

Deictic Features of Demonstratives: A Typological Survey with Special Reference to the Miao Group

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1. INTRODUCTION

Previous typology-minded elaborations on demonstrative pronouns include the works of Fillmore (1982), Anderson and Keenan (1985), Diessel (1997, 1999a, 1999b), and Dixon (2003). Diessel was probably the first to systematically discriminate semantically between deictic features and qualitative non-deictic attributes such as animacy, gender, and number. He characterized *deictic features* as properties “which indicate the location of the referent in the speech situation” (1999b:3) and identified five deictic exponents in his sample of 85 languages: distance, visibility, elevation, geography, and movement (p. 51).

The present article started as a field report on adnominal demonstratives in the Miao Group (see Appendix A). As the Miao data exhibit a wide range of deictic features, the focus quickly shifted to conceptual thinking, providing the backbone for a taxonomy of deictic features. While previous cross-linguistic studies (Diessel 1999b; Dixon 2003) attempted to account for demonstratives as a word category, the current inquiry narrows the focus to deictic features encoded in demonstratives. The aim is therefore not to replace earlier typologies but to examine a subparameter, namely the typology of deictic features, and to greatly augment the number of reported deictic features. The findings are based on a cartography of the communication space which defines the notions of deixis and deictic feature in the most inclusive way. The

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