

# Reference to Space and Time in Two Kenyah Languages: Oma' Lung and Uma' Kulit

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Oma' Lung and Uma' Kulit are only two members of the Kayan-Kenyah languages spoken in Kalimantan and Sarawak. A previous study (Soriente 2003) established that on the grounds of some phonological innovations these two languages belong to different branches of the family. An ongoing project focuses on the morphosyntax of the two languages based on the analysis of extensive texts and aims at a description of these undocumented languages and at demonstrating or disproving the claim that the two languages indeed belong to different branches.

This paper presents a description of the spatial and temporal deictics in Oma' Lung and Uma' Kulit, in particular all the cues provided by the languages to localize the speech event and its participants, in space and time (Anderson and Keenan 1985).

Spatial deixis involves the demonstratives. In Uma' Kulit there are three locative dimensions designating locations in space with reference to the position of the speaker (proximal, medial and distal), whereas Oma' Lung only has two demonstratives (proximal and distal). On the other hand three main locations are expressed by local deictics in Oma' Lung and Uma' Kulit each distinguishing between proximate and distal respectively.

Spatial deixis is related to the environment where the language is spoken; therefore, the topography of the area where the languages are traditionally spoken is a relevant element to keep in consideration. For this reason, rivers as the main communication route and source of income and water, are the most important spatial referent. The main directional deictics depend on the position of the speaker with respect to the river without any reference to the cardinal directions as orientation.

Temporal deixis localizes the speech event in time by means of adverbs ('now', 'then'), therefore it is expressed by means of adverbs or demonstratives and some aspect markers.

One of the goals of this research is to answer basic questions about deictics: to find out whether, as pointed out by Himmelmann (1996), there is a way to distinguish between demonstratives and 3rd person personal pronouns, whether demonstratives are also used anaphorically and whether there is any correlation between the spatial and temporal deictic differentiation in three locative dimensions. Another problem addressed when studying deictics and in particular demonstratives is to investigate whether it is possible to track the development of demonstratives into grammatical markers (Diessel 1999).

If from one side these Kenyah languages are considered 'endangered' because of the pressure of the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, on these marginal languages as demonstrated for example by the use, among others, of many Indonesian demonstratives like *ini* or *itu* in the recorded speech of Oma' Lung and Uma' Kulit speakers, on the other hand some typical Oma' Lung and Uma' Kulit deictic functions like the use of

dualis and trialis in the personal pronouns are calqued in Indonesian and the river related location expressions like the oppositions inland/rivershore and upriver/downriver are extended to urban localization.