

The Expression of Deixis in Limassa

Dissertation Project: A Documentation of the remnant Baka-Gundi Language Limassa

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1 Introduction

+ Limassa (ISO: bme) is an endangered language spoken mainly in Bomassa and Kabo in the northern Republic of the Congo (see Map. 1)

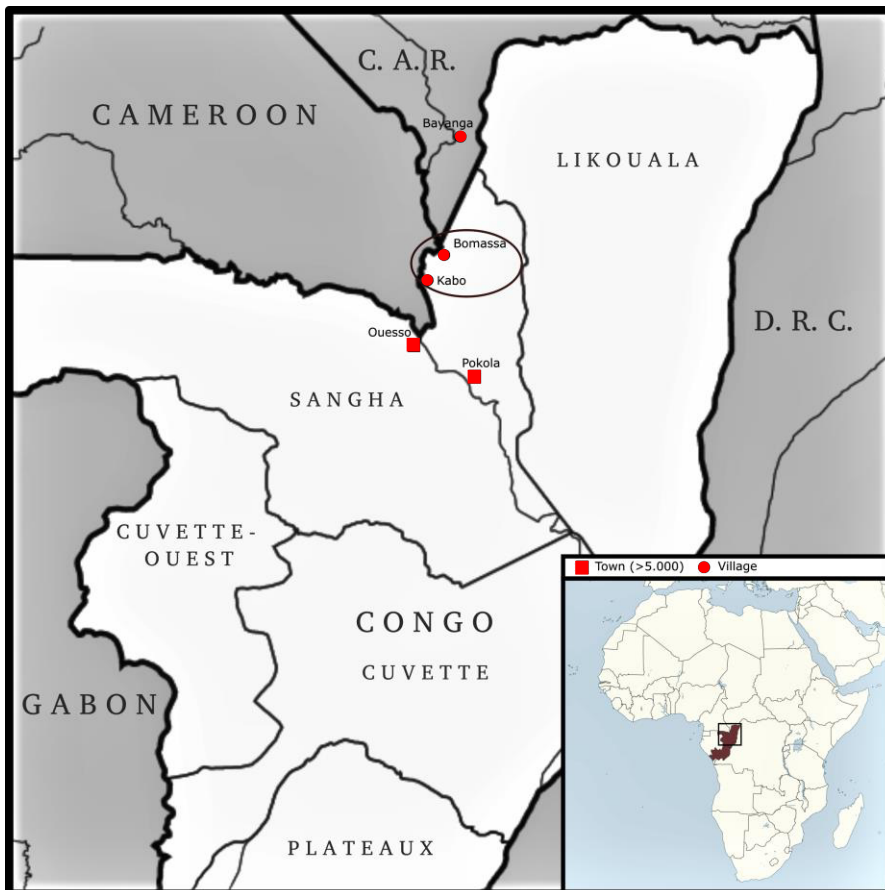
-Otherwise surrounded mostly by wildlife conservation parks as well as logging areas

+ previously only very scarcely researched

-Linguistic data available - three short word lists, two of which older than a century (Ouzilleau (1911: 90, VIII) with ca. 60 entries, Bruel (1911: 124-5), and Klieman (1997: 290))

-Mostly basic nouns and verbs, low numerals, and quality expressions

-No substantial linguistic information on grammar available



Map 1: Geographic distribution of Limassa

Niger-Congo

UBANGI

Mundu-Baka

Western

Baka-Gundi

Baka pygmy complex (Baka, Ganzi, Ngombe)

Limassa

Ngundi

River

Monzombo (Monzombo, Kpala, Yango)

Bwaka (Ngbaka-Ma'bo, Gilima)

Gbanzili (Gbanziri, Buraka)

Eastern

Mayogo-Bangba

Mayogo, Bangba

Mundu

Mundu

Figure 1: Mundu-Baka Classification

2. Theoretical background

+ the concept of deixis in linguistics – a definition:

“A term used in linguistic theory to subsume those features of language which refer directly to the personal, temporal or locational characteristics of the situation within which an utterance takes place, whose meaning is thus relative to that situation” (Crystal 2008: 133).

+ time, place and person of utterance = deictic centre (also called origo)

-roughly equivalent to the speaker's location at the time of the utterance (Diessel 1999: 36)

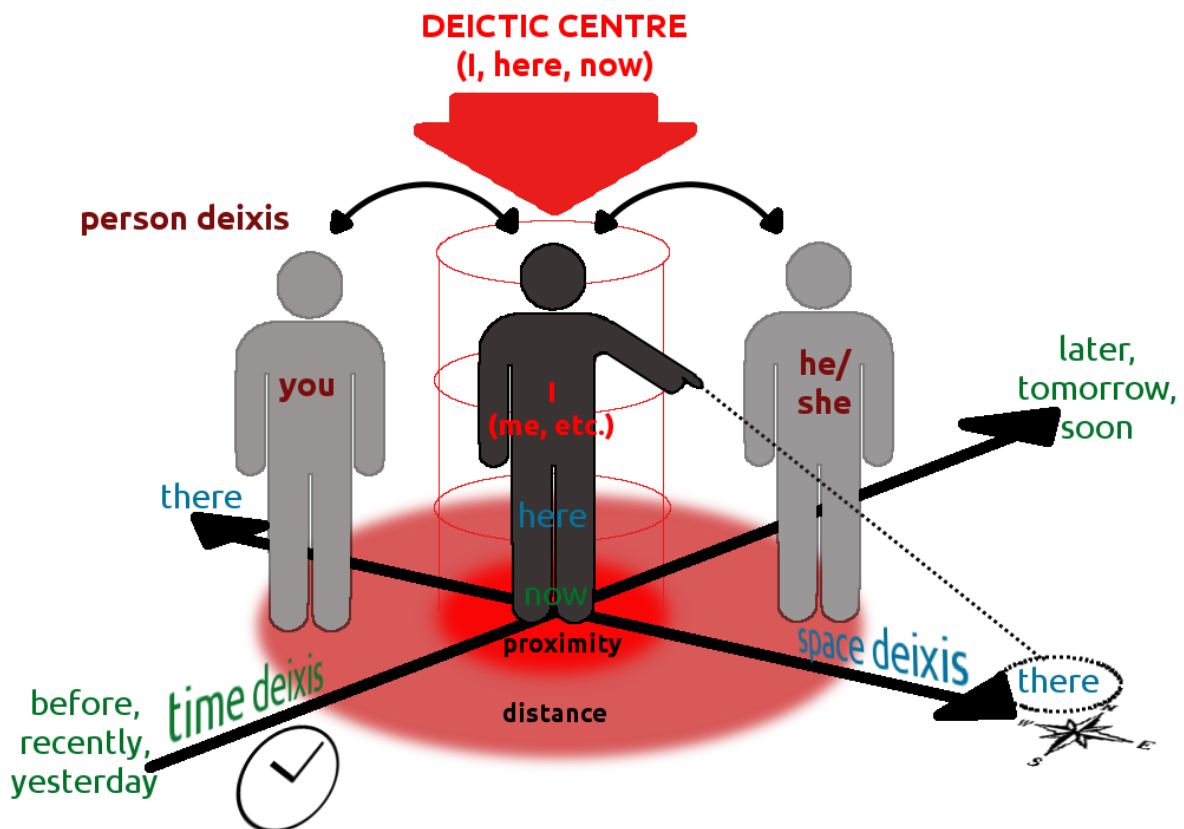


Figure 2: Deictic system¹

+ Diessel (2012) with reference to Fillmore (1997) Levinson (2004) et al. distinguishes five categories which he divides into two types

-three traditional notions of deixis: person deixis, place deixis, and time deixis

-two further categories: social deixis and discourse deixis

¹ Taken from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deixis#/media/File:Deixis.png> - CC BY-SA 3.0

Deictic category	Deixis type	Definition (Diessel 2012: 2414)
Person deixis	Participant deixis	deictic phenomena related to the speech participants
Social deixis		
Place deixis	Object deixis	deictic phenomena that involve a referential link to elements of the situational or discourse context
Time deixis		
Discourse deixis		

Table 1: Deixis types and deictic categories

The two types of deixis serve different communicative functions and are encoded by different types of expressions (Diessel 2012: 2414)

3 Deixis in Limassa

3.1 Participant deixis

+ subsumes person deixis and social deixis (Diessel 2012)

+ indicate the semantic role of speaker and hearer in the event relevant to a given utterance

-may encode aspects such as communicative role, number, ~~gender~~, and social rank

3.1.1 Person deixis

+ person deixis is expressed by pronouns – indicating the speaker (1st person), the hearer (2nd person), and third agents or patients relevant to the discourse (3rd person).

-express syntactic subjects and objects in place of nouns

+ pronouns in Limassa can encode communicative role, number, and social rank

+ pronominal system includes 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular and plural

-furthermore features 1DU.I

-shows an inclusive/exclusive opposition in 1PL resulting in two forms: 1PL.I and 1PL.E

	1M	1 + 2M	1A	1 + 2A	2M	2A	3M	3A
	1SG	1DU.I	1PL.E	1PL.I	2SG	2PL	3SG	3PL
EMPH	nga	nga(mu)	nga(l)o	ngayo	ngamo	ngí	ngé	ngó
SBJ	ma	nga(mu)	nga((l)o)	nga(yo)	mo	ʔí	ʔá/ʔé	wó/ʔó
DO	le	nga	nga((l)o)	nga(yo)	mo	ʔí	ngé/(l)é	ló/ʔó
IO (pe +)	nga	nga	nga((l)o)	nga(yo)	ngamo	ngì(o)	ngé	ngó
POSS	le	nga			mo/mu	ngí	ngé/lé	ngó
-POSS	-a	nga			-u	-í	-ε	-ó

M = minimal, A = augmented

Table 2: Synopsis of all pronoun paradigms

a) Subject pronouns

+ Limassa has a default SVO word order – subject pronouns normally precede the verb

- (1) **ma** kɔl-é zò bile wó le
 1SG arrive there at woman 1SG.POSS
 ‘I arrived there at my wife's house.’

- (2) **wó** gɔ ʔà gbíé
 3PL go LOC field
 ‘They went to the field.’

b) Object pronouns

+ Limassa has a default SVO word order – object pronouns normally follow the verb

- (3) poté ʔá wɔl-é lé
 hunger 3SG pass-PST 3SG.DO
 ‘The hunger overtook him.’

- (4) wa-projet = ó wó tɔ **pe nga** ma-kanisi²
 AGNT-project = PL 3PL give for 1PL.I.IO VI-idea
 ‘the people of the project give us these thoughts.’

+ the order of DO and IO is flexible

- (5) zóó mo mána **pe nga** mbéé *changement* nì
 good 2SG show for 1PL.I.IO small.amount change here
 ‘It's good that you show us a bit of change here.’

- (6) ma tím-é zɔ **pe ngamo**
 1SG send-PST food for 2SG.IO
 ‘I send you food’.

c) Possessive pronouns

+ possessive pronouns exist in two sets – a set of free pronominal forms

-inalienable concepts are juxtaposed to the possessum (7)

-alienable concepts are linked to the possessum by the possessive marker ʔa (8)

² **Ma-kanisi** (SG: **li-kanisi**) is the Lingala word for ‘idea’. The noun classes are 5/6.

- (7) tíla le = ó
uncle 1SG.POSS = PL
'my grandparents'
- (8) wó wóɔ lé s̀̀̀̀ na zo zo ʔa ngó
3PL pass with joke INF eat food POSS 3PL.POSS
'they pass by jokingly in order to eat their food.'

+ and a set of nominal suffixes, that is only used with inalienable concepts

- (9) tɔ pe nga **kp-u** (<stem: kpa 'hand')
give for 1SG.IO hand-2SG.POSS
'Give me your hand.'
- (10) làà **ny-a** ʔé lé lè múo (<stem: nì 'father')
child father-1SG.POSS 3SG with child twin
'My brother has twins.'

3.1.2 Social deixis

- + concerned with the social relationship between the speech act participants
- + social deixis can be expressed through address pronouns or through address nouns

3.2.1.1 Address pronouns

- + a familiar or polite type of social relationship is expressed through address pronoun
- 2nd singular = informal v. 2nd plural = formal, respectful

- (11) **mo** dɔ lé mbéé ʔé ná
2SG come with a.little thing REF
'You come with a few things here'
- (12) bela wani ʔí kɔ̀̀̀ ʔà tó-tó á
work that 2PL cut LOC RED-middle NEG:PROH
'You may not cut this work in the middle.'

+ 2nd person plural is furthermore used for polite imperative utterances

- (13) ʔí ʔíta na kubwa mù-télé mé-bo
2PL push INF open mouth-house spirit-person
'push to open the door, uncle.'

3.2.1.2 Absolut social deixis

+ use of certain nouns to address a relationship towards the hearer

- (14) **yànde** za-za ngo na nzó-nzó
 child RED-take water ATTR RED-drink
 ‘child, get me water to drink!’

- (15) **mé-bo** mo méé mundóbo yéé wonì péni
 spirit-person 2SG make manioc.bread PROX this how
 ‘uncle, how do you make this manioc bread?’

3.2 Object deixis

+ subsumes place deixis, time deixis, and discourse deixis (Diessel 2012)

+ place deixis, in referencing concrete locations or objects, provides the conceptual foundation for object deixis

-time deixis and discourse deixis are more abstract but in language commonly conceptualised in spatial terms making them more objective (Diessel 2012: 2417)

3.2.1 Place deixis

+ indicates the relative spatial distance of a referent in the speech situation vis-à-vis the deictic centre - fundamental to the organization of the deictic system

3.2.1.1 Demonstrative attributes

+ all languages have at least two demonstratives to position the speaker at either end of a spatial spectrum, namely near or far from the deictic centre (Diessel 1999: 36)

-resulting in the linguistic concepts PROXimal and DISTal

+ syntactically, all forms presented here are attributes to NPs, either preceding or following the head noun

+ usually accompanied by gestures to establish joint attention

Canonical position	N_	_N
yéé/yɔɔ	+	+
wonì/wanì		+
yéé wonì/yɔɔ wanì		+
ná		+

Table 3 Canonical syntactic position of demonstratives

+ semantically, all form pairs show a deictic contrast between proximal and distal.

+ **ná** encodes a referential demonstrative

PROX	DIST	REF
yéé	yɔɔ	
wonì	wanì	
yéé wonì	yɔɔ wanì	
		ná

Table 4 Semantic features of demonstratives

3.2.1.1.1 [yéé/yɔɔ N] and [N yéé/yɔɔ]

+ can take both positions preceding or following the NP-head

+ **function 1**: demonstrative determiner

- (16) *n-denge*³ yéé nì ?é ngóma lé
 X-manner this father 3SG speak with:3SG.DO
 ‘in this manner, his father speaks to him.’

+ **function2**: demonstrative pronoun - appears independently in argument position of verbs.

- (17) yéé ?á kɔl-é yíná wáá
 this 3SG arrive-PST still like.that
 ‘it still came to be like that.’

+ more information on the nature of yéé and yɔɔ can be inferred from comparative data on Baka (Kilian-Hatz 1995: 172f)

-yíê (DEM.PRO distance neutral) + kè (DEM.ADJ.PROX) = yéékè > BME = yéé

-yíê (DEM.PRO distance neutral) + kò (DEM.ADJ.DIST) = yéékò > BME = yɔɔ

3.2.1.1.2 [N wonì/wanì]

+ **function 1**: demonstrative determiner

- (18) bo wonì ?é lé mbù na kpéé
 person this 3SG with magic ATTR force
 ‘this person has powerful magic.’

- (19) ngó lé wa-gbá wó signer kpandó wonì
 2PL.EMPH and AGNT-village 3PL sign letter this
 ‘they (the white people) and the villagers, they signed this letter.’

³ *N-denge* (SG: *lo-lenge*) is the Lingala word for ‘manner’. The noun classes are 10/11.

+ **wanì** occurs particularly often in narrative style texts such as folk tales

(20) wó melè sítí ʔà ndá-ndá wanì
 3PL do bad LOC RED-place that
 ‘they do evil in that place.’

(21) ʔá kəl-é na bé bésí wanì
 3SG arrive-PST INF sing song that
 ‘she began to sing that song.’

+ **function2**: demonstrative pronoun - appears independently in argument position of verbs.

(22) ʔá dɔ-é na zo-zo wanì
 3SG come-PST INF RED-eat that
 ‘it (animal) came to eat that’

+ difference between **yéé/yɔɔ** and **wonì/wanì**

-formal: **yéé/yɔɔ** always precedes or follows head noun directly (takes PL-enclitic, when phrase final)

wonì/wanì functions as nominal attribute but is syntactically more distant to head noun (NUM, PL-enclitic can stand between head noun and **wonì/wanì**)

-functional: used to express discourse deixis (see §3.2.3 below)

3.2.1.1.3 [[N yéé] wonì] - [[N yɔɔ] wanì]

+ **function 1**: demonstrative determiner

(23) zá-zá gbà sí yéé wonì
 RED-take bundle fish PROX this
 ‘takes this prepared fish there’

+ **function2**: demonstrative pronoun

(24) ʔá mé-é bo na yéé wonì = ó
 3SG swallow-PST person ATTR PROX this = PL
 ‘He/it swallowed the people of it/this (village).’

3.2.1.1.4 [N ná]

+ **ná** is used to reference a place or object that is familiar or known to the speech act participants.

(25) ʔèsàù ná ʔé ngóma wáá
 tale REF 3SG speak like.that
 ‘the tale in question goes like this.’

(26) nga kəl-é ndé gbíé na bálà ʔà gaze ná
 1PL arrive-PST without field ATTR manioc LOC side REF
 ‘we do not have manioc fields anymore adjacent (to the village) there.’

3.2.1.2 Demonstrative adverbs

- + encode concrete locational information relevant to the discourse
- + canonically phrase final

3.2.1.2.1 nè - wò/zò

- + distance oriented reference expressing PROX or DIST from deictic centre

(27) nuu bo wó mu nga nè
 other person 3PL see 1PL.DO here
 ‘other people see us here.’

(28) εε wó mo ʔé wò
 INTRJ women 2SG.POSS 3SG there
 ‘Yes, your wife is there.’

- + zò is mostly used to indicate movement further away from the deictic centre.

(29) lakpe wanì nga gɔ-é zò ʔà gaze na kati zò
 day that 1PL go-PST there LOC side ATTR south there
 ‘that day we went that way down-river there (south)’

3.2.1.2.2 ʔó

- + referencing a location that was previously talked about
- LOC.REF

(30) kobo nga ʔé ʔó ʔà tó ʔa nga
 adult 1PL.I.POSS 3SG LOC.REF LOC middle POSS 1PL.I.POSS
 ‘Our big brother is there amongst us.’

- (31) bilì na ʔekàla ʔé yíná ʔó
 date ATTR fish.trap 3SG sill LOC.REF
 ‘The season of fishing with fish traps is still here.’

3.2.1.2.3 mó

- + referencing an indefinite location - -LOC.IDEF
- only very rarely accounted for in data

- (32) ʔé lé nuu gbíé mó ʔà kè Momboyo mó
 3SG with other field LOC.IDEF LOC proximity PN LOC.IDEF
 ‘there are other fields in a place near Momboyo.’

3.2.1.2.4 wòò – wáá

- + manner demonstrative
- the duality of the distance distinction appears to be less relevant here than in the other cases (yéé/yɔɔ, nè/wò, etc.) - **wáá** is clearly the default
- + phrase final, comes after V

- (33) mo sía míta na mbíla wòò ʔà Ngolio
 2SG watch oil ATTR palm like.this LOC PN
 ‘you see palm oil like this in Ngolio’

- (34) ma koa na ngóma wáá
 1SP be.able INF speak like.that
 ‘I can talk like that.’

3.2.1.3 Prepositional NPs to express positioning in space

- + this category contains relational expressions
- can be independent of speaker’s viewpoint

3.2.1.3.1 ʔà N_[PART]

- + preposition ʔà in combination with a noun denoting body (e.g. eye, back, chest) or relative place indications (e.g. side, bottom, proximity)
- used to express location in space with relation to subjects or objects (35)
- used to express location in space with relation landmarks - absolute frame of reference (36)

- (35) ʔá dù-é ʔà bú gíe
 3SG put-PST manioc LOC stomach basket
 ‘She put the manioc in the basket.’

- (36) ma nyí nuu gbíé ná ?à gaze Momboyo
 1SG know other field REF LOC side PN
 ‘I know another field there next to Momboya.’

- (37) ngaó nga ?éle ?à sídí
 1PL.E EMPH stay LOC place.behind
 ‘We stay behind.’

3.2.1.3.2 ?à pe

+ preposition ?à in combination with pe ‘back’ to express a spatial relation
 -pe can be used to express temporal deixis (see § 3.2.2.3.2)

- (38) ?à pe kenga
 LOC back mountain
 ‘on (top of) the mountain’

3.2.1.3.3 ?à ndándá

+ preposition ?à in combination with ndándá ‘place’ to express any location that is not further specified

- (39) ?é dal-é léa lo=ó ?à ndá-ndá kpóde
 3SG gather-PST seed tree=PL LOC RED-place one
 ‘She gathered the fruit in one place.’

3.2.1.4 Verbs encoding motion events

+ a set of certain verbs, most commonly ‘come’ and ‘go’, express movement towards or away from a location that is relevant in the utterance – usually the deictic centre

- (40) mbúnge=ó dɔ lé bela lakpe tous ?à Ngolio
 white.people=PL come with work day all LOC PN
 ‘White people come to Ngolio with work every day.’

- (41) wó gɔ ?à gbíé
 3PL go LOC field
 ‘They go to the field.’

3.2.2 Time deixis

- + the present is conceptualized as the temporal deictic centre
- + deictic treatment of time is based on the time-as-space metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980)
- in language time is commonly objectified in terms of spatial concepts (Evans 2004)

3.2.2.1 Temporal adverbs

- + adverbs a very small word class in Limassa in general
- includes a very short list of adverbs expressing temporal concepts – appear with high frequency
- all temporal adverbs of Limassa are unidirectional, i.e. they refer only into one direction along the time line

Lexeme	English
kene	now
yindo	now
yíná, ?elíná	still
?ebiye	tomorrow
?elani, lani	today
?engílí	yesterday
bisele	for now
múkpéé	later

Table 5: Time adverbs of Limassa

(42) ?é zeá to-pe ?engílí
 3SG hurt.PST back-3PL.POSS yesterday
 'He hurt his back yesterday.'

(43) mème mo go kene ?à ndá-ndá ná
 same 2SG go now LOC place LOC.REF
 'in the same way you now go to that place'

(44) ?á ngóma pe ?á na kóló ?ebiye
 3SG say that 3SG FUT arrive tomorrow
 'He says that he will arrive tomorrow.'

(45) nga sía bisele kpíní ?é na gbɔɔ múkpéé ?à sídí
 1PL watch for.now maybe 3SG FUT destroy later LOC after
 'we see this for now but maybe it can be destroyed one day'

+ temporal deixis in the form of time adverbs is often expressed by loans from French
 -this covers lexical meanings included in the Limassa data corpus as well as other concepts

(46) lakpe ʔa nyangòá *déjà*
 day 3SG clear.up:PST already
 ‘The day already cleared up.’

(47) ʔé yéé *maintenant* nga yangà bela na gbíé
 3SG PROX now 1PL exchange work ATTR field
 ‘now we have changed the field work’

3.2.2.2 Tense marking to express positioning in time

+ tense marking is a basic means to sort an event in on a time line

+ past tense encodes events that are located in the back of the temporal deictic centre
 -overtly encoded by verbal suffix *é* that attaches to the verb stem or replaces the final vowel
 (depending on the phonotactic structure of a verb)

(48) nga *ɔ-é* né ʔengílí na *banda*⁴ bela
 1PL come-PST here yesterday INF start work
 ‘We came here yesterday to start work.’

+ present tense encodes events that are located in the close proximity to the temporal deictic centre
 -expressed by verb stem without morphological attachments

(49) Bosi ʔá *kɔnɔ* wa
 PN 3SG cut fire
 ‘Bosi cuts wood.’

+ future tense encodes events that are located in front/ahead of the temporal deictic centre
 -overtly encoded by morpheme **na**

(50) kpini mo **na** **tima** pe nga mbéé
 Maybe 2SG FUT send REL 1SG be.few
 ‘Maybe you will send us something.’

⁴ **banda** (INF: **ko-banda**) is the Lingala word for ‘to star’.

3.2.2.3 Prepositional NPs to express positioning in time

+ this category can be divided into two subsets (analogous to § 3.2.1.3 above)

3.2.2.3.1 ?à N_[TEMP]

+ preposition ?à in combination with nouns expressing fixed temporal concepts

(51) ma lita bela ?à dukpe
 1SG begin work LOC morning
 'I start work in the morning.'

(52) ?à bitì na ?elani ma la-la de
 LOC night ATTR today 1SG RED-sleep NEG
 'in the night of today I did not sleep.'

+ preposition ?à in combination with nouns expressing more general temporal concepts

(53) lénge⁵ nga ?óó nè ?à mbeyi ?à Ngolio
 manner 1PL DIST.PST here LOC past.state LOC PN
 'the way we were before in Bomassa'

3.2.2.3.2 ?à pe

+ preposition ?à in combination with **pe** is sometimes used to express temporal deixis
 -the spatial meaning is the prime one and most likely historically underlying

(54) ?é kɔl-é ?à pe mo
 3SG arrive-PST LOC back 2SG.IO
 'He arrived after you (left).'

3.2.3 Discourse deixis

+ like the time deixis, discourse deixis is based on the metaphorical framing of time as space
 + means to make reference to chunks of information in past or following discourse
 -not co-referential with NP but with a proposition (Diessel 2012: 100f)
 + no forms are used exclusively to express discourse deixis
 -all forms used are primarily used to express place deixis (introduced in §3.2.1.1 above)

⁵ **lo-lenge** (XI) is the Lingala word for 'manner'. The NC-prefix is frequently omitted.

3.2.3.1 wonì/wanì

+ use of demonstrative **wonì/wanì** with pronominal function

Context: summing up the moral of the story

- (55) *et* ?èsàù ná ?é wáá ?á ngóma **wanì**
 and tale REF 3SG like.that 3SG say that
 ‘and that tale is like that, it speaks of that.’

3.2.3.2 yéé wonì/yɔɔ wanì

+ **yéé wonì/yɔɔ wanì** seem to be interchangeable with **wonì/wanì** in terms of discourse deictic use

Context: parents say to boy: “leave it and all will be good, nothing bad will happen”

- (56) ?é yɔɔ **wanì** nga ngóma pe ngé
 3SG DIST that 1PL.E say for 3SG.IO
 ‘That's what we say to you.’

3.2.3.3 ná

+ **ná** is used to reference a place or an object relevant to previous discourse

Context: a boy was told not to open a food package but he did. He was told that depending on his actions good or bad things would unfold

- (57) zoè ?é ?à bú-ε **ná** sí tí bó ?à
 good 3SG LOC stomach-3SG.POSS REF bad LOC.REF LOC
 bú-ε **ná**
 stomach-3SG.POSS REF
 ‘Good is in that and bad is in that here.’

4 Summary

Form	PoS	Participant Deixis		Object Deixis		
		Person Deixis	Social Deixis	Place Deixis	Time Deixis	Discourse Deixis
ma, mo, ʔé, nga...	PRO	+				
mo '2SG' & ʔí '2PL' pronoun	PRO	+	+			
yéé/yɔɔ	DEM.D DEM.P			+	(+)	+
wonì/wanì	DEM.D DEM.P			+	(+)	+
yéé wonì/yɔɔ wanì	DEM.D DEM.P			+	(+)	+
N _[ADDRESS]			+			
ná	DEM			+	+	+
nè - wò/zò	ADV			+		
ḃó	ADV			+		?
mó	ADV			+		
woo/wáá	ADV			+		?
ʔà N _[PART]	PREP + N			+		
ʔà N _[TEMP]	PREP + N				+	
ʔà pɛ	PREP + N			+	+	
ʔà ndándá	PREP + N			+		
verbs of motion	V			+		
kɛɛ	ADV				+	
yindo	ADV				+	
yíná, ʔelíná	ADV				+	
ʔebiye	ADV				+	
ʔelani, lani	ADV				+	
ʔenglí	ADV				+	
PRS tense	n/a				+	
PST tense	n/a				+	
FUT tense	n/a				+	

PoS = Part of speech, DEM.D= demonstrative determiner, DEM.P= demonstrative pronoun

Table 6: Overview of forms relevant to deictic categories

5 Abbreviations

ADV	Adverb	IO	Indirect object
AGNT	Agentiviser	NEG	Negative
DU	Dual	PL	Plural
DEM	Demonstrative	PN	Proper name
DIST	Distal	POSS	Possessive
DO	Direct object	PRO	Pronoun
E	Exclusive	PROX	Proximative
EMPH	Emphatic	PRS	Present
FUT	Future	PST	Past
I	Inclusive	SG	Singular
INF	Infinitive	V	Verb or vowel

6 Literature

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