From recognitional function to topicalization and pragmatic backgrounding: discourse functions of demonstratives in Mano, Southern Mande

Roadmap

1. Mano demonstrative system, esp. recognitional function of demonstratives ā and wē
2. Sentence-final usage of markers ā and wē and information structure
3. Markers ā and wē as markers of subordination
4. Demonstratives ā and wē = markers of “cognitive acces”?

- Methodological note: mostly natural examples, conversations, narratives, etc., obtained in 14 months of fieldwork (2009-2018)
- Theoretical note: approach to deixis beyond spatiality (Hanks 2005, 2011; Enfield 2003; Jarbou 2010, inter alia; for a recent overview, see Peeters & Özyürek 2016), deixis as marking accessibility (Hanks 2011, Peeters & Özyürek 2016); cognitive access not as metaphorical extension (à-la Anderson & Keenan 1985), but as one of contingent dimensions of access.

1. Mano demonstrative system

tō: proximal, typically visible (to both interlocutors); discourse-new
dī: distal; discourse-new
kīlā ~ kīlē: anaphoric
wē: “proximal” topicalizer/demonstrative; discourse-old. When adnominal, glossed DEM, when sentence-final, glossed TOP.
ā: “distal” topicalizer/demonstrative; discourse-old. When adnominal, glossed DEM, when sentence-final, glossed TOP.

1.1. tō

tō: proximal, often visible (to both interlocutors); discourse-new (first mention);
low frequency, not attested in Liberian dialects

(1) 1SG teeth DEM.PROX 3SG.IPFV 1SG ache:IPFV

‘This tooth hurts.’ (elicited)
‘Why did this problem do so that I didn’t go (to the pilgrimage)?’

1.2. diỉ

diỉ: distal; discourse-new (first mention)

relatively rare

FOC (lè, té, floating high tone) + diỉ (diỉ ‘there’ + ā ‘TOP’)

‘That big monster over there (in the forest), we are all going to see it.’

1.3. kíltā ~ kíltē

anaphoric

FOC (lè, té, floating high tone) (+ reflexive pronoun) + kíltā ~ kíltē (kíltī ‘like this’ + ā or bē ‘TOP’)

‘The Chinese guy who caught the wicked spirit in question, they say the chinese guy, is not going to live long (lit.: his living is not going to stay)’.

1.4. ā and wē

all major functions of demonstratives, in many functions interchangeable
ā ~ yā ~ yāā (+ assimilated variants: ģ, ĝ, ĝ̄, ġ̄, ĝ̄̄)

Exophoric:
(6) yíí yā?
   water DEM
   ‘(Speaker A: Go fetch some water!) Speaker B: That water? (invisible, in a different room)’

(7) bà lè wē, léè lō wē
   2SG.POSS place DEM 3SG.IPFV go:IPFV DEM
   ‘THIS field of yours, here it goes’.

(8) mī téā à gā wáá kā.
   person DEM 3SG death NEG>COP>3SG with
   ‘That person, he is not dead.’

In all cases, the referent is familiar, cognitively available, and/or topical.

Reference-tracking:
(9) Yèlè gbāā néfú bē e go gbāā lūū ŋēŋēɨpīé...
   then now child DEM 3SG.PST leave now bushes evening
   'Now this child went to the field in the evening...’

(10) bèlè lāā zèi, à léị áà lò
    rope 3SG.EXI>3SG back 3SG end 3SG.JNT go:JNT
    áà gbụ sélè sálápeëlè yā yí.
    3SG.JNT gather village seven DEM in
   'The rope is around his waist, its ends reach those seven villages.’

Discourse-referential:
(11) Pià bē yìbòayí lé í nāá í pē
    story DEM meaning 3SG.EXI 2SG.CONJ want:COND.COND 2SG.CONJ thing
    vàò sélbā ŋ à à liè lèè pē tò à yí m̀.
    big get TOP 3SG end 3SG.IPFV finish.IPFV stay:NMLZ 3SG in on
   'The meaning of this story is: if you want to get a lot of things, you end up losing.'

Cataphora:
(12) Gèwùlū wē e kē gā dò kā lé à lēè
    Gewulu DEM 3SG.PST do man INDEF with FOC 3SG mother
    và dàā ọ gā.
    and father 3SG.PST die
   'This Gewulu was a man whose mother and father died.'
Recognitional:

(13)  Kɛ̀  ékɛ̀  ó  nū  à  gḕ  à  lè̀
      for.the.sake.of  better.not.to  3PL.CONJ  come  3SG  say  3SG  ADR
      nū  yɔ̄  bɛ̀  ká  nū  pɛ̀  yèbɛ̀  ká  ē  wàà.
      come  wine  DEM  with  come  thing  DEM  with  3SG.PST  enter
      ‘So that people don’t come saying: “Bring this wine, bring this thing”, he ran away.’

(14)  tôò  yā,  kòò  lō  bù  yā  mé-è.
      tomorrow  DEM  1PL.IPfv  go:IPfv  rice:FOC  DEM  beat-GER
      ‘That tomorrow, we will beat that rice.’

       ‘A: That guy that bothers me, who went and sat at the base Goesiagbeela, he called me.’

(15).2. B.:  i dàà?
       ‘B.: your father?’

       ‘I say: That guy that bothers me, the son of Ko’

(15).4. B.:  àhá, méì
       ‘B.: aha, that one’

(15).5. A.:  ūjɛ̀
       ‘A: m-hm’

2. Sentence-final usage of markers ā and wē and information structure
Four-term contrast between lack of final marker, ā, wē (not bē!), and wē: “existential topic”,
probably deriving from bē, marker of existential clauses:

(16)  à  dē  lē  bē
      3SG  husband  COP  EXI
      ‘She is married (lit.: her husband exists).’

a) Focus constructions
Typically (always?) with ā.

(17).1 -  mī  wēè  lē  ē  nū?
       person  how.much  FOC  3SG.PST  come
       ‘How many people came?’

(17).2 -  ō  yààkā  lē  ō  nū  ā
       3PL  three  FOC  3SG.PST  come  TOP
       ‘THREE PEOPLE came.’ (elicited)

b) Deictic usage
Typically, with wē, sometimes with ā.
(18)  sɔ̀làsí vọ wàà nù, wàà kù wë
soldier PL 3PL.PRF come 3PL.PRF>3SG catch TOP.PROX
‘(Describing a picture in Family Problem Picture Task): here (in the picture) the soldiers came, they caught him.’

(19) Wàlà wè gë è nù wë
God speech COP.DEICT 3SG.SBJV come:IPFV TOP.PROX
‘Here is the word of God that is coming’

Proximal (wë) vs distal (ā) (elicitation):
(20) kà gbùò lè dɔá yà
house big 3SG.EXI put GER.with TOP
‘There is a big house (over there)’
(21) kà gbùò lè dɔá wë
house big 3SG.EXI put GER.with TOP.PROX
‘There is a big house (somewhere close to here)’

a) Ostensive usage: presentation of new / unexpected vs expected vs neutral information. (with deictic copula gë)

New:
(22) bùkpọ̀ŋ tɔ, àmọ̀ bòò gë ị kpàà wë
bare.rice DEM.PROX REF sauce:CS COP.DEICT 1SG.SBJV cook:IPFV TOP.EXI
‘This rice, here is the sauce I am cooking for it’ (elicited)

Mirative:
(23) à gë wë!
3SG COP.DEICT TOP.EXI
‘Here he is (finally)!’ (elicited)

(More or less) expected information:
(24) sùù wë gë wë
work DEM COP.DEICT TOP.PROX
‘(A contractual worker engaged in clearing a field is showing the result of his work to the master). Here is the work (we agreed upon).’ (elicited)

Neutral:
(25) Dìì dọ̀ọ̀ gë bù wélè bɔ̀ɔ dọ̀ọ̀ gë.
cow one COP.DEICT rice bone bag one COP.DEICT
‘Here is a cow and a bag of rice’
d) Other examples:

(26) mè  nè  pëttìënlèë  wè  ā  gèë  wè?
what  FOC  mask.sp  DEM  3SG.PST  say  TOP.EXI
‘What did the mask say (so importantly)?’

(27) nū  wè!
come  TOP.PROX
‘(A hostess informed her guest that she had put water on fire for her guest to take shower with. Now that the water for the shower is ready, she invites her guest to take a bath): Now you can come!’

A family of clause-final markers: wè is clearly deictic (indicative); wê is weirdly deictic because introduce new referents and are clearly not presupposing of existence (the contrary); and ā is used to frame a construction of focus.

3. Markers ā and wè as markers of subordination

Conditional (28), temporal (29), relative (30) clauses, other types of clauses where “dependent” clause is preposed – typically ā, but sometimes wè:

(28) ē  pā-á  lēë  néfú  dò  kò  mò  5
2PL.CONJ>3SG  touch:COND-COND  woman  go:IPFV  INDEF  hand  PP  TOP
wā  mè.
3PL.PRET>3SG  beat
‘If he touches a woman (they beat him)’

(29) yè  ŋ̄  mè  kē  gbìnīī  wè
when  2SG.PST  2SG  surface  make  heavy  TOP.PROX
mā  bēë  ŋ̄  lō  ī  mé  kē-è  gbìnīī
1SG.EMPH  also  1SG.IPFV  go:IPFV  surface  make-GER  heavy
‘If you honored me, I will also honor you.’

(30) [tā  pè  lē  à  mià  ni  wā  tó  ā]
plant  thing:CS  FOC  3SG  parents  PL  3PL.PST>3SG  leave  TOP
làá  yí  zë.
3SG.NEG>3SG  interior  kill
‘The plantation that his parents left (him), he does not clear it up’.

4. Summary and discussion: demonstratives ā and wè = topic markers?

• Demonstratives tóò and dîgà are used for a change in attention focus, to attract attention to a new referent. Often the referent is easily accessible: in case of tóò, it is typically visible to both interlocutors. Kílìà, kíliñë are used for reference-tracking.
• Demonstratives ā and wē are used if the referent is already somewhat known: e.g., with reference to objects invisible to at least one interlocutor, which requires that the referent be cognitively accessible. Therefore, the distinction between exophoric and endophoric is blurred (note also Hanks 2011). These markers are also extremely common in all types of endophoric usage, including recognitional.

• Sentence-final marker wē: deictic usage, although not admoninal: pointing to a situation? Large, rather than laser point? Both wē and ā: typically imply topicality, accessibility, backgroundedness of the referent and are contrasted to wē which is used to assert the existence of the referent at the same time as making the point (and therefore, used for new or unexpected referents).

• What are these sentence-final markers, syntactically? As a side note, it is not uncommon in Mano to have floating quantifiers: which are not used adnominally, but still have reference over a particular NP (=> a floating demonstrative?), but also quantifiers that grammaticalize into a sort of discourse particle). See Khachaturyan (2012).

• Finally, as markers of dependent clauses, wē and ā grammaticalize into topic markers of a sort. In is not uncommon for topic markers to mark dependent clauses: see Marchese (1977), Haiman (1978) and Bickel (1993), inter alia. Topic marking of dependent clauses is related to the fact that they tend to express background information, while main clauses express new information (Tomlin 1995). (On an analysis of relative clauses in Mano as topics, see Khachaturyan 2017.)

• Can it be possible to talk about one invariant function -- cognitive accessibility (with ostensiveness, anaphora or topicality overtones)?

References


Marchese, L. 1977. Subordinate clauses as topics in Godie. In M. Mould and T. J. Hinnebusch (Eds.), *Papers from the eighth conference on African linguistics*, Los Angeles.
