

## **Spatial and non-spatial deixis in Kata Kolok: pointing out differences**

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Kata Kolok is a sign language isolate that is indigenous to a village community of North Bali. The sign language emerged in response to a sudden rise of hereditary deafness within the population and has been acquired by five generations of deaf signers since. Kata Kolok is currently used in a wide range of social settings ranging from liturgy, education, politics, and gossip. In addition to 48 deaf signers, the language is also used by approximately 1,200 hearing signers, with varying degrees of proficiency. In addition to the sign language, the community has also developed unique socio-cultural adaptations to deafness including special offices for the deaf men and a shared belief in a deaf god (Marsaja 2008).

With regard to the conference theme, sign languages are particularly intriguing in that they not only discuss space: they exist in space. Signers are found to exploit the iconic affordances of spatial forms to convey both spatial and non-spatial deixis including the expression of grammatical person and time. However, Kata Kolok differs from previously described sign languages with respect to the ways in which and the extent to which the articulatory signing space is deployed to express these meanings. This paper identifies the main differences between Kata Kolok and previously described sign languages with regard to sign-spatial structures in the domain of space, person, and time deixis.

Unlike other sign languages, pointing signs indicating third person referents are not projected onto the signing space in front of the signer, but rather, these pointing signs are motivated by geographic locations. As a result the language exhibits a structural ambiguity between person and location references that can only be resolved within the discourse context. Related to the use of geographic pointing, Kata Kolok signers do not deploy spatial verb inflection: they do not manipulate transitive verbs in the signing space to indicate the core arguments. Finally, Kata Kolok does not exhibit evidence of a body-anchored timeline that project the future to the front, and the past to the signer's back. Rather, Kata Kolok signers deploy a celestial timeline to indicate the times of day and night. This presentation charts the unusual features of Kata Kolok's deployment of signing space and its conceptual relationship to the general Balinese conceptualisation of space (a geocentric landmark-based system; Wassmann & Dasen 1998).

Marsaja, I. G. (2008). *Desa Kolok - A Deaf Village and its Sign Language in Bali, Indonesia*. Nijmegen: Ishara Press.

Wassmann, J., & Dasen, P. R. (1998). Balinese Spatial Orientation: Some Empirical Evidence of Moderate Linguistic Relativity. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 4, 688-711.