

## Same, identical, or equal? Idematives in languages of New Guinea

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### Abstract

**Idematives** is a freshly-coined term to broadly cover constructions or lexemes with a meaning component ‘the same, equal, identical, likewise’ (based on Latin *idem* ‘same’). This is an area of linguistics which is very understudied. Based on an initial sample of languages, the following semantic distinctions appear to be relevant for idematives, as they are often coded in very distinct ways.

- **Identifying idemative:** true identity with a single external referent ‘one and the same’. Examples: *We have the same father. I live in the same town as you.*
- **Classifying idemative:** different referents, but so much similarity that there is a perceived identicalness: ‘same, same kind, similar’. Examples: *I notice we are wearing the same shoes. We drive the same car.*
- **Anaphoric idemative:** referring back to an entity mentioned earlier in the discourse: the ‘same, aforementioned’. Example: *Last night we had a visitor and this morning I saw the same man at the market.*
- **Equative idemative:** identity with respect to some concrete or abstract standard. Examples: *He is as tall as his dad. They are equally tall. They have the same height.* Haspelmath et al. (2016) provides an initial typology for this category.

This presentation looks at some 20 languages spoken on the island of New Guinea (both Austronesian and Papuan, as well as Tok Pisin and Papuan Malay) and tries to answer the following questions. What lexical or morphological means do these languages employ to encode the various idemative meanings? Are any further semantic distinctions made among idematives? How are these choices linked to other areas of grammar? The answers to these questions lead to a preliminary typology of idematives, as well as a semantic map of idematives. This semantic map links idematives to the number ‘one’ (a very strong connection in New Guinea and possibly beyond), as well as similatives (‘like X’), reflexives, demonstratives, and collectives. The presentation ends with a number of remaining research questions.

### References

Haspelmath, Martin and the Leipzig Equative Constructions Team. 2016. Equative constructions in world-wide perspective. <https://shh-mpg.academia.edu/MartinHaspelmath/Drafts>