

Anchoredness in nature and environment – linguistic evidence from Aboriginal Australia

Dany Adone, E.L. Maypilama & Melanie Brück

It is uncontroversial that language reflects cultural norms. This reflection is apparent on syntactic semantic and pragmatic levels, as well as across modalities. In this paper we discuss how language is used as a vehicle for cultural approaches to nature and environment, focussing on the aspect of cultural anchoredness within the triangle of land, language, and people in Aboriginal Australia. We will discuss how shared cultural knowledge and the deep rootedness of Aboriginal people within their land is reflected in their everyday communication. In the first part we take a broad view on ‘language’ to encompass language use in the two modalities - speech and signs. In order to tease apart some aspects of the very complex relationship between language and culture we will take a close look at co-speech gesture contexts. We will address the different possible realisations of anchoredness in the environment, such as inherent deictic features, the use of an absolute frame of reference, and kinship terms. In the second part we analyse data from small Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. An overview of the cultural approaches towards the connection of land, language, and people of this community will be given. Furthermore, we will analyse bimodal data illustrating the anchoredness of the community within this system. In the third part we compare the results with data coming from another small community on the Seychelles and discuss the relevance of geographical features as well as the size of those communities for cultural anchoredness within the environment.

Bio

Dany Adone is Professor and Chair of Applied English Linguistics at the University of Cologne. Her research focus lies in the fields of Indigenous Languages of Australia (spoken and signed) and Language Contact. Her most recent publications are *A Grammar Sketch of Yolŋu Sign Language* (2014, with E.L. Maypilama, Munich: Lincom Europe) and *The Sociolinguistics of Alternate Sign Languages of Arnhem Land* (2015, with E.L. Maypilama, Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts, Vol 16)

E. L. Maypilama has a strong track record of involvement in participatory and action research projects funded by the Commonwealth around Indigenous health, education and community development. She is currently coordinating research at Elcho Island for an NHMRC funded research project led by Menzies School of Health Research. She was foundational in establishing the Yalu Marnggithinyaraw Centre at Galiwin'ku, a centre using traditional Yolgnu clan structures of governance and management to promote physical, spiritual and emotional health of Yolgnu people. In 2014 Charles Darwin University awarded her an Honorary Doctorate for her extensive research work over many years.

Melanie Brück is a research assistant at the Chair of Applied English Linguistics at the University of Cologne. She is currently finalising her PhD project documenting multimodal reference in Seychelles Creole. Her research interests concern the interaction of speech and gesture and the interface between language and culture.