Deixis in Taba

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This paper provides a general description of the demonstrative system in Taba, a South Halmahera language spoken in North Maluku province, Indonesia. To describe Taba demonstratives, however, we first need to ask 'what are the demonstratives?' For many languages the answer to this question would probably be self-evident, but this is not the case in Taba, because the morphological paradigm of Taba demonstratives is in a sense defective and thus partially obscures one of the demonstratives from view.

What might be called the 'core demonstratives' are based on a proximal root *ne* and a distal root which can take either of the forms *da* or *dia*. These form a morphological paradigm organised as in table one below.

		ne (≈ 'this') Proximal	*da / dia* (≈ 'that') Distal
root forms (adnominal use)		*ne*	*da / dia*
demonstrative pronouns	sg.	*ine*	*idia*
	pl.	*sine*	*sidia*
locative nouns ('here' and 'there')		*ane*	*adia*
similative nouns (distinguished according to speech level)	*biasa* 'normal'	*tane*	*tadia*
	alus 'refined'	*tadine*	*taddia*
		hatadine	*hatadia*
	kasar 'coarse'	*dodine*	*dodia*

Table 1. Taba 'core demonstrative' paradigm

Although the form *ya* does not fit into the morphological paradigm illustrated above, it does seem to form a syntactic paradigm with the demonstrative roots as illustrated in the examples below.

(1) *Kso*   *pungan*   *um*   *li*   ***ne***
     k=so   pungan   um   li   ne
     1sg=climb   tree   house   LOC   PROX
     'I'm climbing this tree by the house.'

(2) *Kso   pungan   um   li   **dia***
k=so   pungan   um   li   dia
1sg=climb tree   house LOC   DIST
'I'm climbing that tree by the house.'

(3) *Kso   pungan   um   li   **ya***
k=so   pungan   um   li   ya
1sg=climb tree   house LOC   'up' / 'remember'
'I'm climbing the tree by the house (you should remember which one).'

In the paper I will argue that *ya* is indeed a real demonstrative. It is of the demonstrative types labeled as 'recognitional' by Himmelmann (1996). Recognitional demostratives point to a category of referents that a speaker believes the addressee shares common knowledge of, as with *that* in English when used in utterances like 'You remember that guy we spoke to yesterday'. I argue that *ya* does not occur within the morphological demonstrative paradigm because its meaning is incompatible with the functions of the paradigm.

Traditional deictic categories to have been recognised in the linguistic literature are 'person deixis', 'place deixis', and 'time deixis'. In recent years, other categories such as 'discourse deixis' and 'social deixis' have been added to this list. (See, eg. Levinson's 1983 discussion of deixis). The Taba data to be addressed in this paper (along with data from other languages) suggests that a further type of deixis might profitably be added to this list: that which we might call 'mental deixis'.

References

Himmelmann, Nikolaus, 1996. 'Demonstratives in narrative discourse: a taxonomy of universal uses', in Barbara Fox, ed. *Studies in Anaphora*, 205-254. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Levinson, Stephen, 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.