Demonstratives and non-embedded nominalisations in the Papuan languages of south-east Indonesia

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In the handbooks, demonstratives are invariably discussed as part of entity-referring expressions used to locate referents in physical space and/ or a discourse-based linguistic context (see, e.g., 'D-Elementen', Himmelmann 1997; demonstrative determiners, Diessel 1999; 'nominal demonstratives': Dixon 2003). They are prototypically seen as elements of the nominal domain, either pronominal, substituting for an NP, and/or adnominal, accompanying a noun. In this paper, we discuss a phenomenon which has gone untreated in the typological literature, the use of demonstratives in non-embedded nominalised clauses in the Papuan languages of south-east Indonesia, members of the so-called Timor-Alor-Pantar (TAP) family.

Non-embedded nominalizations (Matisoff 1972; also variously referred to as "main-clause" or "stand-alone" nominalizations) are nominalised clauses which are not syntactically or functionally an element of any higher "matrix" clause, but which function as complete and independent utterances. They are best-known from discussions of Tibeto-Burman languages (e.g., Bickel 1999; Hargreaves 1991: 35–40; Matisoff 1972; Noonan 1997). In the Dolakha Newar example in (1) we see that the final verb is marked with the nominaliser –*e*, but the sentence is a stand-alone utterance, not an embedded structure in a matrix clause.

Dolakha Newar (Genetti 2007:403)

1. *bā tir-i mal-a haN-a le* father put.tika-INF must-3PST say-NMZ PRT 'Father, (they) say you must put on a *tika*.'

Rather than a single dedicated nominalising morpheme being used to create a non-embedded nominalised clause, in the TAP languages demonstratives are used for this purpose. The choice of the demonstrative to nominalise a clause imposes certain temporal and/or epistemic readings on the proposition denoted by the nominalised clause. For instance, the TAP language Adang has five spatial demonstratives given in Table 1. Three distances are differentiated: proximal (close to speaker), medial (close to addressee) and distal (away from speaker and addressee). Distal demonstratives also distinguish elevation relative to the speaker; the referent of the (NP with) demonstrative may be of equal, higher or lower elevation than the speaker.

hɔʔɔ	PROX
ho	MED
hɛmɔ	DIST.LEVEL
hɛtɔ	DIST.HIGH
hɛpɔ	DIST.LOW

Table 1: Adang spatial demonstratives

In non-embedded nominalisations, the choice of demonstratives results in different pragmatic meanings. Clause-final hp?p PROX denotes at event that is happening right here near the speaker, but pragmatically also refers to a proposition which the speaker knows to be true and have evidence for. In (2) the speaker asserts that the event of the dog eating oranges is about to happen in his vicinity with hp?p. A non-embedded nominalisation with the ho MED refers to an event that orientated to the addressee. The NEN in (3) could be uttered in the context of the speaker seeing a dog eating oranges which are intended for or served to the addressee. The demonstrative ho serves to draw the addressee's attention to a proposition, and suggest that it is or that it should be known to them, i.e. that the addressee has the potential to have knowledge of the described event.

- Bεl mud ?a-dε eham hɔ?ɔ!
 dog orange 3-eat INCH PROX
 ' A dog is/was about to eat an orange right here {it's true}.'
- 3. Bel mud ?a-de=eh ho! dog orange 3-eat=prog MED 'A dog is eating oranges there (close to you).'

We explore the temporal and epistemic functions of demonstratives in non-embedded nominalisations using data from Bunaq (Timor), Blagar (Pura Straits) and Abui (Alor) in addition to Adang. We show how different distance-based semantics in the demonstrative systems give rise to different tempo-epistemic meanings across these languages.