

2090513 (1993)
ed. Karsten Legeire + Hans-Volker Grottschel
Windhoek: U of Namibia
(A collection of papers presented at the
international conference "Spatial Relations
"Language Ecology in Africa"
held at the U of Namibia
from 9 to 13 September 1991)

THE EXPRESSION OF SPATIAL RELATIONS IN THE AFRICAN LANGUAGES

(1993)

Lionel C Posthumus
Vista University, Mamelodi Campus,
Pretoria

Abstract

The location of objects can be specified relative to fixed reference points such as landmarks or relative to other objects in the vicinity such as tables, chairs and books, or by using lexical items which themselves have an absolute spatial referential meaning. All these forms of reference are non-deictic. Spatial reference can also be expressed relative to the speech participants in the speech event; the speaker and addressee. The latter type of relational reference is called deictic reference. This article focuses on these deictic spatial referential expressions.

While most languages grammaticalise at least a distinction between proximal (close to the speaker) and distal (remote from the speaker); the African languages make much more elaborate distinctions. In Zulu (and the other African languages) these distinctions are encoded in demonstratives, locative copulative demonstratives and deictic adverbs.

The demonstrative pronouns and locative copulative demonstratives of Zulu are generally subcategorised as first distance (proximal to the speaker), second distance (medial from the speaker) and third distance (distal from the speaker). It is argued in this paper that this categorisation is inappropriately applied to Zulu.

1. INTRODUCTION

In line with the theme of this conference, I would like to draw your attention to an aspect of the ecosystem of language which has not been attended to hitherto.

The majority of papers read at this conference have dealt with the question of either how to select the "tree" to be planted or how to safeguard its survival. This paper will, however, focus on the "fertilizer" to be selected for the "cultivation/ sustenance" of the "tree" in order to be enabled to appreciate its spectrum of "colourful blossoms". I am

referring to the careful selection, adaptation and application of appropriate theories when dealing with the African languages. Too often general linguistic theories are applied *holus bolus* to them.

This unfortunate state of events will be illustrated by referring to the inappropriate explanation given to the expression of spatial relations in the African languages.

2. INTRODUCTION TO DEICTIC, NON-DEICTIC AND ANAPHORIC SPATIAL REFERENCE

Spatial referential expressions may be deictic or non-deictic or anaphoric. Referents may be referred to in terms of their non-deictic spatial locality by either naming them or by locating them in relation to fixed points or in relation to other referents.

3. NON-DEICTIC SPATIAL REFERENCE

Non-deictic spatial reference is that type of reference where referents are identified or described without any overt or covert relational reference being made to the speech participants. The location of referents may, in the first instance, be expressed by spatial relational terms. Example (1) is a typical example of three labels with a particular non-deictic spatial referential meaning.

- (1) *ingcongco* summit/(tree)top
isihloko tip of finger, and
isiphongo forehead/protruding front part.

Locative derived nouns are non-specific spatial relational terms in Zulu. The word *endlini* (in/on/at the house) < *indlu* (the/a house) may mean "in the house" or "on the house" or even "at the house". Scholars such as Ziervogel and Prinsloo have dealt exhaustively with this aspect of spatial reference in the African languages.

Secondly, the location of referents can be specified relative to fixed reference points (non-deictically) as in example (2):

- (2) *Uma uya eMahlekwane wenyuka ngendlela eqonde enyakatho weqe umfula ugudle intaba ukuze ufike esihlahleni somkhiwane bese uthatha indlela ...*
If you are going to Mahlekwane you go up the road North, cross the river, go along the mountain until you come to a wild fig tree then you take the road ...

Finally, referents may also be specified relative to other referents, as in example (3):

- (3) *Ake ungilandele ithunga elingaphambili kwemoto ngaphansi kweshelufu.*
Please fetch me the pail which is in front of the car under the shelf.

4. DEICTIC SPATIAL REFERENCE

The most common way of referring to referents, is to refer to them by either employing deictic terms or describing them deictically.

Spatial deixis concerns the encoding of spatial locations relative to anchorage points in the speech event. These anchorage points are generally the locations of the speech participants; the speaker and addressee.

In terms of deictically specified orientation, most languages grammaticalise at least a distinction between proximal (close to the speaker), medial (some distance away from the speaker) and distal (remote from speaker) but others (such as the African languages) make much more complex distinctions.

In Zulu the spatial deictic distinctions are encoded in demonstrative pronouns, locative copulative demonstratives, deictic verbs and deictic adverbs such as *lapha* (here), *lapho* (there), *laphaya* (there yonder), *nganeno* (on this side), *ngaphesheya* (across [the river]) and *ngapha* (on this side), *ngale* (on the other side).

A number of motion verbs with stems such as *-za* - come (towards the speaker's location); *-ya* - go (away from the speaker's location); *-letha* - bring (towards the speaker's location) and *-goduka* - go to (my) home; *-emuka* - go away from (my) home, encode the direction of the motion relative to participants in the speech event. The deictic nature of certain verbs have been treated extensively by amongst others Lyons, Combrink, De Klerk and De Stadler. Examples (4) and (5) illustrate the speaker-centredness of the verb stems *-za* and *-ya*:

- (4) *Uma uza ngaseMpangeni ubongivakashela.*
If you come to (where the speaker is) Empangeni you must visit me.
- (5) *Uya nini ekhaya?*
When are you going (away from the speaker) home?

4.1 The covert temporal deictic relevance of spatial deixis

Spatial deixis always incorporates a covert temporal deictic relevance which is either coding time or reference time. Spatial deixis may thus manifest itself as the denotation of spatial orientation relative to:

- the location of the speaker at coding time;
- the location of the addressee at coding time;
- the expected location of the speaker at reference time; and
- the expected location of the addressee at reference time.

The following four examples illustrate these possibilities respectively:

- (6) *Yiza lapha kimi, Mntanami.* (a)
Come here to me, my child.
- (7) *Ubongibekela iqashana lenyama lapho.* (b)
You must keep me a small piece of meat there.
- (8) *Ngizokulinda lapho esangweni kusasa ekuseni ngo-6.* (c)
I'll wait for you there at the gate tomorrow morning at six.
- (9) *Ngiyokuvakashela-ke lapho eShowe ngomhlomunye.* (d)
I'll visit you there in Eshowe the day after tomorrow.

The following figures indicate this relational distance between referent, speaker and addressee, portrayed by the three demonstrative pronoun forms. The R indicates the position of the referent (in the centre of the concentric circles) while the possible position of the speaker is indicated by S, and that of the addressee by A. (Note that the referent is central to this referential system and not the speaker.)

FIGURE 2a Referent is close to speaker

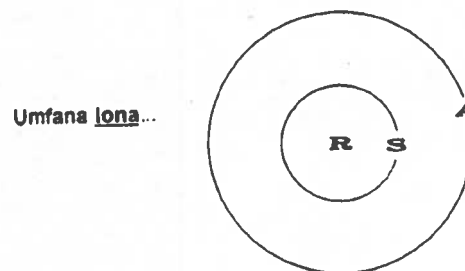


FIGURE 2b Referent is close to addressee

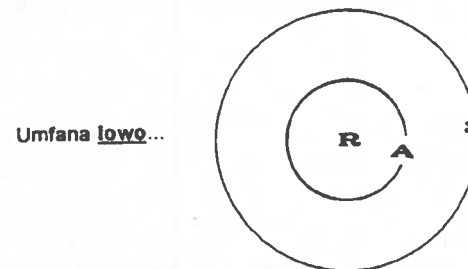
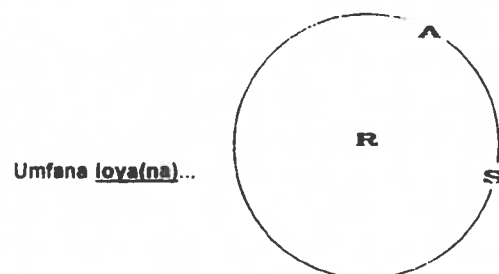


FIGURE 2c Referent is remote from speaker & addressee



4.2 The subcategories of DEIXIS

The notion of deixis is introduced to treat the orientational features of language in terms of the speaker: the particular person making an utterance, the addressee: the person to whom the utterance is addressed, the particular place, the particular time, the particular social context and the particular discourse context within which the utterance is made. Deixis is generally (but not invariably) organised in an egocentric way. The typical situation of utterance is egocentric: as the role of speaker is transferred from one participant to another in a conversation, so the "centre" of reference of the deictic system switches. Deictic expressions refer to a deictic field of language whose zero point - the pragm - is fixed by the person who is speaking (*mina/ngi/-ngi* - I), the central place being the speaker's location at speech time (*lapha* - here) and the central time being the time at which the speaker encodes the utterance (*manje* - now).

The five basic subcategories of deixis are person, spatial, temporal, social and discourse deixis. The analysis of deixis often involves the overlapping of these five deictic categories: thus in Zulu, greetings may include person, temporal and social deixis; imperatives include person, temporal and social deixis while demonstratives involve person, temporal, spatial and discourse deixis.

4.3 Gestural, symbolic and anaphoric reference

Fillmore (1975) indicates that it is essential to distinguish between the deictic and non-deictic usage of deictic terms as most deictic linguistic units also have non-deictic usages. He, furthermore, distinguishes between the referential subcategories gestural, symbolic and anaphoric. Examples (10), (11), (12) and (13) are instances of gestural, symbolic and anaphoric reference of spatial deictic terms respectively. The type of referentiality will depend on the nature of the information which actually identifies the location.

- (10) *Wena ungahlala lapha, wena uhlale lapha, wena uhlale lapha.*
You may sit here, and you here, and you here.

Gestural deictic reference (such as [10] above and [11] below) requires a moment-by-moment physical monitoring of the speech event. The following is an example of an utterance which can *only* be used gesturally:

- (11) *Mina!*
Here, take it!

Symbolic deictic usage (such as that of example [12] below) makes reference only to contextual co-ordinates available to the speech participants. No moment-to-moment monitoring of the speech event is necessary for the interpretation of these deictic terms.

- (12) *USabela lapho kuwe na?*
Is Sabela there with you?

Symbolic usage of deictic terms require knowledge of the basic spatio-temporal parameters of the speech event only (and on occasion participant-role and discourse and social parameters) for their interpretation.

Anaphoric reference (such as that in [13] below) is strictly speaking non-deictic.

- (13) *Ngizifake esibayeni izinkomo ngazishiya lapho.*

I drove the cattle into the kraal and left them there.

Example (14) is also a manifestation of the non-deictic use of a deictic term:

- (14) *Isabizwana "mina" sikhomba umuntu okhulumayo.*
The pronoun "I" refers to the speaker.

4.4 The expression of deixis with reference to first and second person

The demonstrative pronouns used for first and second person singular and first and second person plural are those of class 1 and 2 respectively. This is because of the fact that noun class 1 (with its plural in class 2) is the human class and the categories of first and second person necessarily refer to human beings. In, for instance, "izinganekwane", animals and other objects are linguistically personified and are in terms of their gender system re-categorised as [+human] and may as such take first and second person pronominal forms including demonstrative pronominal forms. Class 1 agreement pronominal forms (e.g. *yena/lo/lowo*) with reference to *uchakide* (mongoose), *unogwaja* (rabbit), *ufudu* (tortoise), are frequently found.

While the category of third person may combine with such categories as definite or indefinite and proximate or remote, the category of first and second person cannot combine freely with these categories. First person is always definite and proximate and cannot combine with the category remote and is therefore mutually exclusive with second and third distance demonstratives. Third person may, however, be proximate to speaker, proximate to addressee or remote from both speaker and addressee. It is for this reason that (15) is grammatical but *(16) is ungrammatical.

(15) *Loya mfana ukhuluma nawe, Mnumzane.*
That boy yonder (he) is talking to you, sir.

*(16) *Loya mina ngikhuluma nawe, Mnumzane.*
That I yonder, (I) am talking to you, sir.

The category of second person is also restricted in its combination with the categories proximal, medial and remote (or as in the case of the African languages; proximate to speaker, and remote from both speaker and addressee). The second person cannot be referred to employing the first or third distance demonstrative. Example *(17) is for this reason ungrammatical.

*(17) *Wena lo/loya usaphila na?*
You here/yonder, are you still well?

A speaker may only use the demonstrative pronoun of the first distance with reference to second person when establishing the identity of an addressee who is very close to him for instance if he bumps into the addressee in the dark. He may thus use a question as formulated in (18) to establish the identity of someone he has bumped into in a dark room.

(18) *Nguwe lo, Mandla?*
Is this you, Mandla?

Distance one or three demonstrative pronominal forms may be used with first and second person when referring to a photograph and asking a question such as that contained in example (19):

(19) *Nguwe lo/loya omi ngemuva?*
Is that you standing here/there at the back?

Demonstrative pronouns for first and second person are thus used only (*gesturally*) in referring to an image of the speaker or addressee.

5. THE DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOMINAL FORMS OF ZULU

As previously mentioned, the demonstrative pronouns of Zulu are generally inappropriately described as distance one (proximal to the speaker) distance two (medial to the speaker) and distance three (distal from the speaker).

The spatial deictic demonstrative pronouns of Zulu (and the other African languages) are not grammaticalizations of spatial relations of referents in relation to the speaker where the speaker is the centre of the referential system as commonly found in other languages. Instead, demonstrative expressions are interpreted in terms of three reference points; the referent, the speaker and the addressee. If the referent is close to the speaker, the speaker uses distance one demonstrative forms; if the referent is closer to the addressee, the speaker uses distance two demonstrative forms and if the referent is distal from both speaker and addressee, the distance three demonstrative forms are used to locate the referent spatially. In those cases where the referent is at an equal distance from the speaker and addressee, either of the two forms generally associated with the referent's *closeness or remoteness from the speaker* may be used. Thus either distance one or distance three forms may be used.

The second distance demonstrative pronoun *lapho* (there) contrasts with first distance demonstrative pronoun *lapha* (here) on a relational dimensional basis indicating the location of the referent *proximal to the addressee*, but distal from speaker, at coding time. Example (20) is a typical manifestation of such an expression:

(20) *Uqhubeka kanjani umsebenzi lapho?*
How is the work progressing there (where you are)?

The distance two demonstrative pronominal forms express a relational spatial situation where the referent is proximal to the addressee. As long as the distance between the referent and addressee is smaller than that between the referent and speaker the second distance demonstrative is used to refer to the referent even if the speaker is distal from the addressee.

To stress the *remoteness of a referent in relation to the speaker and addressee*, the suffix *-ya* is often reduplicated. Demonstrative pronouns such as those in (21) and (22) are not uncommon.

(21) *Izintaba leziyaya ...*
Those mountains over there...

(22) *Izintaba leziyayaya ...*
Those mountains over there, yonder ...

The demonstrative pronouns are often used to distinguish a particular referent deictic-contrastively from other similar referents within the deictic spatial field established by the location of these referents, the speaker and addressee. The following figures

illustrate the deictic relational contrasts holding between the coordinates respectively. (S indicates the location of the speaker, A the location of the addressee and R₁ the location of the referent and R₂ and R₃ the location of other similar referents.)

Figure 3a Schematic representation of distance one demonstrative

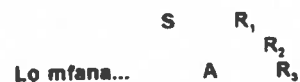


Figure 3b Schematic representation of distance two demonstrative



Figure 3c Schematic representation of distance three demonstrative



6. THE LOCATIVE COPULATIVE DEMONSTRATIVE

The locative copulative demonstratives of Zulu also consist of a tripartite system which pivots around the referent in the same way as the demonstrative pronouns. The locative copulative demonstratives are gestural expressions *par excellence*. The referent needs to be demonstrable in the speech context. The referent in example (23) needs to be demonstrable within the speech context.

- (23) *Nanti ihawu ekwakungelikababa.*
Here is the shield which belonged to my father.

7. INTERACTION BETWEEN DEICTIC AND NON-DEICTIC SPATIAL REFERENCE

The understanding of the egocentrism of deictic spatial expressions depends on a high degree of decentering. One has to first decode the use of expressions such as

ngaphambili kwesihlahla (in front of the tree) successfully as relative to the speaker in order to be able to use it correctly oneself. According to Tanz (1982) children still acquiring language, have difficulty with the complexity of deictic referentiality. Deictic expressions in one language need not be deictic in another language.

The ambiguity that exists in English expressions such as "behind the car" does not exist in Zulu. Where the car is orientated in such a way that the speaker is standing some distance away facing the side, a request such as "Please fetch the ball. It is behind the car." is ambiguous. If the addressee interprets "behind" as meaning "on the far side of the car in relation to the speaker" (in other words if he interprets the reference deictically) then he will search on the opposite side of the car. If, however, he interprets "behind" as referring to the actual rear end of the car (thus non-deictically) he will search at the tail end of the car. In Zulu this system of reference is non-ambiguous. If reference is made to a location in terms of a referent which has a natural front and back the referential expressions will inevitably be *non-deictic*, thus:

- (24) *Ibhola lingaphambili kwemoto.*
The ball is in front of the car. (The ball is at the front end of the car.)

or:

- (25) *Ibhola lingemuva kwemoto.*
The ball is behind the car. (The ball is at the rear end of the car.)

Such utterances will always be interpreted in relation to the car (non-deictically). These two expressions will inevitably refer to the "headlight end" and "tail end" of the car. To refer to the opposite side of the car in relation to the speaker, another type of (deictic) expression is used. The speaker then has to use *ngale* (at the opposite side) as in:

- (26) *Ngilandele ibhola ngale kwemoto.*
Fetch me the ball on the other side of the car.

or if it is on the side of the car closest to the speaker:

- (27) *Ngilandele ibhola nganeno kwemoto.*
Fetch me the ball on this side of the car.

The Zulu terms *ngaphambili/phambili* (in front of) and *ngemuva/emuva* (at the back of) may only be used deictically if they are used to locate referents which do not have a natural front and back. In a sentence such as:

- (28) *Impunzi isithela emuva kwesihlahla.*
The duiker disappeared behind the tree.

emuva (behind) necessarily refers to the side of the tree furthest away from the speaker.

Demonstrative determiners interact with non-deictic terms for spatial organisation to yield complex descriptions of reference in terms of surfaces, spaces, enclosures and containers and fronts, backs, tops, sides, widths, lengths and heights. The interaction between deictic and non-deictic reference is evident in an utterance such as:

(29) *Nansi le ncwadi oyifunayo ngakwesokudla ngaphansi kwebomvu nganeno kwemnyama.*

Here is this book you are looking for underneath the red one next to the black one on the right hand side.

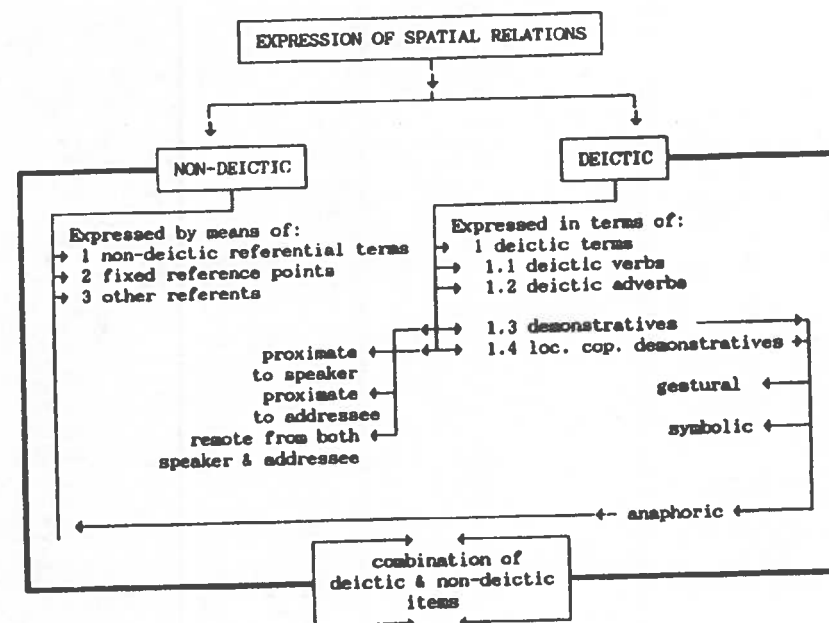
8. DEFINITENESS AND THE DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOMINAL FORMS

A number of linguists including Lyons, Hawkins, De Klerk and Levinson have noted the close relationship between third person pronouns, the definite article and demonstrative pronouns. This is clear when regarding the English and Afrikaans forms: the - this; die - hierdie. Lyons and Levinson have furthermore expressed the view that definiteness may perhaps be an essential deictic notion.

The African languages have no equivalent grammatical structure to the definite article found in the Indo-European languages. In Zulu the inclusion of the pre-prefix renders the noun to be used to express particularity while the deletion of the pre-prefix occurs in contexts where the noun is used in its generic meaning. As particularity and definiteness are semantic concepts closely related, it is argued that this serves as additional semantic evidence to endorse the postulation which includes the pre-prefix as part of the constituting morphological structure of the demonstrative pronoun.

9. SUMMARY: THE EXPRESSION OF SPATIAL RELATIONS IN ZULU

The above exposition may be summarised as follows:



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SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONSEQUENCES OF LANGUAGE CONTACT: EVIDENCE FROM XHOSA*

Henry M. Thipa
University of Transkei, Umtata

1. INTRODUCTION

Analyses of Xhosa seem to dwell predominantly on phonology, morphology and tonology. Syntax and semantics have received very little attention while sociolinguistics, the background to the present paper, seems to be neglected.

This paper is, therefore, partly an attempt to focus on Xhosa as a language, and partly an attempt to contribute in a neglected field in the study of African languages in the Republic of South Africa.

The migration and urbanization of native Xhosa speakers and their general exposure to Western cultural influence and experiences have had some profound influence on Xhosa. It is some of that influence and its results that are the subject of the present paper.

The paper attempts to show some of the ways in which the results of interlanguage contact, and by implication intercultural contact, manifest themselves. It is suggested that some of those ways are to be found in the following:

- a) phonology
- b) codeswitching
- c) semantic shift

It is partly against the background of the pioneer work of Labov (1966) on language variety that the present paper is conceived. It is also partly conceived against a heterogeneous background of developments in the area of sociolinguistic aspects of language contact, with special reference to African languages. Some of the examples which come to mind are Epstein (1969) and Richardson (1963) for Bemba in Zambia, Margaret Ball (1971) in the case of Swahili, Andrzejewski (1971) for Somali, Moshia (1971) in the case of Luganda. Myers Scotton and Okeju (1972) deal with Ateso, a Ugandan language; Cooper and Horvath (1973) in the case of Ethiopia and Akere (1981) for Nigerian languages. Nearer home there is Schuring (1983, 1985) for Northern Sotho.

Consideration will now be given to some of the areas where, albeit in varying degrees, interlanguage influence manifests itself. In order to set the scene, Kashoki's, statement is perhaps relevant: