Research Article
Nicholas Williams*

Place reference in Kula conversation

https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2017-0028

Received March 9, 2017; accepted November 15, 2017

Abstract: Place reference is pervasive in talk-in-interaction but remains less well understood than reference to persons. This paper explores place reference in Kula, an endangered non-Austronesian language of the Timor-Alor-Pantar family in southeastern Indonesia. Using a Conversation Analytic approach, it provides a description of both verbal and nonverbal resources for achieving successful reference to place in Kula. The paper also contributes to the cross-linguistic study of reference in conversation. The organization of practices for place reference in interaction in Kula is suggested to conform to more generic organizational principles, e.g. preferences for minimization and recognition, and fitting the formulation to the task-at-hand, while also reflecting properties specific to Kula, e.g. the use of elevationals in formulations of place reference.

Keywords: place reference, repair, elevationals, pointing, conversation analysis, Alor-Pantar languages

1 Introduction

This paper describes practices for referring to place in everyday conversation in Kula, a non-Austronesian language of the Timor-Alor-Pantar family spoken in southeastern Indonesia. As such, it contributes both to the description of this lesser-known language family and to the cross-linguistic study of reference in conversation, which to date has focused primarily (albeit not exclusively) on English and on reference to persons (Sacks and Schegloff 1979, Schegloff 1996, 2007, Enfield & Stivers 2007, Blythe 2009).

This study also demonstrates an interactional approach to basic grammatical description, taking a recurrent problem of everyday talk – how to formulate reference to place given the wide variety of options available to speakers of any language (see Enfield 2013 for a proposed list) – and identifying recurrent practices for resolving the problem (cf. Dingemanse & Floyd 2014). This approach facilitates an account of grammatical practice rooted in everyday interaction, arguably the most frequent and basic form of language use (see Gaudio 2003 for a dissenting view), and brings together both verbal and non-verbal practices under a single descriptive account.

The language of space has been the object of numerous studies for decades. Influential work on spatial categories in language and cognition by Levinson (2003) and Levinson and Wilkins (2006) established a typology of spatial frames of reference and other resources for referring to space in a wide range of languages, while papers in Burenhult and Levinson (2008) examined landscape terminology and identified human affordance and cultural models as primary driving forces behind landscape categorization. Much of this work has established the striking diversity of linguistic categorization of space, despite humans’ shared organs of perception and cognition (Levinson 2008). A significant focus in other descriptive and typological work has been spatial deixis, especially demonstratives, from both typological (Anderson &
Keenan 1985, Himmelmann 1996, Diessel 1999, Dixon 2003) and anthropological (e.g. Agha 1996, Hanks 1990, 2005) perspectives. Additionally, embodied aspects of spatial reference, such as pointing, have been explored (e.g. papers in Kita 2003). For example, it has been proposed that formally distinct B(big)-points and S(small)-points correspond to distinct pragmatic functions (Enfield et al. 2007). This body of work on space in language and cognition provides the necessary background for the investigation of place reference in everyday conversation, including a typology of resources available to speakers of any language.

The topic of reference has been written about by philosophers, linguists, anthropologists and other scholars of language for over a century. Much of this work has been concerned with the nature of the relationship between words and things, or referring expressions and their objects of reference. More recently, research in the field of Conversation Analysis (CA) has approached the act of reference from an interactional perspective and has proposed a set of principles that constitute a system for achieving reference in conversation. The CA approach to reference is based on the notion that successful referring is not simply about choosing the ‘right’ term for some referent that exists independently in the world, both because referents can be thought of as a product of the process of referring and because there never is only one ‘right’ term (Schegloff 1972). Participants’ use of one among a set of possible formulations is always calibrated to the sequential context in which it is deployed. Since referring is done in talk with other people, it is also by definition a joint achievement (cf. Mondada 2011).

Research on person reference in interaction has identified principles that have been argued to operate in all languages, such as the principles of recognition (or recipient design) and economy (or minimization) (Levinson 2007, Sacks and Schegloff 1979, Enfield & Stivers 2007, Enfield 2013), as well as several culture-specific principles which vary in terms of importance, such as preferences for association (e.g. ‘your brother John’) or circumspection (e.g. taboos on names described for certain Australian languages, Blythe 2009, Blythe et al. 2016). For place reference, we lack the empirical research to determine whether these principles are the same or if other principles might be relevant. We also need to understand better how lesser-described word classes, such as Kula elevationals, and non-verbal practices such as pointing participate in place reference. Findings reported here indicate that very general interactional principles, such as recognition and minimization, are relevant in formulations of place reference in Kula. More empirical work is necessary to flesh out the systematics of place reference and reference in conversation more generally.

After some background on the Kula linguistic and cultural context (Section 2), I describe some resources commonly used for place reference in Kula based on a collection of place formulations in a video corpus of Kula conversation (Section 3). In Section 4, I present several examples of apparently successful place reference in conversation, focusing first on initial references, before examining several cases of expanded or reformulated reference, for example, in response to a repair initiation. Building on Kitzinger et al.’s (2013) analysis of reformulated reference to place in English, I consider how reformulations of place reference in Kula can accomplish more than “repair simpliciter” (Lerner et al. 2012). In Section 5, I summarize findings and articulate some remaining questions.

2 Cultural and linguistic background on Kula

Kula is an endangered Papuan (or non-Austronesian) language belonging to the Timor-Alor-Pantar (TAP) group of languages and is spoken by approximately 5,000 people in the eastern highlands of Alor Island. It is most closely related to the neighboring languages Sawila (Kratochvil 2014) and Wersing (Schapper & Hendery 2014). Kula has also gone by the name of Tanglapui, which was previously used as a cover term for both Kula and Sawila. Kula’s level of endangerment is increasing rapidly due to ongoing shift to both standard Indonesian in official contexts (school, government, church, etc.) and Alor Malay in informal contexts and at home.

Research on the TAP languages has increased significantly in the past fifteen years (see, e.g., Klamer 2014, Schapper 2014b for overviews). Previous research on Kula is limited to a wordlist (Stokhof 1975) and

---

1 Existing studies have analyzed data from small sets (~10) of genetically unrelated and geographically dispersed languages, but generally argue for universal status of the patterns identified across all languages in the study.
an article on an inverse marker (Donohue 1996). More recently, the Kula language has been the focus of a
documentation project resulting in a video corpus of everyday interaction (accessible at: https://elar.soas.
ac.uk/Collection/MPI971878) and a sketch grammar (Williams forthcoming).

Kula has several typologically notable features. First, it displays a complex pattern of morphological
alignment, with nominative-accusative alignment in multiple sets of independent pronouns, but semantic
alignment in verbal participant marking prefixes. Serial verb constructions are common and a large set of
postverbal elements express aspectual and modal notions. Most relevant for the current paper are multiple
paradigms of elevationals, used in many instances of place reference in the data analyzed in this paper.

Kula speakers traditionally lived in small hamlets dispersed throughout the mountainous region of
eastern Alor. Following Indonesian independence, many people were moved to locations either in coastal
villages or at lower elevations along the single semi-paved road leading through the mountains to the
eastern port village of Maritaing. The Kula people generally rely on subsistence farming of corn and cassava,
but occasionally produce and sell candlenut, cloves, vanilla, coffee, and other products. In Lantoka, where
most of the data in this paper was collected, some people now cultivate wet rice fields. Each family in the
village maintains a ‘garden’ (Kula páya), usually located at some distance from their home.

The main data analyzed in this paper come from a corpus of video-recorded interaction among speakers
of Kula across a wide range of daily activities, consisting of 15 recordings and totaling just over 200 minutes.
These videos were collected between 2012 and 2014 in and around Lantoka and the neighboring hamlet,
Samuda, both located in the administrative village Tanglapui (Indonesian Desa Tanglapui).

3 Some Kula resources for referring to place in interaction

In this section, I give an overview of resources for reference to place that occur frequently in the Kula
conversational corpus. The notion of frequency here remains impressionistic pending more detailed
analysis of the relative frequencies of each type of formulation. I focus here on place names, elevationals,
landscape and geographic features and related items, and pointing as common resources for place reference,
beginning with a fragment of conversation that includes instances of each of these practices.

Extract 1 is taken from a recording made in mid-2012 in Samuda. Figures 1 and 2 show the scene of the
interaction, including the position and orientation of the two male speakers, Isakh (far right in Figure 2,
weaving a hat) and Peny (striped shirt), just prior to and at the start of the excerpt. In Figure 1, Peny is seen
walking back from a grove of betel nut trees toward the location shown in Figure 2. This video was recorded
at the home of Matilda (far left in Figure 2). Peny and the researcher were visiting Matilda’s home to record
a narrative from another speaker not yet present during this recording. Most Alorese chew betel nut, a
mildly addictive stimulant, and commonly offer it to guests. Excerpt 1 picks up after Peny has returned from
picking some betel nut to offer to Isakh and chew together while waiting.

Figure 1. Peny returns from picking betel nut
Figure 2. Matilda, Peny and Isakh at Matilda’s house

(1) [nw-tpg-20120605-03]

20 Isakh  pá  mí-ng-kuya:::
NFIN.garden  APPL-1EXCL.I-FIN.stay
‘I’m staying in the fields!’

21 Peny  hā? (1.0)  pá  mí-ya-kuya?=
huh  NFIN.garden  APPL-2.I-FIN.stay
‘Huh? You’re staying in the fields?’

22 Isakh  =pá  mi-lakata  lewaka  ng-kuya:::
NFIN.garden  APPL-tend  watch  IEXCL.I-FIN.stay
‘I’ve been staying and watching over the fields.’

23 Peny  nu-mda-we=o  Slapin  anto
LOC-go.HIGH.go.LEVEL=PROX  PN  or
‘Up over there, uh, (in) Slapin? or …’

24 (.4)

25 Isakh  +me+-we-o  mde-mda-o::=
come.LEVEL-go.LEVEL-PROX  come.HIGH.go.HIGH-PROX
+hp+4
‘(If you) go here and there, come up and go up there, uh …’

26 Peny  =Saika? (.)  +e::  o:::  +
PN  INTERJ  PROX
‘Saika? Er, uh …’
+manual point+

2 File names for the source of each excerpt are given. Original recordings can be accessed at https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/(MPI971878
3 Approximately 50% of Kula words have ‘final’ and ‘non-final’ forms. These are glossed with FIN and NFIN respectively.
4 Following conventions from Mondada (2016). ‘hp’ used for ‘head point’
Excerpt (1) includes eight separate instances of place reference, some consisting of more than one practice. All but the initial formulation in line 20 are reformulations done by means of repair. In line 20, Isakh produces the initial formulation with the single word, pá ‘garden’, which functions syntactically as the applicativized object of the verb mí-ng-kuya ‘I’m staying in (the garden).’ Peny initiates repair multiple times, first using the same formulation as Isakh (line 21), then reformulating with nu-mda-we ‘up over there’, an adverbial elevational term, and Slapin ‘Slapin’, a place name (line 23). Isakh’s response uses two elevational and a head point (line 25), after which Peny initiates repair yet again, this time using a place name, Saika. The final formulation by Isakh (line 27) involves a place name consisting of a common noun (pungka ‘axe’) paired with a landscape feature term (lomang ‘hill’) and is repeated in overlap by Peny (line 28). In this one short exchange, we see many different practices for formulating reference to a place in Kula, including: place names (3.1), elevational terms (3.2), pointing (3.3), and landscape feature terms (3.4). In section 4 I return to this excerpt to discuss the functions of these reformulations.

3.1 Place names

Many Kula place names are binomial and have transparent derivations – e.g. Wata-tuku ‘coconut shell’ and Ja-tan ‘water fall’. Other place names are monomorphemic with no transparent source, e.g. Pimang and Mumu. Place names can refer to either geographic features (sections of a river, particular hills) or to specific points and their immediately surrounding area. These may be associated with particular families, a house and the surrounding land (see also example 31 in Section 4).

Excerpt (2) shows an example of place name use in casual conversation. In this example, a group of speakers has been standing around talking while a field burns in the distance (see Figure 3). This recording was made at the end of the dry season, when Alorese people burn their fields in preparation for planting before the rains begin. Kula place names are inherently locative, not requiring a locative suffix on the noun or locative applicative on the verb. For example, the common noun pá requires the locative applicative mí- on the verb in the phrase pá mí-ng-kuya (excerpt 1, line 20), while the place name Pimang in (2) is not marked as locative with an applicative prefix or any other nominal marking.

5 This is a reduced form of ang gánu – DIST TOP – ‘that’s it’. 
Another nearby area has just been mentioned in immediately prior talk when at line 1 speaker X (far left) produces a question directed at speaker Y (middle) about when he plans to burn the other field (this was recorded at Y’s home). Speaker Y responds that he plans to burn that field tomorrow night, to which speaker X responds with a sort of invocation. In line 7, Seng informs them that it has already started raining in a nearby village, using the place name Pimang (Pureman).

(2) [nw-tpg-20121121-07]

1 X: *pätára tinang mun nta*  
   later night NFIN.maybe or  
   ‘maybe later tonight or?’

2  

3 Y: *aa ile- il- ile tinang giya*  
   uh tomorrow tomorrow tomorrow night PROG  
   ‘uh, (we’ll do it) tomorrow night.’

4 Z:  

5 X?: *kalau su hujan na jangan matahari lagi*  
   if already rain then NEG.IMPER sun again  
   ‘If it’s (started to) rain, better not be sunny again.’

6  (.3)

7 Seng: *tinue pimang su aya lika:*  
   night NFIN.PN come rain INTENS  
   ‘last night it rained a lot in Pureman!’

8  (.5)

9 Y: *waau*  
   ‘wow!’

6 This turn is entirely in Alor Malay.
3.2 Elevationals

Elevational forms are pervasive in formulations of place reference in Kula. Elevationals are a feature shared by all Alor-Pantar languages, although the languages differ in the complexity of their elevational paradigms (Schapper 2014a). Kula has a basic set of six elevational deictic verbs and three non-verbal elevationals, common to many Alor-Pantar languages (Schapper 2014a), as well as a larger set of non-verbal elevationals derived from the deictic verbs.

The meaning of the elevation component is defined by the relative geographic height along a global uphill-downhill slope based on the local geography. Eastern Alor is characterized by a low-level (max. ~1000m) mountainous environment with frequent changes in elevation. Kula makes a three-way contrast in elevation with level terms used for referents on the same elevational plane as the reference point or deictic center (dc), high terms used for referents considered higher in elevation (or ‘uphill’) compared to the deictic center, and low terms used for referents considered at a relatively lower elevation (or ‘downhill’). This elevational contrast is present in paradigms of verbs and adverbial forms (Table 1). There are six deictic motion verbs, combining a deictic motion component (toward or away from the deictic center (dc)) with the elevational feature, and three basic adverbial elevationals contrasting only in relative elevation. All attested forms are given in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Verbal and adverbial elevationals in Kula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adverbial elevationals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From dc (‘go’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar system exists in closely related Sawila and Wersing, while more elaborated paradigms exist in some other related languages (Schapper 2014a). In Kula, the deictic motion verbs express motion trajectories along a slope relative to the deictic center. For example, in excerpt (3) the speaker is clarifying the location of a particular tree that her addressee is looking for. The use of the verb we ‘go.LEVEL’ expresses the level trajectory of motion from the addressee’s current position to his intended goal, near the dâdap tree. This indicates that the motion will neither go up nor down, but simply traverse an expanse of relatively even ground.

(3) [nw-tpg-20120605-03]

dâdap duka angal ya-we
tree.type stand that.way 2.i-go.LEVEL
‘(Where) a Dedap tree is (lit. ‘stands’), (you) go across that way.’
In other cases, the motion verbs express more generic motion without a visible origin, as in (4).

(4) [nw-tpg-20120725-02]
ang ngá-yo-gwita ya-me
DIST 1.II-2.III-call 2.I-come.LEVEL
‘That’s (why) I called you to come here.’

The motion expressed by mda can be either up along a slope toward a higher elevation (5) or actual vertical motion (6).

(5) [nw-tpg-20130103-02]
Golgota ng-nda giya
PN 1.I-go.HIGH PROG
‘I’m going to go up to Golgota.’

(6) [nw-tpg-20120701-01]
ya-nda ng-wansáya le-ya-míti
2.I-go.HIGH 1poss.II-shoulder appl-2.I-fin.sit
‘(You) go up and sit on my shoulders.’

In (7), the verb mde is used in the prototypical way to express the speaker’s motion from a nearby location that is situated at a relatively lower elevation than his current position.

(7) [pm-tpg-20120523-03]
angu n-ji gi-batas le mang
there 1EXCL.I-go.low 3poss.II-border finish conj
ng-mde tenu
1EXCL.I-come.high pfv
‘I went down there to the border, then/now I came up here already.’

Finally, in (8) the verb si is used in just the opposite way – to indicate the speakers intended trajectory of motion from his planned location tomorrow to his current location at the time of speaking.

(8) [nw-tpg-20121121-07]
ile n-lilawa n-si dápa
tomorrow 1EXCL.I-return 1EXCL.I-come.low first
ngwít gaya
1EXCL.I-NFIN.sit FIN.PROSP
‘I’ll come sit (with you) tomorrow when I return coming down this way.’

Elevational verbs can be used to formulate reference implicitly, without any additional adverbial or nominal formulation (see example 28 in Section 4).

As shown in Table 1, the three-way elevational contrast in Kula also defines a small paradigm of adverbial elements, gománg (9), gotíng (10), and goyong (final form gonoya, seen in 11). These adverbial elevationalons are used in location formulations to pick out a large unbounded area conceived of as across from (gománg), above (gotíng), or below (goyong) the speaker’s current location. In each case, the elevational element is functioning as a predicate modifier. This contrasts with many other Alor-Pantar languages in which elevationals may be used predicatively as well (Schapper 2014a).
(9) [nw-tpg-20120725-02]

gomáŋ i-mít táma
NFIN.LEVEL 1INCL.I-NFIN.sit VIS?
‘We’re sitting over there!’ (pointing at the camera screen showing them being recorded)

(10) [nw-tpg-20121114-01]

anawe ya-mda goting tänagana
everyone 2.I-go.HIGH NFIN.HIGH FIN.gather
‘Everyone go up to gather together up there.’

(11) [nw-tpg-20131012-02]

naka=si ingu penduduk lelika goyona
long.ago=top here inhabitants continue FIN.LOW
‘That long time ago, (there were) inhabitants here all the way down there!’

In addition to the six deictic motion verbs and three basic adverbial elevationals, Kula has an additional set of elevationals derived from the motion verbs and a de-verbal prefix (ní-/nu-). This process has produced a large paradigm of adverbial elevationals used frequently in formulating place reference. All attested forms are given in Table 2. I have divided the forms into simple, which consist of just one verb root (ní-/nu- + verb) and complex, which involve two verb roots (ní-/nu- + verb + verb). Glosses for the complex forms remain approximate in some cases. Of the three sets of elevational terms, these derived de-verbal elevationals are the most commonly used in place reference.

Table 2. Kula derived deverbal elevationals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>Complex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ní-we</td>
<td>ní-we-mda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘over there’</td>
<td>‘over up there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ní-ji</td>
<td>nu-mda-we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘down there’</td>
<td>‘up over there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ní-si</td>
<td>ní-ji-we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘down here’</td>
<td>‘down over there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nu-mda</td>
<td>ní-ji-mda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘up there’</td>
<td>‘across there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ní-de</td>
<td>ní-si-mde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘up here’</td>
<td>‘across here’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* ní-me</td>
<td>ní-si-mde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td>ní-si-mde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘down over here’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speakers choose among this large set of elevationals based on the direction of motion required to move between the speaker’s current location and the location of the intended referent. For instance, the elevational used in excerpt (1), line 23, nu-mda-we, points to a location later referred to with a place name, Slapin, which would involve walking some distance level (we) before ascending slightly (mda) from the speaker’s location at the time of the speech event.

In (12-20), I provide examples of each ní-elevational, drawing from both conversational and monologic narrative data. The elevationals are used in many cases to locate an object, person, or other place.

7 nu- is prefixed to /m/-initial roots, ní- elsewhere.
Place reference in Kula conversation

(12) **ní-we pá suba=ng i-we i-míti**
    LOC-go.LEVEL NFIN.garden house=DEF 1INCL.i-go.LEVEL 1INCL.i-FIN.sit
    ‘Let’s go sit at the garden house over there.’ (narrative)

(13) **ní-si=ng=a-mít muna nta**
    LOC-come.LOW=DEF=PROX 3.I-NFIN.sit maybe or
    ‘(There’s a chair) sitting down here maybe, or ...?’

(14) **nu-mda=ó koya-koya mana mí-lula**
    LOC-go.HIGH=PROX koya-koya village APPL-go.DIST
    ‘Up there, they went to the villages around Koya-Koya.’

(15) **ní-de=ng a-mít onu**
    LOC-come.HIGH=DEF 3 .I-NFIN.sit dem
    ‘(the house) sitting up here.’

(16) A: Bakakila nunguya?
    PN FIN.where
    ‘Where’s Bakakila?’

    B: Bakakila ... **nu-mda-we**

    Bakakila LOC-go.HIGH-gO.LEVEL
    ‘(the) Bakakila (that is) up over there …’

(17) **ngá-les pe ni-ji-we=ngu duka muna**
    1EXCL-think deer LOC-go.LOW-gO.LEVEL=DEF stand maybe
    ‘I the deer down over there is (still) standing, probably.’

(18) **ní-we-ji aku táma kopi fanili ang gánu**
    LOC-go.LEVEL-go.LOW stay vis? coffee vanilla DIST FIN.3.NOM
    ‘(the pipe) is down over there, where there’s coffee and vanilla, that’s it.’

(19) **ní-ji-mda wila=to mít mda**
    LOC-go.LOW-go.HIGH wila=also NFIN.sit go.HIGH
    ‘Across there, in Wila there were many sitting up there.’

(20) **ní-si-mde ingu ngwiti|ng-míti|**
    LOC-come.LOW here 1EXCL.1-FIN.sit
    ‘We (stayed) sitting on this side over here.’

Morphosyntactically, these elevationals function as either predicate or nominal modifiers. For instance, in (17), **nijiwe** is part of the noun phrase **pe nijiwe=ngu**, ‘the deer down over there’. In (18), **níweji** modifies the verb **aku** ‘stay’, expressing more specifically the location of the pipe in question. In other cases, however, the elevational appears to stand on its own as an independent phrase. For example, in (19) the place is initially formulated as **nijiinda**, with a possibly complete falling prosody. The second formulation as **Wila** (a place name) thus replaces it, rather than being modified by the elevational.

Extract (21) demonstrates an adverbial elevational in a longer stretch of interaction, also revealing more about the semantics of the form in question. In this example, Isakh uses the **LEVEL** elevational **gomán** as an initial formulation in the context of a discussion about the researcher’s activities in their community. After Peny spends several turns explaining what the researcher is up to, Isakh claims understanding by paraphrasing in line 2 that he (the researcher) will “take the language over there (**gomán**),” where **gomán**

Unauthenticated
refers generally to an other place, a place distant from ‘here’ – in this case, the researcher’s home base – and contrasts with the preceding place reference, ingu ‘here’ (line 1). Note, it does not matter precisely where the researcher is from, since gomán is often used to refer generally to anywhere outside Kula territory, anywhere ‘other’ or ‘not here.’

(21)
1 Peny:  

\begin{verbatim}
ang gán le-ape su ingu kula-() kula
\end{verbatim}

DIST NFIN.3.NOM APPL-do come PROX kula kula

\begin{verbatim}
gi-tela gi-daya
\end{verbatim}

3POSS.II-speak 3POSS.II-sing

‘That’s what he’s doing, coming here, Kula, the Kula way of speaking ...’

2 Isakh:  

\begin{verbatim}
ang mi lula=to () gomán ( )
\end{verbatim}

DIST take go.DIST=also NFIN.LEVEL

‘(He’ll) take that, too, over there (gomán) ...’

3 Peny:  

\begin{verbatim}
mi lula gomán=ng=o () basa gaya
\end{verbatim}

take go.DIST NFIN.LEVEL=DEF=PROX language PROSP

‘Taking it over there, (he’ll) make it a language.’

4 Isakh:  

\begin{verbatim}
we atánayi
\end{verbatim}

go.LEVEL FIN.teach

‘(He’ll) go teach (it).’

We return to the use of elevationals in formulating reference to place in Section 4.

### 3.3 Landscape terms and other features

Place formulations in Kula may also involve use of terms for natural or man-made geographic or landscape features. For instance, the natural geographic features lomang ‘hill’ and tapa ‘hillside’ were used in excerpt 1 (partially reprinted here as example 22) to clarify reference to a man-made garden (pá) previously referred to by Isakh. After two attempts by Peny to repair the reference, Isakh eventually provides a formulation that uses a place name derived from the common word for ‘ax’ (pungka), along with the geographic terms lomang and tapa (line 2). Place names generally do not include the possessive prefix gi-, and it remains unclear whether pungka gi-lomang (gi-tapa) was a spontaneously invented construction (e.g., evoking the shape of the hill in question, or materials that are available there) or a fossilized proper name.

(22) [nw-tpg-20120605-03]
1 Peny:  

\begin{verbatim}
saika? e o:
\end{verbatim}

‘Saika? He, this, uh—’

2 Isakh:  

\begin{verbatim}
pungka gi-lomang gi-tapa
\end{verbatim}

ax 3POSS.hill 3POSS.hill.side

‘On the other side of hatchet hill.’

3 Peny:  

\begin{verbatim}
pungk- pungka gi-lomang gi-tapa [g]ánu
\end{verbatim}

ax ax 3POSS.II.hill 3POSS.II.hill.side DIST

‘... on the other side of hatchet hill, that’s it?’
Other landscape features include names of certain types of trees, which can be part of the formulation of reference to a place. For example, in (23), speaker D uses the generic term for candlenut trees to formulate reference to the border of the area they are working in, from which he has just returned.

(23) [pm-tpg-20120523-03]

1 Peny: \[n\text{i}-\text{j}i=\text{ng} \quad \text{ya-\text{j}i} \quad \text{da} \quad \text{kla} \quad \text{ya-de} \quad \text{tenu} \quad \text{anta=}\]
\text{LOC-go.LOW=DEF} \quad \text{2.i-go.LOW} \quad \text{so} \quad \text{now} \quad \text{2.i-come.HIGH} \quad \text{FIN.PFV} \quad \text{or}
‘Did you go down there and just come back up, or?’

2 D: \[=\text{y}awa \quad \text{angu} \quad \text{n-\text{j}i} \quad \text{gi-batas} \quad \text{le}\]
\text{yeah} \quad \text{there} \quad \text{1EXCL.i-go.LOW} \quad \text{3POS.si-border} \quad \text{NFIN.finish}

3 \quad \text{mang} \quad \text{n-de} \quad \text{tenu}
\text{CONJ} \quad \text{1EXCL.i-come.HIGH} \quad \text{FIN.PFV}
‘Yeah, I went down there to the border, then I came back up here.’

\[\text{insertion sequence ommitted}\]

4 D: \[\text{anuna} \quad \text{ji} \quad \text{waikik=}\text{du} \quad \text{ang} \quad \text{weseda} \quad \text{ampa}\]
\text{because \text{go.LOW} \ NFIN.candlenut=}\text{pl} \quad \text{DIST} \quad \text{border} \quad \text{but}
‘Because down (where) the candlenut trees (are), that’s the border, but …’

Geographic terms may also refer to man-made features of the landscape, such as \text{p\^a} ‘garden’ in (1) and \text{d\^a}k ‘ditch’ in (33).

### 3.4 Pointing

Pointing plays a prominent role in formulations of place reference in Kula. In my collection, pointing most often accompanies other verbal formulations, though this does not preclude the possibility of pointing used alone (e.g. in response to a where-question). While pointing may also accompany reference to a person or object, I here focus only on points occurring as part of an instance of place reference. I describe three types of pointing practices in Kula, building on Enfield et al.’s (2007) two-category account of B-points and S-points (defined below). Kula speakers frequently use a third type of point, which I here call \textit{non-manual}.

Kula speakers use their arms and forefingers to point in two types of manual gestures, corresponding to the B(ig)-points and S(mall)-points described in regard to analysis of video-recorded interactions in Lao (Enfield et al. 2007). These two types of pointing gestures are formally and functionally distinct. Formally, B-points are larger, involving full extension of the arm and aligned eye-gaze, while S-points are smaller, faster, more casually articulated, and involve the hand only. Functionally, B-points occur in the context of “location-focus utterances,” for example in response to a where-question, while S-points occur in “insecure reference environments”, for example when requesting clarification or mentioning a place for the first time. Both types of pointing were observed in the collection of Kula place reference formulations.

In (24), Matilda uses a B(big)-point as part of a location formulation in response to a where-question by Isakh (lines 1-2). Figure 4 shows Matilda’s position at the end of Isakh’s turn. Both Matilda and Peny (on Matilda’s right) are facing Isakh, who is sitting across from them to the right of the camera (out of view). During a 0.7 second silence (line 5), Matilda and Peny both turn to their left while Matilda raises her left arm to point toward the location of the water hose in question. Figure 5 shows the apex of Matilda’s point, which occurs just as she produces the elevational term \text{niweji} at the beginning of line 4. Her point is a prototypical B-point in both form (straight elbow, fully extended arm and forefinger, and accompanying gaze direction) and function (response to a where-question).
1 Isakh: *in sli si-de=nga nung gán legatani*  
PROX hose come.LOW-come.HIGH=DEF where NFIN.3.NOM FIN.reach  
‘This hose coming down here, where does it reach?’

2 Peny: *ah?*  
‘huh?’

3 Matilda: *m?*  
‘huh?’

4 Isakh: *ja sli si-de=ng ga guna*  
water hose come.LOW-come.HIGH=DEF say GUNA  
‘That hose coming down here, you know!’

5 *+(0.7)  
matilda: *....turns head left raises and extends left arm.....→*  
peny: *......turns head left....→*

6 Matilda: *ni+*we-ji+ *aku tâma+* +(.)+kopi *+fanili*  
LOC.go.LEVEL.go.LOW NFIN.stay vis? coffee vanilla  
matilda: ....+points+,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,+ ....+points+,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,→*  
peny: ....*gazes to his left----*,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,* gazes left→*

    ang gânu+*  
DIST FIN.3.NOM  
matilda:,,,,,,,,,,+  
peny:,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,*  
‘It’s down over there of course! (where there’s) the coffee, vanilla, that’s it.’

7 Isakh: *:::

Figure 4. Matilda and Peny conversing with Isakh (off-screen)
In excerpt (25), Peny uses a prototypical S(mall)-point as part of an initial place reference formulation. In response to a query from Isakh (line 1), Peny is explaining the researcher’s arrival in the community and his purpose there. At line 6, Peny points twice, first aligned with the elevational *numda* ‘up there’, and second aligned with the word *mana* ‘village.’ Figures 6 and 7 show the apex of the two points (indicated in transcript line 6 as well). Both points involve use of the hand primarily, without full extension of the arm. While Peny’s gaze is aligned with the point, Isakh does not direct his own gaze in the direction of the point. Thus, Peny’s points here are both produced as and responded to as S(mall)-points in the sense of Enfield et al. (2007). Functionally, it seems that this may well be an ‘insecure reference environment’, as the place references comprises an initial reference that is subsequently expanded upon using a place name, suggesting that the initial formulation may not have been adequate (see also Section 4).

(25)

1 Isakh: u· us gán=nga
   s· send NFIN.3.NOM=DEF
   ‘S-, (they) sent him …?’

   [several lines omitted for brevity]

2 Peny: gán=nga (1.5) wele ngán=ngo
   NFIN.3.NOM=DEF together NFIN.1EXCL.NOM=DEF.PROX

3 su ingu (.) wele sirusa ng-kuya
   come here together work 1EXCL-FIN.stay
   ‘He … with me … (he) came here to work with me.’

   [several lines omitted for brevity]

4 Peny: mala sak=nga igá-tela=nga sálál aku
   man NFIN.old=DEF 1EXCL.POSS-speak=DEF NFIN.seek stay

5 ten pu naka sak tela=o na=dua
   NFIN.PERF but ancient NFIN.old speak=PROX what-PL
6  +nu-mda+=o: + (.)+ +koya-koya +mana+
    LOC-go.HIGH=PROX  PN  village
   peny: +............+points........+,,,+ +.................+points+,,,,,,

7  mí-lula=o:+  agátu
    APL-APL.go:DISP=PROX  FIN.disappear
   peny: ,,,,,,,,,,,+

'This guy is here looking for our language, but the old way of speaking, up there in, uh, that went from village Koya-Koya and is gone (now).'

Figure 6. Peny’s first point (line 6)

Figure 7. Peny’s second point (line 6)

In addition to these two types of manual points, a third type of pointing practice occurs frequently in my collection of place reference formulations in Kula – head pointing. This involves a quick, brief nod of the head in the direction of the intended referent. These are distinct from lip or chin points, which I have observed but do not occur in the current video corpus. While the lip points I have observed point to visible referents, head points typically direct attention toward referents outside the immediately visible environment. In most cases of head points in Kula, speakers’ hands are not engaged in any other activity, leaving them free to point with if desired. It seems possible that head points serve some additional pragmatic function that is not achieved with an S- or B-point, but this requires further investigation.
In (26), speaker C uses a head point as part of his response to Edu’s where-question. The point is produced prior to the verbal part of his turn in line 2. Figure 8 shows speaker C’s head position during Edu’s question in line 1, while figure 10 shows the apex of his head point just before he starts speaking in line 2. Interestingly, the speaker also closes his eyes just before turning his head to point (figure 9), and this may be part of the communicative move (e.g., possibly indicating that the direction of his eye gaze is not to be attended to by the other participant).

(26) [nw-tpg-20131011-01]
1 Edu kâla Timtius nunguya?
   now Timtius FIN.where
   ‘So where’s Timtius now?’

2 C  +nu-mda  Kris suba míya
    LOC-go.HIGH  Kris house FIN.be.located
    ‘Up at Kris’s house.’

c:  +headpoint----+

Figure 8. C’s position at line 1

Figure 9. C closes his eyes
While the speaker is responding to a where-question from Edu (line 1), that is, a context where a B-point might be appropriate, there is also reason to believe that this may be an ‘insecure reference environment’, i.e., more similar to a typical S-point environment. First, there is more than one ‘Kris’ in the community, so the phrase ‘Up at Kris’s house’ alone may not be sufficiently informative. Second, speaker C is from another village several miles away, while Edu is a local, in fact the speakers are sitting in Edu’s house. It is likely that speaker C’s head point helps to fine tune the formulation to the local context without ‘overtelling’, since Edu certainly knows where Kris’ house is.

While more work remains to be done on the forms and distribution of pointing gestures in Kula conversation, I have here aimed to establish that speakers use three distinct types of pointing practices when formulating reference to place: manual B-points, manual S-points, and non-manual head points. The function(s) of non-manual points in particular require further analysis.

4 Choosing the right formulation

Referring in interaction is essentially a “matter of selection” (Enfield 2013, Schegloff 1972), in that the means for referring on any given occasion are a subset of the available means for referring in general. For example, for the domain of person reference, English speakers use personal names as the preferred unmarked initial reference form. However, other ways of referring are available, including use of recognitional descriptions (e.g. ‘that guy’) and even pronouns, a prototypically subsequent (anaphoric) reference form (Schegloff & Sacks 1973, Schegloff 1996, 2007, Stivers 2007). In addition, what counts as an (un)marked format can of course differ from language to language. While in English personal names are the most common default unmarked option for initial reference to third persons, in Yeli Dnye and other languages with taboos against using personal names, other formulations (e.g. zero-marking, minimal description, kin-term) may be preferred and unmarked in initial position (Blythe 2009, Enfield 2013, Levinson 2007). A speaker’s choice of formulation is also influenced by the more general principles of minimization and recognition. For example, in English conversation this is apparent from speakers’ preference for personal names (which are minimal yet recognitional) and the gradual relaxation of minimization when an initial formulation fails to achieve recognition (Sacks and Schegloff 1979). For the domain of place, we know less about how the principles of minimization and recognition operate in reference. For example, are place names, like person names, the ideal solution to these sometimes competing preferences?8 What are the effects of special local cultural

---

8 As Enfield (2013) points out, “Schegloff (1972: 99-100) suggests that in place reference in American English, there is a preference for association (e.g. John’s house) over a geographical specification (105 Smith Street); yet in person reference, association tends to be outranked by a preference for names (Sacks & Schegloff, 2007 [1979]).”
constraints such as place name taboos (cf. Blythe et al. 2016)? Are all the principles the same for person and place reference? Furthermore, does the distinction between initial and subsequent forms and positions hold for place as well?

In the rest of this section, I examine issues of form and position as they relate to place reference in Kula conversation. I begin with apparently unmarked forms of place reference that appear to adequately achieve recognition in initial position, and then discuss some examples of more (formally or positionally) complex formulations. Finally, I turn to cases of place reference that appear to be problematic, in that they involve reformulation or repair. I examine an apparent case of a marked reference form used in an initial mention of a place and consider what it appears to be doing in addition to ‘mere reference’. In further analysis of this same excerpt, I make use of the participants’ own method for dealing with perceived trouble (i.e. repair and reformulation of the initial reference) as a way to start thinking about what alternative ways of referring to a place can accomplish (following Kitzinger et al. 2013).

### 4.1 Adequate formulations of place reference in initial and subsequent positions

One common solution for initial reference to a place in Kula is to use a place name. This parallels the use of person names in English and many other languages, with the notable exception of those languages that have place or person name taboos or highly-ranked preferences for association in person or place reference. Place names in Kula may thus represent one ‘optimal’ solution to the competing preferences of minimization and recognition in initial references. When used in conversation, place names are typically ‘nodded through’ (Heritage 2007) and treated as unproblematic. An example is given in (27) below. Here, the place name *Lansaku* uniquely refers to the home base of the speaker, his family’s house and the surrounding land.

(27)

1 Isakh: *aba mí- mít mda aminák mí a-mít*
   *Aba LOC? NFIN.sit go.high NFIN.hillside LOC 3.i-NFIN.sit*

2 *ong ga guna*
   *PROX NFIN.say GUNA*

   ‘(It’s the one/house) sitting up on the hillside up from there from *Aba-míti.*’

3 Peny: *oh yo (.) ngán * _Lansaku=to yo kang*
   *oh yes NFIN.1.nom PN=also NFIN.granary NFIN.good*

4 *pka dàng iníng pka dàng ape gaya*
   *little NFIN.one NFIN.like.this just NFIN.one make FIN.PROSP*

5 *ampo::*
   *but*

   ‘I kind of want to build a little house in *Lansaku*, too, but ...’

6 (1.0)

7 Peny: *talan=dua=to: (.) sawa lula*
   *old.men=pl=also wet.rice.field go.DIST*

   ‘... the men are always going to the rice fields.’

In cases like (27), place names occur as the initial and only formulation of a place reference. Peny uses *Lansaku* following a spate of talk in which Isakh referred to another traditional house or granary (Kula *yo*,...
Malay gudang) nearby. In line 1, Isakh is reformulating the location of the yo in question. Peny responds to this with a claim of understanding in line 3. After a micropause, Peny immediately self-selects as next speaker, stating that he would like to build his own yo. This appears to be responsive to the preceding turns in which Isakh and others present had been discussing work on their own yo nearby. Since these buildings function as status symbols in the community, it appears that Peny not yet having his own family yo is an accountable fact. Peny then gives an account for why he has yet to build his own yo (line 7). None of Peny’s talk receives any uptake from Isakh or other speakers, however, and the place referent Lansaku is simply treated as non-problematic. In this way, place names can function like person names, i.e. be tacitly recognized by recipients as adequate for referring to the intended item and not the current focus of the turn.

Perhaps more unusually, in Kula it is also possible to ‘refer’ to a place in an initial mention without using a referring expression at all. As outlined in Section 3, Kula speakers can use motion verbs to express motion toward or away from some place, without any other means for formulating reference to the place itself. In (28), speaker W (line 1) uses the verb nji ‘I go down’ to formulate her return to her home in a nearby village.

(28) W: ngápa n-ji giya
   father 1EXCL.I-GO.DOWN PROG
   ‘Father I’m going down [home to my village] now’

   Edu: nenek tida ada sesuatu jadi9
      grandparent NEG EXIST something so
   ‘I don’t have anything to give you though, so...’

   W: [smiles]

While the verb could be used to indicate planned motion to any number of possible places ‘below’ the participants’ current location, the addressee does not seek clarification of the intended goal location. In fact, after the speaker has left, the researcher proposed a candidate understanding of the speaker’s intended referent, Kalambasa?, which was corrected by the other speaker, namu, Nangwana, ‘No, (she’s going down to) Naumang.’ Apparently, the speaker’s formulation was designed for her addressee, who has detailed knowledge of her, including where she has been and where she is likely to be going next.

In the previous examples, each formulation referred to a place outside the speaker’s location. In the special case of initial reference to places in the immediately visible environment, such references are commonly formulated using an elevational adverb (and potentially also a point). In (29), the speaker uses an elevational adverb and manual S-point to formulate reference to the screen on the video camera that is recording them. The screen has been turned toward the participants who can see themselves in it as they are speaking.

(29) gomáŋ i-mít táma
     NFIN.LEVEL IINCL.I-NFIN.SIT VIS?
     ‘We’re sitting over there!’ (pointing at the camera screen showing them being recorded)

The strategy exemplified in (29) is found for visible places for which place names would be suited. These elevational adverbs seem similar to pronouns, which are highly marked in initial references to persons, but are less marked for initial mentions that refer to a person visible in the immediate environment (i.e., exophoric reference).

9 This turn is in Malay.
As already implied by noting the S-point in (29), speakers can also use combinations of reference resources. In (30), shown previously as (26), speaker C responds to Edu's where-question in line 1 with a formulation involving a non-manual S-point, an elevational *numda*, and *suba kris* ‘Kris’ house’. The articulation of points and elevationals alongside the nominal reference may indicate that there is some potential problem of recognition in this formulation. The points and elevationals add just enough information, maintaining the preference for minimization while maximizing chances of recognition of the referent by the addressee. Such cases reinforce the relevance of the general principles of minimization and recognition identified in work on person reference.

(30) [nw-tpg-20131011-01]
1 Edu kála Timtius nunguya?
   now Timtius fin.where
   ‘So where’s Timtius now?’

2 C +nu-mda Kris suba miya
   LOC-go.HIGH Kris house FIN.be.located
   ‘Up at Kris’s house.’

The examples discussed so far are initial (as opposed to subsequent) formulations. Based on work on person reference, we expect different formats to associate with these different positions. However, it may be that the notion of subsequent reference is less powerful for examining the domain of place in some languages. In the collection of Kula formulations analyzed here, subsequent mentions of places are rare. One case of possible subsequent place reference (in the person reference sense) is examined below. Yesya and Isakh have been asked to work on a map of the village, a task intended to elicit place names and other information on the local geography. In (31), Yesya is explaining the task to Isakh, who has just arrived. Yesya lists several nearby areas, using elevationals, place names, and S-points in each case. I have omitted part of the transcript (between lines 2-3) for brevity.

(31) nw-tpg-20120725-02
1 Yesya: ang ngá-yo-gwita ya-me amám=p
   dist 1excl.i-2.iv-call 2.i-come.level nfin.like.that=so.that

2 amán=o
goyong guspi angu an tenu ji-mda
   like.that=prox NFIN.LOW PN there DIST FIN.PFV go.LOW-go.HIGH

3 ang yawing=ngo na=dua tenu
   NFIN.DIST NFIN.2.foc=DEF.PROX what=PL FIN.PFV
   ‘That’s why I called you to come here, so that, like down there in Guspi, after that go up to ... that’s what you’re going to (talk about).’

4 Isakh: ya-do tayap alil wing (tela) awing bisara
   2poss-child Tayap Alil NFIN.FOC say NFIN.3FOC speak
   ‘Your son Tayap is the one who should speak (about those places).’

5 Yesya: hai amánda in tatuk blina gaya
   INTERJ NFIN.like.that-so PROX NFIN.talk write PROSP

6 ang awa nunung gaya
   NFIN.DIST then how PROSP
   ‘Hey! Yeah, but we’re going to talk about this now, so do it however ...’
7 Isakh: *ang ga guna*

   NFIN.DIST NFIN.say GUNA

   ‘That’s right.’

8 Yesya: *hm*

   ‘Right.’

9

10 Isakh: *i-lula (.) anda námála wing tatuk blina*

   1INCL.II.GO.DIST SO who NFIN.FOC NFIN.talk WRITE

11 *an=to amána*

   DIST=also FIN.like.that

   ‘We go-, so who talks (and) writes that, it is also like that.’

12 Yesya: *anda si-de lansaku ((wakda le-tatuku))*

   SO come.LOW-come.HIGH PN only APPL-FIN.talk

13 *ni-ji-mda=s ga tia di*

   LOC-Go.LOW-go.HIGH=top NFIN.say NEG.IMP IPFV

   ‘So, just talk about up here in Lansaku, don’t talk across over there.’

As can be seen in Isakh’s response to Yesya in line 4, he is hesitant to talk about the places that do not ‘belong’ to him. While some of the following talk is difficult to make sense of, it seems that the two come to an agreement by the end of the sequence. Yesya suggests in lines 12-13 that Isakh only talk about the places in and around Lansaku, the small named area that belongs to his family members. Here Yesya uses an elevational with a topic marking enclitic, *niJimda=s*, to re-refer to the places initially formulated with place names in lines 1-3. In this way, an elevational can be used for subsequent reference in a manner similar to pronouns for the domain of person. However, this is the only clear case in the current Kula collection.

### 4.2 Expansions, reformulations and repairs

Combining referential resources, as in (30), may be one way of improving recognition, albeit at the expense of minimization. Further cases of expansion, reformulation and explicit repair in the Kula data illustrate place references that are considered somehow problematic, for example, adequate recognition does not appear to be achieved. These reformulations typically occur when the initial formulation involves an elevational or some other non-recognitional format. In (32), Peny uses the elevational *numda* with a demonstrative enclitic =o, along with a manual S-point to initially refer to a well-known, but not currently visible, place in the local area; he quickly reformulates using the place name *Koya Koya*, suggesting that a more inherently recognizable format was required at this point in the conversation.

(32)

1 Peny: *mala sak=nga igá-tela=nga sálál aku*

   man NFIN.old=DEF 1EXCL.POSS-speak=DEF NFIN.seek stay

2 *ten pu naka sak tela=o na=dua*

   NFIN.PERF but ancient NFIN.old speak=PROX what-PL

3 *+nu-mda+=o:  (+)  +koya-koya +mana+*
A subsequent reformulation involving reference to landscape items is shown in (33). Matilda is clarifying her formulation of the location of a certain plot of land. Isakh has asked who was tending to a certain plot of land, and following some dispute about which plot of land was intended, Matilda answers Isakh’s question with in line 1. Peny then produces the where-question in line 2, asking about the location of the plot Isakh and Matilda are talking about. In overlap with Isakh’s claim of understanding in line 3, Matilda produces the formulation in line 4, which uses an elevational along with dák ‘ditch’.

(33) [nw-tpg-20120605-03]

1 Matilda: Wa-Etaya ang anák wing ape ji tenu=
   Eta¹⁰ DIST NFIN.3.DU NFIN.FOC make  go.low  FIN.PFV
   ‘(That is) Eta’s, it’s the two of them who made (a garden) down there.’

2 Peny: =te? [nung-al kda ( )
   QP where-toward just
   ‘Huh? Where’s that to?’

3 Isakh: [aaaaa]
   ‘Ahhh.’

4 Mat: nu-mda-we=o] dák awa miya
   LOC-go.HIGH-go.LEVEL=PROX ditch side FIN.be.located
   ‘Up over there next to the ditch.’

5 Peny: oooh
   ‘Oh.’

As in extracts (22-24) in Section 3, the landscape term in (33) occurs in a subsequent formulation when recognition of the intended referent is in question, suggesting that this may be a typical environment. However, we have also seen one case in (1), reproduced here as (34), where a landscape term, pá ‘garden’, is used as an initial reference. Similar to elevationals, the term pá picks out a range of possible referents. The environment is populated by dozens of gardens, one or more for each family, and this vagueness apparently leads to Peny’s repair and Isakh’s reformulation in the subsequent talk. So why might Isakh formulate the place in such a non-recognitional way?

The fact that pá formulates the place as a ‘setting’ rather than a ‘location’ (cf. Enfield 213:451, Dingemanse et al. 2017) is uniquely suited to the action pursued in Isakh’s turn, i.e. accounting for his prior complaint (line 14). By referring vaguely to any garden (not a specific one), Isakh highlights the nature of the garden as a setting far away from home, where he does not have access to things like betel nut, the implication being that Isakh is sleeping in the garden and will likely be there for several days or weeks longer. Within this context, the amount of betel nut given to him by Peny becomes a complainable offense. The original complaint comes at line 14, immediately following Peny providing some betel nut in response
to Isakh’s request for it. Peny and Matilda both respond to Isakh’s complaint at line 16-17, but Isakh offers no uptake, treating their responses as inadequate. After Peny pursues a response with his further accounting for the small amount of betel nut (line 19), Isakh reissues his complaint in the form of an account. It is in this reformulation of the complaint that Isakh first mentions the place, pă ‘garden’. Peny then initiates repair multiple times (lines 21, 23, 26), resulting in reformulations which are more recognitional and apparently less suited to Isakh’s action of complaining. That is, it is not that Isakh is working in some particular garden that makes betel nut unavailable to him, but rather the fact that he is working in any garden. By initiating repair, Peny delays any further response to Isakh’s complaint, which he has already responded to in lines 17 and 19. The first repair (line 21) is treated as targeting a problem of hearing, in that Isakh responds by repeating the account, in a slightly expanded form (line 22). However, Peny initiates repair again at line 23, this time with a candidate formulation of his own (numdawe-o Slapin ‘up over there in Slapin’). This makes relevant a confirming or disconfirming response by Isakh, which he himself resists in line 24 with another vague formulation, me-we-o mde-mda-o:: This formulation is difficult to translate, but seems to both highlight the difficulty of the commute to his garden and also dismiss Peny’s attempt to produce a more recognitional formulation, since knowing which garden is not relevant to his action (and perhaps may even jeopardize his complaint, for example, if the specific garden is not as far away as Isakh is making it out to be). Ultimately, Peny’s repairs lead to Isakh abandoning his complaint and the end of the overall sequence. It thus appears that Peny’s repairs, including his own candidate reformulations (line 23 and 26), do more than simple repair. They are also fit to the action of not responding to Isakh’s complaint. Isakh’s reformulations, in response to Peny’s repair initiations, try to pursue his own original course of action, although ultimately unsuccessful.

(34) [nw-tpg-20120605-03]

1 Isakh na-dua pe?
   what-PL do
   ‘What are you doing?’

2 (.5)

3 Peny ng-we pi miya
   1EXCL.I-go.LEVEL NFIN.betel FIN.take
   ‘I/we go to take betel nut.’

4 (.8)

5 Isakh (        )

6 Peny hm m
   ‘mhm.’

7 (3.0)

8 Peny pi ngá-mi n-su pat ga guna
   NFIN.betel 1EXCL.I-take 1EXCL.I-come NFIN.eat PROSP GUNA
   ‘We brought the betel here to eat.’

9 (3.8)

10 Isakh eh mi si awa
‘Hey, bring some (down) here!’ (i.e. to Isakh)

‘Huh?’

‘This is all I get?’

‘Yes, older brother, just that.’

‘That’s it!’

‘You could have gotten a bit more, it was just like that [=that’s all there was] so,’

‘I’m staying in the fields!’

‘Huh? You’re staying in the fields?’

‘I’ve been staying and watching over the fields.’

‘Up over there, uh, (in) Slapin? or …’

UNFORTUNATELY, the nonverbal response to Isakh’s request was not captured in the video as we were walking back toward the house. However, it is apparent that Peny or Matilda gave some betel nut to Isakh during this silence, prompting Isakh’s complaint in line 14.
While true subsequent reference to places is unusual in my collection, repairs and reformulations are common. Reformulations can do simple repair (e.g. line 21) and also work to secure recognition of the referent. Reformulation was apparently used by Peny in (34) for an additional function, i.e. to delay, and ultimately make irrelevant, his response to Isakh’s complaint, which had attempted to hold Peny accountable for the complainably small amount of betel nut.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I have given an initial overview of frequently used verbal and non-verbal strategies for reference to place in Kula conversation. This represents an experiment in interaction-based grammatical description, in which we start with recordings of everyday conversation and build our description from the observable practices engaged in by participants in solving interactional problems, e.g. achieving reference to place. Kula speakers use a range of verbal and non-verbal resources for reference to place, including place names, elevationals, terms for geographic features, and manual and non-manual points. While place names appear to be unmarked in initial position (similar to person names in English), the use of elevationals is less familiar from the prior literatures, and suggests some interesting questions of what formal elements can be integrated into adequate initial reference. More generally, I have pointed to the possible lack of compatibility of the form/position distinction from person reference for the domain of place, since places are not as commonly referred to in subsequent position as persons (at least in the collection examined here).
From this study, it is clear that certain principles (minimization and recognition) are relevant for many instances of place reference. Formulations are fit to the recipients and the action being pursued, and re-formulations may do more than simply repair an initial formulation. Following Kitzinger et al. (2013), I argued that reformulations can work to delay, and ultimately make irrelevant, a response by pursuing recognition of the referent. More accounts from more languages will allow for a better understanding of the range of practices involved in doing reference to place as well as the principles that shape speakers’ formulations in different languages.

Acknowledgements: The research for this paper was supported by a Fulbright student research grant (2012–2013), a Dissertation Improvement Grant from the US National Science Foundation (BCS-1159510), and an individual graduate student fellowship from the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (IGS0181). The content of the paper was greatly improved through input from two anonymous reviewers and additional helpful suggestions from Lila San Roque and Nick Enfield. I would also like to thank Barbara Fox, David Rood, Andrew Cowell, and Gary Holton for helpful input on earlier versions of the analyses presented here. None of this work would have been possible without the generous support of my friends in Alor, especially Penipius Mosali.

Abbreviations and conventions

3. Glosses used in the excerpts are given below:

1  first person
2  second person
3  third person
APPL  applicative
AFF  affectedness marker
CAUS  causative
CONJ  conjunction
DEF  definite
DEM  demonstrative
DIST  distal
DISTR  distributive
DU  dual
EXCL  exclusive
FIN  final
FOC  focus
IMP  imperative
INAL  inalienable
HIGH  elevation higher than DC
INCL  inclusive
INCOMPL  incompletive
INTENS  intensifier
INTERJ  interjection
INV  inverse
IPFV  imperfective
LEVEL  elevation level with DC
LOC  locative
LOW  elevation lower than DC
NEG  negative


References


