determiners 325
15.6 Unmarked vs marked oppositions in the speaker-oriented series 328
15.7 Contrastive use of demonstratives (numerals indicate order of mention) 335
16.1 Simplistic analysis of *ta* 346
16.2 Royal up/down on Tidore. All objects or movements located in the direction of the sultan's palace are 'up' 347
16.3 Royal up/down on Tidore. All movements and objects towards the port to Ternate are 'down' 347
16.4 Going to the market 349
16.5 Tidore region 350
16.6 Use of demonstratives in geographical and interactional space 354
16.7 *Re, ge* and *ta* in interactional space 356
16.8 A dog trotting off into geographical space 359
17.1 Scenes 1, 3, 6, and 11: Speaker-anchored exterior acceptable. The added arrow indicates the required position of the referent, if different from that indicated in the questionnaire 373
17.2 Scenes 2, 4, 5, 10, and 18: Addressee-anchored exterior acceptable. The added arrow indicates the required position of the referent, if different from that indicated in the questionnaire 374

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978-1-108-42428-8 — Demonstratives in Cross-Linguistic Perspective
Edited by Stephen Levinson , Sarah Cutfield , Michael Dunn , Nick Enfield , Sergio Meira , David

Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

Tables

1.1 The languages surveyed in this volume *page* 13
1.2 Numbers of deictic distinctions versus numbers of terms in pronominal/adnominal demonstratives in the languages in this volume 17
1.3 A typical paradigm mismatch 18
1.4 Major types of spatial distinction in the nominal demonstratives of the 15 languages, where 1 = attested 23
1.5 Semantic parameters involved in the 'design space' of demonstrative oppositions 35
1.6 Generalizations about demonstrative systems: Hypotheses based on this book 37
2.1 Visibility parameters 54
2.2 Three two-term ('speaker-anchored') demonstrative systems compared: Proximal and distal terms in English, Ewe, and Italian 56
2.3 Brazilian Portuguese 57
2.4 Turkish 58
2.5 Japanese 59
3.1 Distinguishing properties of Lao demonstratives 75
3.2 Distribution of the Lao demonstrative determiners *nii*^{4} and *nan*^{4} according to native-speaker judgements in response to the questionnaire 78
4.1 Dalabon demonstratives used in non-contrastive exophoric reference 94
4.2 Distribution by scene (Wilkins, 1999a) of the spatially specific Dalabon demonstratives 99
4.3 Contrastive uses of Dalabon demonstratives in table-top space 111
4.4 Spatial pre-emptive heuristics in the Dalabon demonstrative paradigm 113
5.1 Written Portuguese demonstratives (after Cunha and Cintra, 1984: 328) 118

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CAMBRIDGE

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978-1-108-42428-8 — Demonstratives in Cross-Linguistic Perspective
Edited by Stephen Levinson , Sarah Cutfield , Michael Dunn , Nick Enfield , Sergio Meira , David

Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

5.2 Spoken Brazilian Portuguese demonstratives (based on Pavani, 1987; Castilho, 1993) 120
5.3 Demonstratives in combination with place adverbs (singular forms only) 121
5.4 Results of the demonstrative questionnaire (total of six consulted speakers) 124
5.5 Proposed analysis of the demonstrative system (singular forms only) 131
6.1 The demonstrative word 136
6.2 The structure of the noun phrase 137
6.3 Results of the Demonstrative Questionnaire (five consulted speakers) 140
6.4 Classifiers and their semantics 145
6.5 The anaphor and the demonstratives 148
7.1 Basic oppositions in Tenejapan Tzeltal demonstratives 153
7.2 Initial and terminal deictic pairings in Tenejapan Tzeltal 160
7.3 Results of the exophoric elicitation task for Tzeltal 163
8.1 Synopsis of Yucatecan spatial indexicals (based on Hanks, 1990: 18–19) 180
8.2 The semantics of the space-deictic determiners and adverbs of Yucatec according to Hanks (1990) 185
9.1 1st/2nd person personal pronouns 208
9.2 3rd person demonstrative pronoun ‘he/she/it’ 208
9.3 3rd person demonstrative pronoun ‘the other one’. The paradigm is defective. 209
9.4 Demonstrative modifier ‘this’ 209
9.5 Possible analysis of exophoric demonstratives 212
9.6 Summary of results of the exophoric demonstratives questionnaire for Lavukaleve (cited in neuter sg forms) 214
9.7 Functions of exophoric demonstratives 220
10.1 Tiriyó third-person pronouns (after Meira, 1999a: 154) 224
10.2 Results of the demonstrative questionnaire (total of four consulted speakers) 227
10.3 The Tiriyó system of third-person pronouns: A revised version 239
11.1 Demonstrative pronouns (previous studies) 244
11.2 Demonstrative modifiers (previous studies) 244
11.3 Place adverbs and demonstratives (previous studies) 245
11.4 Results of the elicitation conducted with the Wilkins (1999) Demonstrative Questionnaire 249
11.5 Demonstrative pronouns 253
11.6 Demonstrative modifiers 254
11.7 Place adverbs 254

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42428-8 — Demonstratives in Cross-Linguistic Perspective
Edited by Stephen Levinson , Sarah Cutfield , Michael Dunn , Nick Enfield , Sergio Meira , David

Wilkins
Frontmatter
More Information

12.1 Three-way deictic contrast across classes of spatially deictic terms 258
12.2 Buhutu spatial deictics (adapted from Cooper, 1992: 96) 259
12.3 Three-way contrast across classes of spatial deictics 260
12.4 Distribution of =*ne* and =*wa* according to discourse mode 266
12.5 Results of the demonstrative questionnaire (seven speakers) 272
13.1 Barral's person-oriented system 285
13.2 Romero-Figeroa's (1997) system 286
13.3 Combinability of demonstrative stems 287
13.4 Usage of the demonstrative pronouns in the questionnaire (consulted speakers) 290
13.5 Metalinguistic commentary and ideal definitions given by consultants 295
13.6 Warao demonstrative forms and definitions 299
13.7 Language-specific variables for Warao demonstratives 299
13.8 Warao demonstratives in participant and distance anchoring 300
14.1 Demonstrative stems 304
14.2 Demonstrative stems and the corresponding demonstrative adverbs 306
14.3 The preferred and alternative (bracketed) demonstratives at different ranges from speaker and addressee 311
15.1 An (inaccurate) first approximation: The core set of spatial demonstratives 322
15.2 Demonstrative pronouns and corresponding adverbs, according to the first approximation in Table 15.1 322
15.3 Henderson's (1995: 46) analysis of the deictics 324
15.4 Yélî Dnye demonstratives used in the scenes in the Wilkins (1999) Demonstrative Questionnaire 326
15.5 Another arrangement of Yélî Dnye demonstratives 327
15.6 Basic collocations with gesture 333
15.7 Conditions on the deictic center's attention with respect to referent 334
15.8 Epistemic certainty 334
15.9 Adverbial (manner) uses of demonstratives 335
15.10 Ordered slots in the pre-verbal nucleus 337
16.1 Demonstratives in Tidore 344
16.2 Application of scenes from the Wilkins questionnaire 353
17.1 The Jahai demonstrative system 368

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More Information

Preface

This book has had a long incubation. On the basis of a field task designed by David Wilkins, published here as Chapter 2, successive generations of linguistic fieldworkers at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics have contributed chapters to this volume. Editorial teams have also changed, as earlier editors moved on to other jobs and projects. The first editorial team consisted of Michael Dunn and Sérgio Meira, Sara Cutfield was then brought in by Nick Enfield both to contribute and to edit the newer chapters, and finally, I myself took over to see the volume through with the help of Edith Sjoerdsma and Ludy Cilissen. I have tried to provide a worthy introduction to what is a unique collection of chapters exploring the semantic and pragmatic typology of this topic, which has played a central role in linguistic and philosophical theory, and is now being picked up as an important issue in the neurosciences.

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