

Demonstratives, articles and topic markers in the Yi group[☆]

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Abstract

In Weining Neasu (a Burmese-Lolo language from South-West China), the system of demonstratives, articles and topic marking may be represented as follows (Fig. 1):

	<i>PROXIMAL</i>	<i>MEDIAL</i>	<i>DISTAL</i>
<i>Demonstratives</i>	<i>t^ha⁵⁵</i>	<i>na⁵⁵</i>	<i>ga⁵⁵</i>
<i>Definite articles</i>	<i>t^hɔ³³</i>		<i>gɔ⁵⁵</i>
<i>Topic marking</i>		<i>nɔ³³</i>	

Fig. 1. Demonstratives, articles and topic marking in Weining Neasu.

There are three properties of this system which I want to address in this paper. First, the **a⁵⁵*-set requires a classifier when determining a noun, while the **ɔ³³*-set forbids classifiers. Second, the **a⁵⁵*-determiners have a tendency to mark noun phrases of a relatively high activation state (in the sense of Chafe, Wallace L., 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and point of view. In: Li, Charles N. (Ed.), *Subject and Topic*. Academic Press, New York, pp. 25–55; Chafe, Wallace L., 1987. Cognitive constraints on information flow. In: Tomlin, Russell (Ed.), *Coherence and Grounding in Discourse*. Typological Studies in Language, Vol. XI. Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 21–51; Ariel, Mira, 1990. *Accessing Noun-Phrase Antecedents*. Routledge, London), while the **ɔ³³*-determiners are more often associated with noun phrases of relatively lower activation. Third, **a⁵⁵*-noun phrases occur more often in focus position, while **ɔ³³*-noun

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