

A typology of referential devices: The parameters of boundness and tenacity¹

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Among the most central things that any human language does is referring: mentioning entities, such as persons or objects, in discourse. There are two gross types of referential devices: lexically full (such as full NPs) and reduced, such as pronouns. In this paper a comprehensive typology of **reduced referential devices**, based on the material of 192 languages of all continents and linguistic areas, is proposed.

One well-known typological parameter of reduced referential devices is the three-fold distinction between free pronouns, bound pronouns, and referential zeroes. Languages differ in whether they adhere to one of these types as the dominant one, or use a certain mixture of types. Mixtures may be due to a variety of factors, including the level of a referent's activation, different argument roles and different construction types. Further discussion in this paper is restricted to overt reduced referential devices, that is pronouns – both **free** and **bound**, with central focus on third person pronouns. Typically free pronouns are clitics (this applies, for example, to English pronouns), whereas non-clitical, prosodically autonomous free pronouns occur only in functionally specialized contexts, such as contrastiveness.

Quite often a pronoun can be combined within one clause with another referential device, evoking the same referent. In particular, in many polysynthetic languages bound pronouns are found within inflected verbs no matter whether the referent is mentioned by a full NP in this very clause, cf. (1):

- (1) Abkhaz, Abkhaz-Adyghean, Caucasus
i-čk'o'ənc'a *d-rə-pxyan* 'He called his sons.'
 his_i-sons_j he_i-them_j-called

Pronouns of this kind can be called **tenacious** (a replacement for the somewhat misguided notion of pronominal arguments). In contrast, pronouns of the English kind are in a complementary distribution with full NPs and can be dubbed **recessive**: they are present when a referent is highly activated and absent when it is not (in the latter case a full NP is used). Even though cross-linguistically bound pronouns tend to be tenacious and free pronouns recessive, this is only a quantitative tendency, not a requirement – see Table 1 below. Among the **free tenacious** pronouns particularly well known are Romance object pronouns, and this pattern is common in other languages as well – cf. the clearly free pronouns in Bilua:

- (2) Bilua, a Papuan language of Solomon islands [Obata 2003: 30]
 Sai vo=a ziolo **ke=papue=v=e** jari topi.
 there 3SG.M.NOM=LIG devil_i 3PL.NOM=sit=3SG.M.ACC_i=RMP copra.house on.top
 'There, they sat the devil on the copra house.'

Conversely, **bound recessive** pronouns are also sufficiently common. Examples from Athabaskan languages are discussed in detail in the talk. Also, cf. the following two clauses with the same verb 'put':

- (3) Kabba, Central Sudanic, Central African Republic [Moser 2004: 230, 221]
 a. Lúbba ìla jì kàjì` là-á dɔ-jé tɔ kára kára tóyn
 God put hand heal GEN-3SG head-1PL LOC one one all
 'May God place his healing hands on each one of us'
 b. **n-ìl-é** kɔr.ɔ 'He threw it into the bush.'
 3S.SUBJ-put-3S.OBJ bush.LOC

	Recessive	Tenacious
Free	West Africa; English	Oceania; Spanish, Bilua
Bound	South America; Kabba	North America; Abkhaz

Table 1. A typology of languages according to pronouns' boundness and tenacity; typical areas and example languages

Both boundness and tenacity relate in many ways to a language's basic typological features, including the degree of synthesis and the locus of marking. For this reason the typology of reduced referential devices is not just interesting in itself, but also is relevant for a language's general typological profile. In terms of this typology, the major languages of Europe, such as English, German, French, Spanish, and Russian all present different types or subtypes.

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