

Spatial deixis in Aghu¹

Of all the Greater Awyu languages, the Aghu language, spoken (in the 1950s) by some 1,500 people in the area between the Digul river and the Mapi river in Papua, seems to have the most extensive paradigm of spatial expressions. Demonstratives, modifying the position of a Figure (F) relative to a viewpoint (V), express both the Figure's distance from V and its position relative to V. For expressing the distance, the language makes a threefold division into 'close', 'rather close' and 'far', while the position can be expressed according to different frames of reference, like *su* vs *sü* 'up' vs 'down', or *oto* vs *üko* 'uphill' vs. 'downhill'. The same formatives as those used in demonstratives are also used as part of verbs, which express both the fact that the Figure is moving, and the direction in which it is moving: either from or towards V.

The following table gives a partial paradigm of demonstratives and verbs of motion.

Relative position	Demonstrative	Go towards	Come towards
'this here'	nego	-	-
'this here rather close'	wo / wüo	-	-
'that one over there'	xo	-	-
'that one rather close'	xogo 'that one rather close'	ogo	mada
up	xosu 'that one up'	osu	moso
up + rather close	xogsu 'that one up rather close' etc.	ogsu	manomoso
down	xosü	osü	mi
down + rather close	xogsü	ogsü	manimi
uphill	xoto	oto	mata
downhill	xüko	üko	mida
upstream	xosoxo	osoxo	moda
downstream	xüoxo	wüoxo	mida
other side (across)	xonu	onu	mono

In my presentation I plan to give a more elaborate overview of the different formatives that make up demonstratives and verbs of motion, and to present more details about the semantics of the system, including conventionalized implicatures (e.g. that *su* is used for going 'up' into a house, even if the house is on the ground). In the second part of my presentation, I will show how a careful analysis of the use of motion verbs can serve to analyze the structure of Aghu narratives. As indicated above, motion verbs and demonstratives reflect a certain viewpoint from which the narrative is perceived. Careful study of motion verbs and demonstratives reveals how these may reflect a change in location or viewpoint from which the story is perceived. As such, they can be seen as indications of paragraph boundaries, and can thus be used as a valuable tool in analyzing the way in which Aghu narratives are structured.

Drabbe, Petrus. 1957. *Spraakkunst van het Aghu-dialect van de Awju-taal*. 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.

¹ The data in this presentation are all taken from Drabbe (1957). This publication is currently translated into English (and reanalyzed at places), as part of the project 'the Awyu-Dumut languages in their linguistic and cultural context' at VU University Amsterdam.