

D. N. S. Bhat, *Pronouns* (Oxford Studies in Typology and Linguistic Theory). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. xii + 320.

Reviewed by MICHAEL CYSOUW,

Max Plank Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig.

In the classical analysis of the *pronomina*, various *accidentia* of the pronoun were distinguished. For example, in the oldest available grammatical text in the occidental tradition, the *Tékhnē Grammatiké* by Dionysius Thrax, ‘person, gender, number, case, shape and species’ are mentioned as possible attributes of pronouns. Many slightly different versions of this list of attributes can be found in the classical literature, though they all agree on one point: the attributes are an unordered list of characteristics that are all equally relevant to the analysis of pronouns. Various proposals for a more structured analysis of pronouns have been made since then, but none really succeeded. In this book, Bhat starts a new attempt, distinguishing between what he calls ‘personal pronouns’ and ‘proforms’, based on an investigation of a wide array of languages from all over the world. In Bhat’s proposal, personal pronouns are restricted to first and second person forms, and proforms are basically demonstrative, indefinite and interrogative pronouns. He considers third person pronouns to be an intermediate category between the two classes.

In Chapter 1 ‘Introduction’, this proposal is laid out and a general survey of the book is given. Additionally, a distinction is proposed between ‘free-pronoun’ and ‘bound pronoun’ languages. Apparently, this section was only added in a later stage, as the rest of the book only deals with the structure of independent pronouns. The next five chapters deal with personal pronouns. In Chapter 2 ‘Relation with the Refer-

ent' Bhat argues that the indexical nature of personal pronouns elucidates various of their syntactic peculiarities. Chapter 3 'Coreference and Non-Coreference' discusses logophoric, anaphoric, reciprocal and reflexive pronouns. It remains somewhat unclear what their relation is to the greater 'pronoun' vs. 'proform' scheme of the book. In Chapter 4 'Association with Grammatical Categories' the interaction between person and number, gender, and case is discussed. The rather short Chapter 5 'Conflicting Characteristics' discusses a few aspects of person marking that apparently did not fit in elsewhere. In Chapter 6 'The Position of Third Person Pronouns' Bhat argues that there is a typological distinction between languages that consider the third person to be part of the personal pronouns ('three-person languages') and languages that, roughly speaking, use demonstratives instead ('two-person languages').

The next five chapters deal with proforms. First, in Chapter 7 'The Structure of Proforms' Bhat argues that proforms mostly consist of two parts, a 'pronominal term' (relating to the kind of proform, e.g. demonstrative *th-* or interrogative *wh-* in English) and a 'general element' (relating to categories like 'person', 'thing', or 'place'). Chapter 8 'Constituent Elements of Proforms' investigates these two parts of the proforms in somewhat more details, displaying some of the cross-linguistic variability of their form and function. Closely related to this, a few themes relating to the usage and meaning of proforms are discussed in Chapter 9 'Characteristics of Proforms'. In Chapter 10 'Interrogative-Indefinite Puzzle' Bhat argues that the often observed similarity between interrogative and indefinite pronouns is basically due to the inherent *indefinite* nature of both. Chapter 11 'Other Related Puzzles' discusses the various kinds of overt marking that is found in indefinites. However, Bhat does not give an explanation to the fact that, if there is any overt marking, then it is always the indefinite pronoun that is overtly marked relative to the interrogative, and never the other

way around. Finally, Chapter 12 ‘Concluding Remarks’ summarizes the main arguments of the book.

There are so many themes discussed relating to the proposed distinction between pronouns and proforms that it is impossible to discuss them all in this review. It is highly inspiring to see so many important issues being discussed side by side. However, the scholarly precision seems to be negatively influenced by the wide array of topics included. Taking just one example of the often somewhat awkward discussion of past research, in section 4.2.5 Bhat discusses the problem of so-called ‘minimal-augmented’ person paradigms. In such paradigms, a sole inclusive dual form (without accompanying duals for the other persons) is best analyzed on a par with the singular forms (based on morphological and paradigmatical arguments). As this inclusive dual is of course referentially not a singular, a different name is needed – a terminological quibble that by now spans over 50 years of scholarly debate (cf. Cysouw 2003: 85-90). Over the last decades, the name ‘minimal’ instead of ‘singular’ has become established to refer to such situations. Bhat clearly completely misunderstood this point when he notes that ‘these analyses appear to be rather ad hoc because one cannot escape from the fact that the 1+2 form [i.e. inclusive dual, MC] is unlike singular forms in that its reference is non-singular’ (103). Of course such a pronoun is referentially non-singular, that is exactly what the whole debate is about. Still, these forms have some affiliation with singular forms, and that is what urged scholars to propose a new analysis.

Notwithstanding, the distinction between pronouns and proforms is interesting for various reasons. The morphological and semantic structure of indefinites, interrogatives and demonstratives is clearly related – and completely different from first and second person forms. Regrettably, Bhat does not present details on how similar the

morphology of the various proforms is cross-linguistically. For example, it might be argued for English that interrogative *wh-* is in complementary distribution with demonstrative *th-*. However, there are gaps in this generalization as the counterparts of *who* (**tho*), *which* (**thich*), *this* (**whis*) and *these* (**whese*) do not exist, and the interrogative counterpart of *thus* is *how* (and not **whus*). Indeed, recurrent similarities between interrogatives, demonstratives and indefinites are found throughout the world's languages, but likewise there also always some apparently arbitrary gaps in the general patterns. One extremely interesting topic for typological research would be whether there is any regularity among these irregularities. Unfortunately, instead of investigating this, Bhat simply assumes that the apparent regularities are indicative of a need for an integral analysis under the name 'proforms'. Whether this approach is granted by the world's linguistic diversity is still unanswered.

In the course of the book, Bhat makes many claims about the typological structure of pronouns and proforms, regrettably often without much argumentation. A few randomly chosen examples are the following: 'proforms are generally made up of two different elements' (12), 'distance-oriented deictic systems are generally preferred by two-person languages whereas person-oriented deictic systems are preferred by three-person languages (14), 'bound pronoun languages show several distinctions in their independent personal pronouns that are absent among agreement markers' (20), and 'the use of GP [general-pronominal, MC] structure for proforms appears to be one of the characteristics of verb-initial languages' (158). These claims (and many more) are proposed as universally valid typological statements and are illustrated with examples from a wide array of languages. However, the justification for their universal validity remains meager. Just to take up one of Bhat's assertion, I will scrutinize the evidence

for a proposed correlation between person and gender marking, only to conclude that Bhat's universal is spurious.

Bhat makes the following claim: 'the cross-linguistic variation concerning the occurrence of gender distinction among third person pronouns appears to correlate with the distinction between two-person and three-person languages in the sense that gender distinction in third person pronouns occurs primarily among two-person languages' (139). Two-person languages are, roughly speaking, languages that do not have a clear distinction between third person marking and demonstratives. Putting aside the problem how one can talk about 'gender in the third person' in the case of a two-person language, Bhat thus claims that three person languages tend not to have gender marking in the third person (English being a counterexample). The numbers as presented by Bhat, shown in Table 1, indeed indicate an implicational universal, though only of a statistical kind with 13 counterexamples (Fisher's Exact $p < .0001$).

Table 1. Bhat's data arguing for a correlation between person and gender marking.

	Two-person language	Three-person language
3rd person gender	49	13
3rd person no gender	77	86

The question remains whether this typological distribution is meaningful. One approach to further investigate such typological distributions is Dryer's test (Dryer 1989) in which the world's languages are divided into independent macro-areas. Unfortunately, Bhat did not include the raw data for his judgements on the presence of gender distinctions in all languages investigated, but this information can be extracted from Haspelmath *et al.* (2005). In this mammoth project Bhat's data on two-person vs. three-person languages appear integrally as Bhat (2005), and the marking of gen-

der in independent pronouns is supplied by Siewierska (2005). From these sources, the distribution of Bhat's typology over the six macro-areas can easily be extracted, as shown in Table 2 (following the format as proposed by Dryer 1989). Not all languages from Bhat's survey appear in Siewierska's data (only 171 languages from Bhat's 225 languages are also included by Siewierska). Further, Siewierska's judgments about what counts as gender marking are not always the same as Bhat's. This can be most clearly seen by the number of languages with three-person pronouns and gender in the third person (i.e. the exceptions to Bhat's claimed correlation). Bhat only found 13 of such combinations among his 225 languages, but in the cross-section of Bhat's and Siewierska's data there are 16 such languages among 177 languages. Such differences in judgment are not necessarily a problem, because they might have a good reason (e.g. differing definitions of the concept 'gender'), but it shows how important it is to supply full references to every classification in a typology. The totals from the Bhat/Siewierska typology, as shown in the last column of Table 2, still show a statistical significant interaction between the two parameters (Fisher's Exact $p = .003$), though clearly a less strong one in comparison to the numbers as given by Bhat in Table 1.

Table 2. Macro-areal distribution according to Dryer's Method.

	Africa	Eurasia	SE Asia & Pacific	N. Guinea & Australia	North America	South America	Total
2-pers. & gender	11	9	3	6	3	9	41
3-pers. & gender	5	4	2	1	3	1	16
2-pers. & no gender	1	11	11	13	11	9	56
3-pers. & no gender	10	7	15	8	12	6	58

The first observation to be made from the split-up into macro-areas is that the preferences are not the same in all areas. This already makes it difficult (if not completely unwarranted, cf. Cysouw 2005) to derive any universal interpretation. Sure, when there is gender in the third person, two-person languages everywhere outnumber the three-person languages (cf. the top part of Table 2). However, the same preference for two-person languages is also found without gender marking in the areas Eurasia, New Guinea/Australia and South America (cf. the bottom part of Table 2). In these three areas there is a general preference for two-person languages, irrespectably of the presence or absence of gender marking. Taking together these three areas, there is no significant interaction between person and gender (Fisher's Exact $p = .06$). Conversely, in the areas South-East Asia/Pacific and in North America, gender marking in the third person is unusual throughout, and its distribution is likewise independent of the opposition two-person versus three-person (Fisher's Exact $p = .4$). The only macro-area to corroborate Bhat's claimed interaction is Africa (although, paradoxically, this is the area with the highest number of counterexamples).

There is clearly no world-wide universal correlation between person and gender in the sense as claimed by Bhat. More generally, all of the many claims made by Bhat seem to rely on likewise slight tendencies in the world-wide distribution. I expect that all of them will vanish once the macro-areal breakdown is considered. And explaining away counterexamples by regarding them as 'non-prototypical' (173) is of course a bad magician's trick. Bhat's lighthearted take on doing typology, by proposing many claims without scrutinizing the evidence, is not helpful. Instead of dealing with so many topics superficially, he could have better chosen a single topic for a book-length investigation. Or he might have published a survey-like monograph with the scope of

the present book, but then he should have left out the many spurious claims about cross-linguistic correlations.

In the tradition of OUP publications, this book has full indexes and has been thoroughly proofread. I only found one unfortunate error, viz. Amele is part of the Gum family, not the Gur family (45). In contrast, stylistically the text is somewhat clumsy. The recurrent use of phrases like ‘point out’, ‘however’ and ‘on the other hand’ becomes a bit tedious when reading the book from front to back. Also, internal cross-references, however helpful to the reader, are used far too frequently. Further, there are various factual claims in this book that might be considered controversial. For example, I find it contentious to list Nicobarese as part of the Munda family (89). Also, in contrast to Bhat’s claim (122), the typical Australian inclusive dual *ɲali* is not obviously related to the first person *ɲa* (cf. Dixon 2002: 122ff). Yet, such criticism is probably an inevitably factor in books like this that contain so much factual information on so many different languages.

REFERENCES

- Bhat, D. N. S. (2005). Third-person pronouns and demonstratives. In: Haspelmath *et al.* 178-81.
- Cysouw, M. (2003). *The Paradigmatic Structure of Person Marking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . (2005). Quantitative methods in typology. In Altmann, G., Köhler, R. & Piotrowski, R. (eds.), *Quantitative Linguistics: An International Handbook*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 554-78.
- Dixon, R. M. W. (2002). *Australian Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dryer, M. S. (1989). Large Linguistic Areas and Language Sampling. *Studies in Language*, **13**. 257-92.

Haspelmath, M., Dryer, M. S., Comrie, B. & Gil, D. (eds.) (2005). *The World Atlas of Language Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Siewierska, A. (2005). Gender distinctions in independent pronouns. In: Haspelmath *et al.* 182-85.