Usage patterns and constraints on Absolute Frames of Reference
A view from Australia

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My Interests

- How do genetic affiliation, location, landscape features, climate zone, and cultural systems influence choice and usage of Absolute Frame of Reference in Australian languages?
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- What are the most influential factors governing choice of absolute Frames of Reference?
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- What are the most influential factors governing choice of absolute Frames of Reference?
- What happens at boundary areas?
Absolute Frames of Reference in Australia

Variety of Systems, including:

- compass- (e.g. Warlpiri (Laughren, 1978))
- wind- (Kala Lagaw Ya (Stirling, 2011, 182; Bani, 2001))
- river drainage- (Dyirbal (Dixon, 1972))
- ocean- (Iwaidja (Edmonds-Wathen, 2011); Edmonds-Wathen, 2012, 142-143)
- and tide-based (Bardi (Bowern, 2012, 30))
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- and **tide-based** (Bardi (Bowern, 2012, 30)
- as well as **no absolute FoR**, but named landmarks, demonstratives and pointing (Murrinh-Patha (Blythe et al., 2016))
(1) ngu-rnalu ya-ni kanimparra, kaarnimpa
CAT-1PL.EXCL go-PAST downstream east.along
nyawa. Nangala-lu paraj pu-nya
this subsect-ERG find pierce-PAST
ngu-ø-ø ngarlu.
CAT-3SG.SBJ-3SG.OBJ honey

‘We came downstream along the eastern side here. (Then)
Nangala found some bush honey.’ (VD: FM07_a021: Narrative) (Meakins, 2011, 49)
(2)  yinya nende dangid-en pud  
man  thing/person southeasterly-DIR chest  
wu-rrunguny, miri-nen pai-ga-ma  
3PL-go/be.IPfv, sun-DIR change.location-come-CONT  
‘the men are facing towards the southeasterly wind direction, towards the east (where the sun comes up)’  
(Hoffmann fieldwork, 2012)
Usage Patterns

Dependent on scale:

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- while Pama-Nyungan languages make widespread use of absolute systems in large- and small scale descriptions (Edmonds-Wathen, 2012)
Usage Patterns

Dependent on context in MalakMalak:

- the wind-based system is limited to motion and orientation settings (in Terrill and Burenhult (2008)’s sense)
MalakMalak absolute orientation, wind-based

(3) **nul-yen**       **wu-tju=we**
 northwesterly-DIR 3PL-stand.PST=FOC

‘they stood towards the northwesterly wind direction’
"MalakMalak absolute Frame of Reference, wind-based"
Usage Patterns

Dependent on context in MalakMalak:

- the wind-based system is limited to motion and orientation settings (in Terrill and Burenhult (2008)’s sense)
- the sun-based system can additionally be used in deictic FoR settings
(5) miri tjalk-ma yina, yina miri
sun go.down-CONT this this sun
pai-ga-ma yina
change-location-come-CONT this
‘this one is west and that one is east’
Usage Patterns

Dependent on context in MalakMalak:

- the wind-based system is limited to motion and orientation settings (in Terrill and Burenhult (2008)’s sense)
- the sun-based system can additionally be used in deictic FoR settings
- the riverbank system is most flexible in allowing for deictic and non-deictic FoR settings in addition to orientation and motion descriptions (Hoffmann, sub)
MalakMalak absolute FoR, riverbank-based, deixis independent

(6) duk puyunduk **kinangga**
place underneath north.eastern.bank/this.side
yi-de  chair=we
3SG.M-go/be.PRS chair=FOC

‘it is underneath, on the northeastern bank’s side, of the chair’ 2012
Questions to address

1. How do the systems of newly emerging languages such as the varieties of Kriol, or mixed languages such as Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri (Meakins, 2011; OShannessy and Meakins, 2016) use absolute FoR? Are the systems similar to those of their substrate or superstrate languages? To what extend are they dependent on extra-linguistic factors? What cognitive and linguistic shifts are taking place?
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2. Are there universal uses of absolute directionals across the Australian continent or can systematic variation be found with regards to genetic and/or typological variation? What roles do landscape and geographic conditions, climate and seasonal patterns play (Palmer, 2015)?
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3. What wider implications for cross-linguistic generalization are evident from observing spatial frames of reference in a typologically and culturally relatively homogeneous, but genetically diverse area such as Australia?
Mamak!
Section 1

References


