

## Chapter 2

# Demonstratives in Chiyao: An analysis of their form, distribution and functions

Julius Taji


University of Dar es Salaam

This chapter aims to provide a description of Chiyao demonstratives with a particular focus on their form, distribution, and functions. It is shown that, morphologically, the Chiyao demonstrative consists of an initial element, which is always the vowel *a-*, followed by an agreement marker, and ends with a final element which changes according to the location of the referent in relation to the speaker or hearer. In cases of demonstrative doubling, the post-nominal demonstrative drops the initial vowel. Thus, it is proposed that the initial vowel in the Chiyao demonstrative is optional. Within the broader classification of demonstratives in Bantu languages, the Chiyao demonstratives appear in four main types. These include pronominal demonstratives, which are used as independent pronouns; adnominal demonstratives, which modify nouns; adverbial demonstratives, which modify verbs and locative nouns; and finally, identificational demonstratives, which occur in copula and non-verbal clauses. With regard to their distribution, it is established that the Chiyao demonstrative can occur either post-nominally, or in both pre-nominal and post-nominal positions simultaneously. Finally, it is shown that demonstratives serve various grammatical and communicative functions, including expressing the location of an entity in relation to interlocutors, showing emphasis, indicating definiteness, and encoding anaphoric reference. These findings contribute to our further understanding of the behavior of demonstratives in Bantu languages and inform future descriptive and typological works in this area.

## 1 Introduction

Studies across Bantu languages have generally indicated that demonstratives perform spatial-deictic roles referring to entities in three main dimensions, namely



Julius Taji. 2024. Demonstratives in Chiyao: An analysis of their form, distribution and functions. In Hannah Gibson, Rozenn Guérois, Gastor Mapunda & Lutz Marten (eds.), *Morphosyntactic variation in East African Bantu languages: Descriptive and comparative approaches*, 17–41. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10663763 

proximal (near the speaker), non-proximal or medial (near the addressee), and distal (distant from the speaker or addressee) (Nicolle 2007a,b, Asimwe 2014). Despite this uniformity in the dimensions reflected by demonstratives, there is significant variation among Bantu languages in terms of syntactic ordering of demonstratives within the NP and the functions they serve, in addition to their spatial-deictic uses. For example, with regard to syntactic ordering, Swahili allows both pre-nominal and post-nominal demonstratives as shown in (1).<sup>1</sup>

(1) Swahili

- a. **m-geni yule**      a-li-fika      mapema  
1-visitor 1.DEM.DIST SM1-PST-arrive early  
'That visitor arrived early.'
- b. **yule**      **m-geni** a-li-fika      mapema  
1.DEM.DIST 1-visitor SM1-PST-arrive early  
'That visitor arrived early.'

In contrast to Swahili, Sukuma allows only post-nominal demonstratives (2). Placing the demonstrative before the head noun in Sukuma is ungrammatical, as shown in (3).

(2) Sukuma (Nyanda p.c.)

- a. **u-ng'w-ana uyu**      a-tog-ilwe      βu-gali  
PPX-1-child DEM.PROX SM1-like-PFV 14-ugali  
'This child likes ugali.'
- b. **a-ma-shamba ayo**      ga-lim-ilwe  
PPX-6-farm DEM.NON\_PROX SM6-cultivate-PFV  
'Those farms have been cultivated.'

(3) Sukuma (Nyanda p.c.)

- a. \* **uyu**      **u-ng'w-ana** a-tog-ilwe      βu-gali  
DEM.PROX PPX-1-child SM1-like-PFV 14-ugali  
Int: 'This child likes ugali.'
- b. \* **ayo**      **a-ma-shamba** ga-lim-ilwe  
DEM.NON\_PROX PPX-6-farm SM6-cultivate-PFV  
Int: 'Those farms have been cultivated.'

---

<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all Swahili examples are from the author as a native speaker.

A similar pattern is attested in Makhuwa where demonstratives occur after the head nouns they modify in their canonical adnominal function as illustrated in (4) below.

(4) Makhuwa (van der Wal 2010: 184)

- a. mwálpwá **olé**                      o-hoó-wa  
 1.dog      1.DEM.NON\_PROX SM1-PERF.DJ-come  
 ‘The/that dog came.’
- b. ki-kúm-ih-é-ni                      nipúró **nna**                      vá  
 1SG.OM-exist-CAUS-OPT-PLA 5.place 5.DEM.PROX 16.DEM.PROX  
 ‘Get me out of this place.’

Makonde exhibits a more free order as it permits multiple occurrence of demonstratives in both pre-nominal and post-nominal positions simultaneously, as in (5) below. As it will be revealed in the subsequent sections, several other languages of southern Tanzania also display this order.

(5) Makonde (Makanjila 2019: 171)

- a-yu**      mu-ana **a-yu**      a-ka-pilikan-a                      **a-yu**  
 DEM.PROX 1-child    DEM.PROX SM1-NEG-payheed-FV DEM.PROX  
 ‘This child is stubborn.’

In view of the variation displayed by demonstratives across Bantu, this chapter provides a description of demonstratives in Chiyao, a Bantu language of southern Tanzania, with a focus on their forms, syntactic distribution, and functions.

The Chiyao data in this paper are based on the Masasi dialect and come from two main sources, namely grammaticality judgments and oral narratives. Through grammaticality judgments, a list of constructions with demonstratives in different orders was provided to ten native speakers of Chiyao who then gave feedback on whether they were acceptable or not. As for oral narratives, constructions with demonstratives were extracted from three traditional stories narrated by three different native speakers of Chiyao. The constructions were then analyzed to determine the form, distribution and function of demonstratives. Unless otherwise indicated, all data in this paper are from Chiyao.

The chapter proceeds as follows: §2 provides a brief account of the Chiyao language; §3 discusses the forms of the Chiyao demonstratives; §4 outlines the types of demonstratives; §5 presents the syntactic distribution of demonstratives; §6 focuses on the functions of demonstratives; and §7 provides a conclusion.

## 2 The Chiyao language

Chiyao is a cross-border Bantu language which is spoken in Southern Malawi, north-western Mozambique, and southern Tanzania. The language is also referred to as Ciyao (Ngunga 1997), Ciyawo (Dicks & Dollar 2010), and Yao (Whiteley 1966). According to Ngunga (2002), there are about three million Chiyao speakers residing in these three countries. A significant number of Chiyao speakers, mainly emigrants from Malawi, are also found in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The present study is based on the Tanzanian variety of Chiyao, which is mainly spoken in the southern regions of Ruvuma (Tunduru District), and Mtwara (Masasi District). The number of Chiyao speakers in Tanzania is estimated at 400,000 (Languages of Tanzania Project, 2009). Nurse & Philippson (1980) classified Chiyao under the Ruvuma Bantu branch of the Rufiji-Kilombero Bantu zone. In Guthrie's updated list by Maho (2009), the language is coded as P21 and is found in the Yao group, along with Mwera (Shimwela) P22, Makonde (Chimakonde) P23, Ndonde (P24), and Mavia (P25).

## 3 Forms of the Chiyao demonstrative

It has been argued that demonstratives in many Bantu languages start with the "initial element" or "initial vowel" (Wald 1973, Du Plessis 1978, Du Plessis & Visser 1992). The initial vowel may take various forms depending on the vowel of the agreement prefix, such as *a-*, *e-*, or *o-* (Visser 2008). However, across languages, not all demonstratives have an initial vowel (Asiimwe 2014). Asiimwe (2014), observed that in Runyankore-Rukiga, the initial vowel *a-* is realised in the proximal and medial demonstratives, but it is absent in the distal demonstratives (but see also Asiimwe (2024 [this volume])).

The situation in Chiyao seems to support the analysis that not all demonstratives take an initial vowel. There are cases where a demonstrative occurs without this initial vowel, notably when a demonstrative occurs as a circumdemonstrative as illustrated in (6) below where the post-nominal demonstrative form does not host the initial vowel *a-* (see also §5.3).

- (6) a. **ali**                      **lí-koswé lí**  
         5.DEM.PROX 5-rat        5.DEM.PROX  
         'This rat'
- b. **achíla**                **chi-téla chíla**  
         7.DEM.DIST 7-tree    7.DEM.DIST  
         'That tree (over there)'

Given this scenario, we can therefore posit that the demonstrative in Chiyao take different shapes depending on the noun class, as shown in Table 1.

As Table 1 below indicates, the proximal demonstrative optionally begins with *a-* and ends with *-u*, *-a*, or *-i*. The non-proximal demonstrative optionally begins with *a-* and ends with *-o*. The distal demonstrative optionally begins with *a-* and ends with *-la*. Generally, all demonstratives in Chiyao have an agreement marker which, as it is proposed here, can be regarded as a base, and a final element. The agreement marker and the final element change in response to noun class and deixis. Thus, the proximal demonstrative appears in the form (*a*)- + agreement marker + *-u/-a/-i* while the non-proximal demonstrative takes the form (*a*)- + agreement marker + *-o*. As for the distal demonstrative, the form is (*a*)- + agreement marker + *-la*. From a phonological point of view, it can be observed that proximal and non-proximal demonstratives take the form of (V)C(C)V while distal demonstratives take the form of (V)CVCV.

Generally, the above scenario seems to suggest that the form of the demonstratives in Chiyao is dependent upon two key factors, namely noun class and deixis. Thus, a demonstrative changes its shape in response to the noun class of the noun it modifies, as well as the spatial relationship between the interlocutors and the referent. It follows that in relation to the spatial relationship, the demonstrative takes one of the three forms for each noun class, namely close to the speaker (proximal demonstrative), near the addressee (non-proximal demonstrative), and far from both the speaker and the addressee (distal demonstrative). The examples in (7) further illustrate this three-way distinction of Chiyao demonstratives and their forms by using a class 7 noun *chiteéngu* ‘chair.’ Example (7a) illustrates a proximal demonstrative, (7b) illustrates a non-proximal demonstrative, and (7c) shows a distal demonstrative.

- (7) a. *chi-teengú achí*  
       7-chair      7.DEM.PROX  
       ‘This is a chair’
- b. *chi-teengú achó*  
       7-chair      7.DEM.NON\_PROX  
       ‘That is a chair (near you)’
- c. *chi-teengú achilá*  
       7-chair      7.DEM.DIST  
       ‘That is a chair (over there)’

In addition to noun class and deixis, the shape of the demonstrative seems to be further influenced by syntactic and pragmatic factors. Pragmatic factors specifi-

Table 1: : Chiyao demonstratives in relation to noun classes and deixis

Class	Prefix	Example	Gloss	demonstratives			Example
				PROX	NON_PROX	DIST	
1	mu-	mundu	person	(a)ju	(a)jo	(a)jula	mundu aju/ajo/ajula 'this/that person'
2	va-	vandu	people	(a)va	(a)vo	(a)vala	vandu ava/avo/avala 'these/those people'
3	m-	mteela	tree	(a)wu	(a)wo	(a)wula	mteela awu/awo/awula 'this/that tree'
4	mi-	miteela	trees	(a)ji	(a)jo	(a)jila	miteela aji/ajo/ajila 'these/those trees'
5	li-	lindanda	egg	(a)li	(a)lyo	(a)lila	lindanda ali/alyo/alila 'this/that egg'
6	ma-	mandanda	eggs	(a)ga	(a)go	(a)gala	mandanda aga/ago/agala 'these/those eggs'
7	chi-	chipuula	knife	(a)chi	(a)cho	(a)chila	chipula achi/acho/achila 'this/that knife'
8	i-/y-	ipuula	knives	(a)yi	(a)yo	(a)yila	ipula ayi/ayo/ayila 'these/those knives'
9	n	ndembo	elephant	(a)ji	(a)jo	(a)jila	ndembo aji/ajo/ajila 'this/that elephant'

Table 1: Chiyao demonstratives in relation to noun classes and deixis (continued)

Class	Prefix	Example	Gloss	demonstratives			Example
				PROX	NON_PROX	DIST	
10	n	ndembo	elephants	(a)si	(a)syo	(a)sila	ndembo asi/asyo/asila 'these/those elephants'
11	lu-	lusulo	river	(a)lu	(a)lo	(a)lula	lusulo alu/alo/alula 'this/that river'
12	ka-	kajuni	small bird	(a)ka	(a)ko	(a)kala	kajuni aka/ako/akala 'this/that small bird'
13	tu-	tujuni	small birds	(a)tu	(a)to	(a)tula	tujuni atu/ato/atula 'these/those small birds'
14	u-	ukana	liquor	(a)u	(a)wo	(a)wula	ukana au/awo/awula 'this/that liquor'
15	ku-	kulya	eating	(a)ku	(a)ko	(a)kula	kulya aku/ako/akula 'this/that eating'
16	pa-	paasi	down	(a)pa	(a)po	(a)pala	paasi apa/apo/apala 'here/there down'
17	ku-	kumchiji	left	(a)ku	(a)ko	(a)kula	kumchiji aku/ako/akula 'here/there on the left'
18	mu-	mulisimbo	inside the pit	(a)mu	(a)mo	(a)mula	mulisimbo amu/amo/amula 'here/there inside the pit'

cally determine the presence or absence of the initial vowel in the demonstratives. Thus, the demonstrative in its full form with an initial vowel commonly occurs in copula constructions to indicate the location of an entity within the interlocutor(s)' visibility (see §4.2) – this is usually accompanied by a pointing gesture, as in (8). On the other hand, the reduced form (without the initial vowel) modifies nouns in subject or object position and functions to refer to the entity mentioned earlier in the discourse (8).

- (8) m-chanda **ájúlá**  
1-boy      1.DEM.DIST  
'That is a boy (over there)'
- (9) m-chanda **júla**      a-íiche  
1-boy      1.DEM.DIST SM1-arrive.PERF  
'That/the boy has arrived.'

The copula construction illustrated in (8) above cannot take a reduced demonstrative, thus explaining the ungrammaticality of (10). Similarly, placing a full demonstrative after a noun in a non-copula construction is ungrammatical, as in (11) below:

- (10) \* m-chanda **júla**  
1-boy      1.DEM.DIST  
Int: 'A boy is over there'
- (11) \* m-chanda **ájúlá**      a-íiche  
1-boy      1.DEM.DIST SM1-arrive.PERF  
Int: 'That/the boy has arrived.'

The form of the demonstrative in (11) looks similar to (7) in that they both contain initial vowels. However, (11) is ungrammatical because the demonstrative occurs with the NP and thus functions as a modifier while in (7) it occurs within the VP as a subject complement. It can therefore be posited that the initial vowel can be present when Noun + DEM are produced in isolation, but it is absent when this sequence is used in a clause as subject or object.

## 4 Classification of demonstratives

There are various approaches to the classification of demonstratives. Included amongst these are those proposed by Diessel (1999), Dixon (2003), and Van de



Velde (2005). The first two are general typological works while the latter focuses specifically on Bantu. The analysis in this chapter is based on the approaches of Diessel (1999) and Dixon (2003). Van de Velde's (2005) approach is referred to in the section on syntactic distribution of demonstratives since it focuses on the positioning of demonstratives in relation to other elements within a Bantu clause.

Diessel (1999) analyses demonstratives based on the type of elements with which they occur in a clause. His analysis is based on the view that demonstratives can occur independently as arguments, or as modifiers of nouns, or as arguments of copula verbs. On the basis of this view, Diessel establishes four types of demonstratives: pronominal demonstratives, adnominal demonstratives, adverbial demonstratives, and identificational demonstratives. These are discussed below with reference to Chiyao examples.

#### 4.1 Pronominal demonstratives

Pronominal demonstratives can be used as independent pronouns, as is the case with the word *this* in the English sentence *This is nice*. Since they may take the place of noun phrases, they have also been referred to as demonstrative pronouns (Diessel 1999: 72). In Chiyao, pronominal demonstratives show grammatical distinctions also displayed by nouns. This means that they show agreement in terms of noun class and number (see Table 1 above). These demonstrative pronouns can also be cross-referenced on the verb with a subject or object marker. In (12) below, the demonstratives *acho* 'that', and *aga* 'these' are pronominal as they stand alone and take the place of noun phrases.

- (12) a. nné ngú-chi-sáká **achó**  
           I       SM1-OM7-want 7.DEM.NOM\_PROX  
           'I want that (one).'
- b. **agá**               ga-teméche  
           6.DEM.PROX SM6-break.PFV  
           'These have been broken.'

The demonstrative *achó* in (12a) refers to a class 7 singular noun, such as *chitengu* 'chair' while *agá* in (12b) stands for a class 6 plural noun, such as *majela* 'hoes', thus evidencing the fact that demonstratives exhibit noun class agreement. The examples in (12a–12b) further illustrate that pronominal demonstratives can occur in both subject position (12b) and object position (12a). In both cases, the nouns which they refer to are also cross-referenced on the verb with either a subject marker or an object marker.

## 4.2 Adnominal demonstratives

Unlike pronominal demonstratives, which can function like nouns, adnominal demonstratives modify nouns, and across Bantu can appear either before nouns (e.g. in Kirundi) or after nouns (e.g. in Luganda and Ruhaya) (Van de Velde 2005). In Chiyao, adnominal demonstratives can occur either post-nominally (13) or in both pre-nominal and post-nominal positions (cf. §5.3), as in (14). The prenominal or postnominal occurrence of the adnominal demonstrative can also be conditioned by other adnominals, as is the case in Ikyaushi (Spier 2022).

- (13) mbwá ásíla  
10.dog 10.DEM.DIST  
'Those dogs'
- (14) asila mbwá síla  
10.DEM.DIST 10.dog 10.DEM.DIST  
'Those dogs'

## 4.3 Adverbial demonstratives

Adverbial demonstratives indicate location. These are exemplified in English with words such as *here* and *there*. Adverbial demonstratives are used to indicate the location of an event or situation expressed by the corresponding verb. In Chiyao, adverbial demonstratives occur both pronominally and adnominally. When they occur pronominally, they stand as independent pronouns and can function as subjects (15a) or as verbal modifiers (15b). When the adverbial demonstratives occur adnominally, they co-occur with the locative nouns they modify, as in example (16).

- (15) a. akulá ku-talíche  
17.dem.dist sm17-be.far  
'That place (over there) is far.'
- b. a-kú-támá apa  
1sm-prs-stay 16.DEM.PROX  
'He stays here.'
- (16) a. ku-chi-jíji kula ku-talíche  
17-7-village 17.DEM.DIST PRS-befar.PFV  
'There at the village it is far.'

- b. li-jóká lí-jinjíle mu-lisimbo **mo**  
 5-snake SM5-enter.PFV 18-hole 18.DEM.NON\_PROX  
 ‘A snake has entered that hole.’

The basic forms of the demonstratives in (16a) and (16b) are *akula* and *amo* respectively. However, it is worth noting that in these examples the adverbial demonstratives have lost the initial vowel, which is a common tendency for adverbial demonstratives occurring post-nominally in this language (see also §3).

The dropping of the initial vowel in adverbial demonstratives which occur post-nominally, illustrated in the examples above, further supports the argument put forward in §3 that the initial vowel does not constitute the core unit of the demonstrative. Moreover, the examples above seem to suggest that the type and syntactic occurrence of the demonstrative can impose some restrictions on the form of the demonstrative – i.e. when the adverbial demonstrative occurs post-nominally, it drops the initial vowel.

#### 4.4 Identificational demonstratives

Identificational demonstratives, or, as Diessel (1999) calls them, “demonstrative identifiers” occur in copula constructions. They function to identify a referent in a speech situation by introducing a new discourse topic or drawing the interlocutors’ attention to some existing discourse entity (Payne & Peña 2007). Identificational demonstratives have alternatively been referred to as predicative demonstratives (Denny 1982, Heath 1984), deictic predicators (Schuh 1977), predicative pronouns (Marconnes 1931), existential demonstratives (Benton 1971), pointing demonstratives (Rehg & Sohl 1981), deictic identifier pronouns (Carlson 1994), and presentational pronouns (Moltmann 2013). Identificational demonstratives normally occur pronominally, in subject position, as in the following example from Ewondo, a Bantu language of southern Cameroon (Diessel 1999: 19).

- (17) Ewondo (Diessel 1999: 19, glosses added)  
 káádá **ɲɔ**  
 1.crab 1.DEM.PROX  
 ‘This is a crab’

In Chiyao, identificational demonstratives can be found in copula constructions which are formed using the copula *ni*, as in the following examples.

- (18) a. **ájú** ní ambusánga jwenu  
 1.DEM.PROX is friend 1SG.POSS  
 ‘This is your friend.’

- b. *aulá*            *ní m-gunda wénu*  
3.DEM.DIST is 3-farm    3SG.POSS  
'That is your farm.'

In the context where the interlocutors have prior knowledge of the referent, the identificational demonstrative can occur in both positions, i.e. before and after the copula verb, as shown in (19).

- (19) a. *ájú*            *ní ambusánga jwenu júla*  
1.DEM.PROX is friend    1SG.POSS 1.DEM.DIST  
'This is that friend of yours (that we talked about).'
- b. *aulá*            *ní m-gunda wénu ula*  
3.DEM.DIST is 3-farm    3SG.POSS 3.DEM.DIST  
'That is the farm of yours (that we talked about).'

The demonstratives *aju* 'this,' and *aula* 'that' in (18a) and (18b) respectively are identificational as they serve to identify the nouns with which they occur. The occurrence of these demonstratives in the preverbal position without nouns seems to suggest that a subject nominal that would appear before the demonstrative is "silent" (or omitted, depending on the theoretical approach adopted) since Chiyao widely allows pro-drop.

## 5 Syntactic distributions of demonstratives

Van de Velde (2005) identified three major patterns for the positioning of demonstratives in Bantu languages in relation to the nouns with which they occur. These are i) the pre-nominal position ("preposed demonstratives" in Van de Velde's terminology), ii) the post-nominal position ("postposed demonstratives"), and iii) both before and after the head noun ("circumdemonstratives"). I discuss each of these in the context of Chiyao below.

### 5.1 The pre-nominal position

The pre-nominal occurrence of demonstratives has been observed in several Bantu languages, including Nkore, Rundi, Ha, Bemba, Zulu, Xhosa (Van de Velde 2005), and Runyankore-Rukiga (Asiimwe (2024 [this volume])). In Xhosa, the prenominal demonstrative performs the emphatic role when it precedes a noun with an augment, as in (20) below.

- (20) Van de Velde (2005: 14), glosses added
- a. **loo**            m-ntu    (non-emphatic)  
1.DEM.DIST 1-person  
'that person'
- b. **lowo**        u-m-ntu    (emphatic)  
1.DEM.DIST AUG1-person  
'that person'

However, unlike the aforementioned languages, which allow demonstratives to occur before their head nouns, Chiyao does not permit pre-nominal occurrence of demonstratives without an accompanying post-nominal demonstrative form (i.e. the demonstrative without the initial vowel *a-*). Thus, the examples in (21) below are ungrammatical while those in (22), which employ the circumdemonstrative demonstrative are grammatical.

- (21) a. \***aju**                      mú-ndú  
              1.DEM.PROX 1-person  
              ‘This person’  
      b. \***áu**                      m-gunda  
              3.DEM.PROX 3-farm  
              ‘This farm’
- (22) a. **aju**                      mú-ndú **ju**  
              1.DEM.PROX 1-person 1.DEM.PROX  
              ‘This person’  
      b. **áu**                      m-gundá **u**  
              3.DEM.PROX 3-farm    3.DEM.PROX  
              ‘This farm’

## 5.2 The post-nominal position

Chiyao also allows demonstratives to occur in the post-nominal position as illustrated in the following examples.

- (23) a. li-jóká álílá  
5-snake 5.DEM.DIST  
'A snake is over there.'
- b. chi-sotí achó  
7-hat 7.DEM.NON\_PROX  
'A hat is over there (near you)'

- c. ku-chi-jíji ákúlá  
 17-7-village 17.DEM.DIST  
 ‘There at the village’

When other dependents are present in the NP, the post-nominal demonstrative occupies the final slot in the Chiyao NP template. But it is worth noting that only the reduced form of the demonstrative, without the initial vowel is allowed to occur after other dependents, as shown in (24). These examples further suggest that, canonically, the post-nominal demonstrative occurs last in the Chiyao NP. In (24) below, the demonstratives *síla* (24a) and *lila* (24b) are separate from the head noun, while other modifiers optionally occur between the nominal form and the demonstrative.

- (24) a. mbwá syetu syékúlúngwá **síla**                      sya-júv-ilé      m-ma-úkútu.  
 10.dog 10.POSS 10.big                      10.DEM.DIST SM10-hide-PFV 18-6-bush  
 ‘Those big dogs of ours hid in bushes.’  
 b. li-símú ly-épiliú ly-ákúnyákapala **lila**                      ly-a-jígeelé  
 5-ogre 5-black 5-ugly                      5.DEM.DIST SM5-PST-carry.PST  
 li-váágó.  
 5-axe  
 ‘That black ugly ogre carried an axe.’

When a demonstrative occurs before other modifiers (e.g. the possessive or an adjective), the sentence becomes ungrammatical as in (25) below.

- (25) a. \* mbwá **síla** syetu syékúlúngwa sya-júv-ilé m-ma-úkútu.  
 10.dog 10.DEM.DIST 10.POSS 10.big 10SM-hide-PFV 18LOC-6-bush  
 Int. ‘Those big dogs of ours hid in bushes.’  
 b. \* li-símú **lila**                      ly-épiliú ly-ákúnyákapala ly-a-jígeelé  
 5-ogre 5.DEM.DIST 5-black 5-ugly                      SM5.PST-carry.PST  
 li-váágó.  
 5-axe  
 Int. ‘That black ugly ogre carried an axe.’

In (25a) the distal demonstrative *síla* ‘those’ precedes the modifiers *syetu syeku-lungwa* ‘our big’ while in (25b) the distal demonstrative *vala* ‘that’ precedes the modifiers *vapiliu vakunyakapala* ‘black ugly’. In both cases, the resulting sentences are ungrammatical.

As many as five modifiers can appear between the head noun and the demonstrative, including possessives, numerals, adjectives, intensifiers and relative clauses, as long as the demonstrative occurs after the modifiers. Example (26) presents a Chiyao sentence with a series of modifiers of these types followed by a demonstrative.

- (26) chi-pula chángu chi-mo ché-kúlúngwa nnope chi-ná-chi-súm-ile  
 7-knife 7.POSS 7-one 7-big INT 7REL-SM1-buy-PERF  
 lisó chila  
 yesterday 7.DEM.DIST  
 ‘My one very big knife which I bought yesterday’

Considering the position of the demonstrative in relation to other nominal dependents in the Chiyao NP, I propose the following NP template for Chiyao:

- (27) (DEM) + N + NUM + ADJ/ASSOC + REL + DEM

Thus, as the above template shows, the post-nominal demonstrative is the most final element in the Chiyao verb template.

### 5.3 The pre-nominal and post-nominal position

A number of languages contain demonstratives that occur in sort of pairs; one before the head noun and the other after the head. (see Lyons 1999). Due to their nature of occurrence – before and after the head- they are often referred to as circumdemonstratives (see Van de Velde 2005: 6). In Irish, for example, the simultaneous pre-nominal and post-nominal occurrence of demonstratives is evident in such forms as *an leabhar* ‘the book’, *an leabhar seo* ‘this book’, *an leabhar sin* ‘that book’, and *an leabhar úd* ‘yonder book’ where the post-nominal particle is obligatory, and the pre-nominal determiner element is the definite article (Lyons 1999: 117). A similar pattern is attested in Chiyao, where a demonstrative occurs first before the head noun in its full form and is then repeated after the noun in a reduced form without the initial vowel. In (28) the distal demonstrative occurs in both post-nominal and pre-nominal positions.

- (28) a. n-tu-sáidie yákuṭí pa-ku-m-okóá ajula mu-ndu júla  
 SM1-2OM-help how 16-INF-save 1.DEM.DIST 1-person 1.DEM.DIST  
 ‘Help us on how to save that person.’

- b. nambó alila      li-kwáta lila      vá-á-tité      va-ngáli  
but      5.DEM.DIST 5-dance      5.DEM.DIST SM2-PST-say.PFV SM2-NEG  
ma-véngwa a-ka-ika  
6-horn      SM2.NEG-come  
'But that dance, they said the one who doesn't have horns should not  
attend.'

The circumdemonstrative is the most frequently used demonstrative in Chiyao and in several neighbouring languages, including Makonde (P23) (see Makanjila 2019), Shimwela (P22) (see Taji & Mreta 2017), and Makhuwa (P31) (see van der Wal 2010). Below are examples from these languages:

- (29) Makonde (Makanjila 2019: 171)  
ai timu ai inamala kung'ana mpila namene  
a-i      timu      a-i      i-na-mal-a      ku-ng'an-a m-pila  
9.DEM.PROX 9.team 9.DEM.PROX SM9-TAM-know-FV INF-play-FV 3-ball  
namene  
very  
'This team plays football extremely well.'
- (30) Shimwela (Taji & Mreta 2017)  
aji      mi-kóngó ji  
4.DEM.PROX 4-tree      4.DEM.PROX  
'These trees'
- (31) Makhuwa (van der Wal 2010: 201)  
ólé      nthíyán' uule      kh-oóthá      aa-páh  
1.DEM.DIST 1.woman 1.DEM.DIST NEG-SM1.IMPF-lie SM1.IMPF-light  
ólumwenku  
14.world  
'This woman didn't just lie, she set the world on fire.'

In sum, the preceding discussion of the distribution of demonstratives has revealed three main properties relating to Chiyao demonstratives. Firstly, Chiyao does not permit a pre-nominal demonstrative to occur alone without being complemented by a post-nominal demonstrative both of which together form a circumdemonstrative; secondly, the post-nominal demonstrative occupies the most final slot in the NP, after all other modifiers; thirdly, the simultaneous occurrence of demonstratives (also known as the circumdemonstrative) in both pre-nominal and post-nominal positions is the most favoured pattern in Chiyao. In the section



that follows, I discuss different grammatical and communicative roles served by demonstratives in Chiyao.

## 6 Functions of demonstratives

Demonstratives serve various linguistic roles. In addition to the commonly attested spatial-deictic function whereby they are used to indicate objects in three dimensions (proximal, distal, and non-proximal), demonstratives have also frequently been analyzed as definite markers, as in Bemba, Zulu and Xhosa (Greenberg 1978); relative pronouns, for example in German (Lehmann 1984); third person pronouns, for example in French (Harris 1978, Lambrecht 1981); sentence connectives, as in Hixkaryana in Brazil (Derbyshire 1985); and possessive markers, as in Supyire in Mali (Carlson 1994). It is important to note that these functions are by no means universal. The following sub-sections discuss the functions of demonstratives in Chiyao.

### 6.1 Spatial-deictic role

Demonstratives found in most languages are deictically contrastive. Most languages have a proximal demonstrative denoting closeness to the deictic center and a distal demonstrative denoting some relative distance from the deictic center (Payne & Peña 2007). Some languages have more elaborate demonstrative systems than others. Spanish, for example, has *este*, *ese* and *aquel* which correspond to proximal, medial and distal demonstratives, respectively (Payne & Peña 2007). There are also other languages that make more than a two-way distinction of demonstratives. Tlingit (North West American) and Samal (Philippines), for example, have four deictic dimensions of demonstratives, while Malagasy (Austronesian) has six deictic dimensions (Levinson 1983). Chiyao makes a three-way distinction in deictic demonstratives, namely close to the speaker (proximal), far from the speaker but closer to the addressee (non-proximal), and far from both the speaker and the addressee (distal). The Chiyao examples in (32) are illustrative of this system.

- (32) a. proximal  
       li-jela ly-ángu ali  
       5-hoe 5-mine 5.DEM.PROX  
       ‘My hoe is this one.’

- b. non\_proximal  
li-jela ly-ángu **alyo**  
5-hoe 5-mine 5.DEM.NON\_PROX  
'My hoe is that one.'
- c. distal  
li-jela ly-ángu **alila**  
5-hoe 5-mine 5.DEM.DIST  
'My hoe is that one (over there).'

The examples in (32) above illustrate the spatial-deictic role of demonstratives in Chiyao by using the class 5 noun *lijela* 'hoe'. Thus, the demonstrative *ali* (32a) refers to a proximal entity, *alyo* (32b) refers to the non-proximal referent, and *alila* (32c) refers to a distal entity.

## 6.2 Emphatic role

Cross-linguistically, demonstratives are known for their property of encoding emphasis. In many languages, the expression of emphasis through demonstratives is done by reinforcing the existing demonstrative morphologically, through for example, the addition of further deictic particles, or through reduplication (Lyons 1999; Asiimwe (2024 [this volume])). In Swahili, for example, reduplicated forms of demonstratives such as *hikihiki* 'this', and *kilekile* 'that' are widely attested (Lyons 1999: 116). Like Swahili, Chiyao widely employs demonstrative reduplication to indicate emphasis of some parts of a message conveyed. The emphatic demonstrative is alternatively referred to as the confirmative demonstrative, as it induces the meaning 'the very (same)' (Floor 1998). The Chiyao examples in (33) below are illustrative of this phenomenon.

- (33) a. va-lendo vá-aiché            u-síku **úla**            **úla**  
2-guest SM3-arrive.PAST 14-day 14.DEM.DIST 14.DEM.DIST  
'The guests came on that very day (not any other day).'
- b. tw-ápité li-tála **lila**            **lila**  
2-SM-pass 5-way 5.DEM.DIST 5.DEM.DIST  
'We used the same way (not any other way).'

As is evident in (33) above, the demonstratives *ula* (33a) and *lila* (33b) are reduplicated for emphatic purposes. The reduplicated demonstratives drop the initial vowel, a common tendency for post-nominal non-deictic demonstratives in Chiyao. The full forms of these demonstratives would be *aula* (33a) and *alila* (33b).

The emphatic role of demonstratives has also been reported in Makhuwa, as in (34) (van der Wal 2010: 186).

- (34) Makhuwa (van der Wal 2010: 186)  
 yoólé      mpákhá wa-ámútsy' aáwe  
 1.dem.dist until    16-2.family 2.POSS  
 'She/the same went to family's place.'

### 6.3 Definiteness role

It is generally assumed that demonstratives are universally definite, and that definiteness exists in all languages (Lyons 1999). Lyons (1999: 2) associates definiteness with such properties as familiarity and identifiability. Thus, something definite is familiar to and identifiable among interlocutors. In many Bantu languages, demonstratives have been observed to perform a function similar to definite articles in languages which have articles (Van de Velde 2005). In this way, the demonstrative is used to refer to a referent which is identifiable to both speaker and hearer. This role of demonstratives has been described in a number of Bantu languages, including Chaga (E62), Nyamwezi (F22), and Dciriku (K62) (Van de Velde 2005). Similarly, Taji (2020: 53) reported that demonstratives are important indicators of definiteness in Chiyao. In the examples below, the post-nominal demonstratives *úla* (35b) and *líla* (36b) show that the nouns they modify are familiar among the interlocutors, and thus definite. These contrast with the nouns in (35a) and (36a), which are not modified by demonstratives, suggesting that they are indefinite.

- (35) Taji (2020: 53)
- a. m-kologo u-jitiche  
 3-alcohol SM3-be spilt  
 'Alcohol has been spilt.'
  - b. m-kologo *úla*                      u-jitiche  
 3-alcohol 3.DEM.DIST SM3-be spilt  
 'That/the alcohol has been spilt.'
- (36) Taji (2020: 53)
- a. m-ka-jigále    li-jela  
 1SM-FUT-take 5-hoe  
 'Go and bring a hoe.'

- b. m-ka-jigále li-jela líla  
1SM-FUT-take 5-hoe 5.DEM.DIST  
'Go and bring that/the hoe.'

Demonstratives that are used to express definiteness appear in three deictic distinctions – proximal, i.e. closer to the speaker (37), non-proximal, i.e. closer to the hearer (38), and distal, i.e. far from both speaker and hearer (39).

- (37) **achi**            **chí-téélá chi**  
7.DEM.PROX 7-tree    7.DEM.PROX  
'This tree (near me, speaker)'
- (38) **acho**            **chí-téélá cho**  
7.DEM.NON\_PROX 7-tree    7.DEM.NON\_PROX  
'That tree (near you, hearer)'
- (39) **achila**        **chí-téélá chíla**  
7.DEM.DIST 7-tree    7.DEM.DIST  
'That tree (far from both of us)'

In (37–39), the NPs are definite as they are modified by demonstratives. The definite reading of these sentences is further induced by the spatial deictic nature of the demonstratives used, which show that the referents are within the interlocutors' visibility.

As one would expect, there are structural and semantic differences between the sentences in (35–36) and those in (37–39) above. The examples in (35–36) contain only post-nominal demonstratives, and these refer to entities away from the interlocutors' line of vision, while those in (37–39) each contain both pre-nominal and post-nominal demonstratives, and these refer to entities within the interlocutors' vision. As such, they may be accompanied with a pointing gesture. This interpretation is consistent with Taji (2020) who observed that, in Chiyao, demonstrative doubling is related to deictic definite NPs as in (37–39) above while single occurrence of demonstratives is associated with anaphoric reference as in (35–36). In anaphoric reference, demonstratives are used to refer to an entity with which the hearer is familiar not from the physical situation but from the broader linguistic context. The hearer is familiar with the entity because it was mentioned earlier in the text or discourse. One important aspect of anaphoric reference that deserves a separate section as an independent role of demonstratives is tail-head linking, and this is discussed in §6.4 below.

## 6.4 Tail-head linking

Tail-head linking involves repetition of some part (usually the last – the tail) of the previous sentence in the immediately following sentence (van der Wal 2010: 201). This function of demonstratives is commonly encountered in narratives where an entity or character that has been mentioned in the last part of the previous sentence is co-referenced in the following sentence through a demonstrative. In (40) below, the first sentence introduces the location *mumbugu* ‘inside a cave’ which is referred to in the following sentence through a post-nominal demonstrative.

- (40) ni a-jáwile ku-li-sisa mú-mbugu. Ambano mú-mbugu  
 and SM1-go.PST INF-REFL-hide 18LOC-9.cave now 18LOC-9.cave  
**múla** mw-álijí ni méésí.  
 18.DEM.DIST 18-contain.PST with water  
 ‘And he/she went to hide himself/herself inside a cave. Now, inside that cave, there was water.’

Tail-head linking through demonstratives has also been reported in Makhuwa (van der Wal 2010: 201). In (41a) below, a woman is introduced into the story and she is referred to in the next sentence through a doubled demonstrative (41b):

- (41) a. o-m-phwánya nthiyána m-motsá  
 SM1.PERF.DJ-1-meet 1.woman 1-one  
 ‘He met a woman.’  
 b. ólé nthiyán’ uule kh-oóthá aa-páh  
 1.DEM.PROX 1.woman 1.DEM.PROX NEG-SM1.IMPF-lie SM1.IMPF-light  
 ólumwenku  
 14.world  
 ‘This woman didn’t just lie, she set the world on fire.’

## 7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a description of Chiyao demonstratives, focusing on their form, distribution, and functions. It has revealed that in terms of form, the Chiyao demonstrative is comprised of an initial element, which is always the vowel *a-*, followed by an agreement marker, and ends with a final element which changes according to the location of the referent in relation to the speaker or

hearer. The demonstrative may be doubled, thus occurring in both pre- and post-nominal positions. In such cases, the post-nominal demonstrative drops the initial vowel but the pre-nominal demonstrative remains intact. The dropping of the initial vowel in the post-nominal demonstrative suggests that the initial element in the Chiyao demonstrative is optional.

The chapter has further provided a syntactic description of demonstratives in Chiyao. The findings in this aspect have shown that, within the broader classification of demonstratives in Bantu languages, the Chiyao demonstratives appear in four main types. The first type includes pronominal demonstratives, which are used as independent pronouns, and the second type encompasses adnominal demonstratives, which modify nouns. The third type of demonstrative that are encountered in Chiyao is that of adverbial demonstratives. These function to modify verbs and locative nouns. The last type includes identificational demonstratives, which occur in copula and non-verbal clauses.

With regard to syntactic distributions of demonstratives, it is established that the Chiyao demonstrative can occur either post-nominally, or in both pre-nominal and post-nominal positions simultaneously.

Finally, the description of functions of demonstratives in Chiyao has shown that demonstratives serve various linguistic and communication purposes, including expressing the location of an entity in relation to interlocutors, emphasis, definiteness, and tail-head linking in narratives. It is hoped that these findings will contribute to further understanding of the behavior of demonstratives in Bantu languages and will inspire further research in this area.

## Acknowledgements

I appreciate the inputs I received from the team of researchers of the project Morphosyntactic Variation in Bantu at the manuscript development workshop held in Dar es Salaam in September 2017. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers whose comments helped to improve this work to its present form.

## Abbreviations

ADJ	Adjective	DIST	Distal
ASSOC	Associative	FUT	Future
AUG	Augment	IMPF	Imperfective
DEM	Demonstrative	INF	Infinitive
DJ	Disjoint	INTENS	Intensifier

LOC	Locative	PLA	Plural addressee
NEG	Negative	POSS	Possessive
NON_PROX	Non-proximal	PRES	Present
NUM	Numeral	PROX	Proximal
OM	Object marker	PST	Past
OPT	Optative	REL	Relative clause
PFV	Perfective	REFL	Reflexive

## References

- Asiimwe, Allen. 2014. *Definiteness and specificity in Runyankore-Rukiga*. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University of South Africa. (Doctoral dissertation). <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/95926> (16 March, 2015).
- Asiimwe, Allen. 2024. The structure, distribution and function of demonstratives in Runyankore-Rukiga. In Hannah Gibson, Rozenn Guérois, Gastor Mpunda & Lutz Marten (eds.), *Morphosyntactic variation in East African Bantu languages: Descriptive and comparative approaches*, 43–83. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10663765.
- Benton, Richard A. 1971. *Pangasinan reference grammar*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Carlson, Robert. 1994. *A grammar of Supyire*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Denny, J. Peter. 1982. Semantics of the Inuktitut (Eskimo) spatial deictics. *Journal of American Linguistics* 48. 359–384.
- Derbyshire, Desmond C. 1985. *Hixkaryana*. Amsterdam: North-Holland.
- Dicks, Ian D. & Shawn Dollar. 2010. *A practical guide to the understanding of Chiyawo*. Zomba: Kachere Series.
- Diessel, Holger. 1999. The Morphosyntax of demonstratives in synchrony and diachrony. *Linguistic Typology* 3. 1–49.
- Dixon, Robert Malcolm Ward. 2003. Demonstratives: A cross-linguistic typology. *Studies in language* 27(1). 61–112.
- Du Plessis, Jacobus Albertus. 1978. *IsiXhosa* 4. Bellville: Via Afrika.
- Du Plessis, Jacobus Albertus & Marianna Visser. 1992. *Xhosa syntax*. Pretoria: Via Afrika.
- Floor, Sebastian. 1998. Confirmative demonstratives. Ms., SIL Nampula.
- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1978. How does a language acquire gender markers? In Joseph H. Greenberg, Charles A. Ferguson & Edith A. Moravcsik (eds.), *Universals of human language*, 47–82. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Harris, Martin. 1978. *The evolution of French syntax: A comparative approach*. London: Longman.

- Heath, Jeffrey. 1984. *Functional grammar of Nunggubuyu*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1981. *Topic, antitopic and verb agreement in non-Standard French*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Lehmann, Christian. 1984. *Der Relativsatz: Typologie seiner Strukturen, Theorie seiner Funktionen, Kompendium seiner Grammatik*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, Christopher. 1999. *Definiteness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maho, Jouni Filip. 2009. *NUGL online: The online version of the new updated Guthrie list, a referential classification of the Bantu languages*. [https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads\\_products/35125\\_Bantu-New-updated-Guthrie-List.pdf](https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads_products/35125_Bantu-New-updated-Guthrie-List.pdf) (20 March, 2013).
- Makanjila, Dominick. 2019. *The internal syntax of the Chimakonde determiner phrase*. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University. (Doctoral dissertation).
- Marconnes, Francisque A. 1931. *A grammar of Central Karanga: The language of Old Monomotapa as at present spoken in Central Mashonaland, Southern Rhodesia* (Supplement to Bantu Studies 5). Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Moltmann, Friederike. 2013. Identificational sentences. *Natural Language Semantics* 21. 43–77.
- Ngunga, Armindo. 1997. *Lexical phonology and morphology of the Ciyao verb system*. Berkeley, CA: University of California at Berkeley. (Doctoral dissertation).
- Ngunga, Armindo. 2002. *Elementos de gramática da língua Yao*. Maputo: Universidade Eduardo Mondlane.
- Nicolle, Steve. 2007a. Metarepresentational demonstratives in Digo. In Randi Alice Nilsen, Nana Aba Appiah Amfo & Kaja Borthen (eds.), *Interpreting utterances: Pragmatics and its interfaces: Essays in honour of Thorstein Fretheim*, 127–146. Oslo: Novus.
- Nicolle, Steve. 2007b. Textual functions of Chidigo demonstratives. *SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics* 15. 159–171.
- Nurse, Derek & Gérard Philippson. 1980. The Bantu languages of East Africa: A lexicostatistical survey. In Edgar C. Polomé & C. P. Hill (eds.), *Language in Tanzania*, 26–67. London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute.
- Akan Demonstratives. 2007. In Doris L. Payne & Jaime Peña (eds.), *Selected proceedings of the 37th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, 134–148. Somerville, MA: Cascadia Proceedings Project.



- Rehg, Kenneth L. & Damian G. Sohl. 1981. *Ponapean reference grammar*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.
- Schuh, Russell G. 1977. Bade/Ngizim determiner system. *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 4(3). 1–74.
- Taji, Julius. 2020. Definiteness in Chiyao. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 9(2). 44–64.
- Taji, Julius & Abel Mreta. 2017. The structure of a noun phrase in Shimwela. *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education* 11(1). 19–41.
- Van de Velde, Mark. 2005. The order of noun and demonstrative in Bantu. In Koen Bostoen & Jacky Maniacky (eds.), *Studies in African comparative linguistics with special focus on Bantu and Mande*, 425–441. Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa.
- van der Wal, Jenneke. 2010. Functions of demonstratives in Makhuwa narratives. *Africana Linguistica* 16. 183–213.
- Visser, Marianna. 2008. Definiteness and specificity in the isiXhosa determiner phrase. *South African Journal of African Languages* 28(1). 11–29.
- Wald, Benji. 1973. Syntactic change in the lake languages of Northeast Bantu. *Studies in African Linguistics* 4(3). 237–268.
- Whiteley, Wilfred Howell. 1966. *A study of Yao sentences*. London: Oxford University Press.

