

Deixis as a Discourse Marker in Informal Conversations

BY

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Abstract

The study of deictic expression is important in language because the absence of deictic information invariably affects interpretation in an utterance. Words are deictic, if their semantic meaning is fixed, but their denotation meaning varies; depending on time and/ or place. For effective communication to take place in deictic usage, the major types of deixis - person, time and place- must be considered. The study employs a qualitative methodology in analyzing these major deictic elements in selected informal conversations (talk), examining their linguistic functions as discourse markers and information codes that facilitate effective communication in informal contexts. The findings support the fact that the use of deictic elements are paramount in personalized communications, which cut across every area of human interaction.

Key words: deixis, communication, language, speech, pragmatics, discourse analysis.

Introduction

The study of deixis demonstrates the close relationship between language and context. Language is used to refer to persons and things directly and indirectly (Cruse,2006; Grundy,2000). Direct reference makes use of names and known concepts, while indirect reference can only be properly established through linguistic and non-linguistic strategies, and one of such ways is through the use of deixis. (Fromkin et al ,2003)

Deictic words are features that refer to the *who*, *where*, and *when* of language. Words such as *I*, *you*, *they*, *there*, *then*, *now* and other are examples. The speaker is the determinant factor for interpreting all deictic expressions. When words like *I*, *this*, *here*, *now* are used in an expression, the speaker is at the centre of the utterance, while the use of *that*, *there*, *then*, show distance from the speaker's perspective (Nozar,2010).

For a listener to understand what a speaker intends, the speaker should have something definite in mind which he must convey in clear terms, using words; while the listener tries to understand it accurately. Therefore, effective communication can only take place, not with mere words, but when people understand themselves. (Green,2008,Yule,2017)

Objective of the Study

The study aims at observing communication strategies and motivations of participants in an informal context and investigating the use of deictic features to determine how deixis facilitates effective communication.

Significance of study

Exploring the various uses of deixis especially in informal conversations is a step forward to most studies on deixis. It brings to focus, not only the deictic usage of language which has been the main concern of most studies on deixis, but the close relationship between deictic usage and communication. The study goes further to highlight the communicative effect of language by using deictic elements and to demonstrate how language users can use deixis to protect certain ideas peculiar to them. It also shows the contextual dependency of language on the use of deixis and how the absence of these contextual coordinates can distort the communication process. Similarly, the study will assist in understanding the mechanics of conversation and the strategies adopted by participants in some of these interactions, ultimately increasing the knowledge and understanding of how human beings can use language in real situations to engage in social action.

The following research questions support the roles of deixis in language:

- i. Are deictic elements relevant to communication?
- ii. What is the relationship between deixis, pronouns and demonstratives in English?
- ii. Does the absence of deictic element cause impediment in communication?
- iii. How does deixis contribute to meaning in language?
- iv. What are the implications of deixis to communication?

Review of Literature

A lot of linguistic scholars have written on the concept of deixis in language use (Al- Hindawi, 2018; Williams,2019; Hanks, 2009; Yule, 2017; Diessel, 2006; Febriza, 2020; Khalili,2017; Rauh,2011; Kidhir & Majeek,2019; Levinson,1983) and have contributed significantly to this area of knowledge. Three basic approaches to the study of deixis can be identified as follows: the philosophical approach, the descriptive approach and the pragmatic approach.

Each of these approaches represents a school of thought in the subject of deixis.

Under the philosophical approach, deixis is referred to as **Indexicals**. Indexicality is viewed as an alternative way of understanding reference, by pointing or indicating some state of affairs (Russell, 2011).

The descriptive approach has a relatively poor record of significant theories on deixis, in spite of the importance accorded it by philosophers, psychologists and linguists in the analysis of language. The most significant linguistic works in this area were summarized and systematized in Mey,2014; Lyons,1995).

The descriptive approach identified the most common categories of deixis: *person*, *place* and *time* deixis. Fillmore calls these “the major grammaticalized types of deixis (Levinson, 1983:62).

Person deixis concerns itself with the speaker, the listener and the over- hearers who are not directly addressed; and the first, second and third persons who are mentioned in the utterance. (Al-Khalidy, 2014; Indriastuti et al,2023)

The *place* deixis, also known as spatial deixis deals with the location of the speaker or receiver or other persons referred to. Demonstrative ‘*this*’ and ‘*that*’ and adverbs such as *here* and *there* indicate place deixis. (Diessel,2006; Hussein,2013).

The *time* or temporal deixis concerns itself with the particular time referred to, in an utterance. English adverbs like *now*, *then*, *soon*, and others, serve as pointers to time. Time deixis concerns the encoding of temporal points and is commonly grammaticalized in deictic adverbs of time such as *yesterday* and *this year*. (Bouk,2016; Grundy, 2000).

The Pragmatic approach identified two different types of usage in deixis namely: the deictic and *non - deictic* usage (Lo Castro,2012; Birner,2013). The deictic usage makes a specific reference within a given utterance. For example, I broke *this* finger. Understanding this utterance will require being able to see which finger is being held up.

This form of usage represented in gestural and symbolic forms. *Gestural* deixis refers broadly to deictic expressions whose understanding require some sort of audio-visual information, and physical monitoring which involves the entire body motions, exhibited by the speaker in the course of conveying his desired message, which includes eye contact (direction of gaze), facial expressions, gestures and posture adopted in communication (Ekowati,2014).This means that the physical gestures of the speaker and the addressee(s) must be considered, for this form of deixis to be decoded. For example: *This* finger hurts; *You*, *you* but not *you*, are dismissed.

For one to successfully decode what and who are being referred to, in the two examples; the listener needs to be physically present to monitor which finger is held up and who and who are pointed at, as you and you respectively, in the two examples.

The *symbolic* usage in contrast generally requires only the basic spatial-temporal knowledge of the utterance. It makes reference to only the contextual coordinates available to the participants, antecedent to the utterance (Umera - Okeke,2008:Adetunji ,2006).

For example, if a speaker in America says to someone “You are shit, men. The meaning of this statement will be easily understood in America, that the speaker meant to express disgust at the referent, whereas a Briton may be at a loss, as to what the speaker meant. A symbolic utterance therefore suggests that the speaker conveys more information to what is ordinarily said, and can only be decoded within the social context in which it is used as in the case of the ‘coded expression’- *You are shit, men*.

Studies show that different cultures assign different meanings to various messages and gestures. This goes to show the importance of the spatial- temporal elements embedded in utterances. For instance, forming a circle with a thumb and forefinger says It’s ok in the United States, but this means that something is worthless in France; in Japan, it is a symbol of money; whereas in Germany, it is a vulgar statement. (Verdeber &Verdeber 2005: 76)

Non deictic usage on the other hand, does not reference to anything specific, and can be either anaphoric or non-anaphoric in nature and can be used as definite article in an utterance, just as ‘a’ could be used in its place (Hutauruk; 2018)

Most of these approaches are centered on the scope and different usage of deixis, as it meets their individual linguistic interests; but little or no attention is given to the implications of deictic elements to communication. This research attempts to fill this gap, by establishing the role of deixis in effective communication and its contributions to the inference of meaning.

Methodology

The methodology is qualitative and descriptive involving an indepth analysis of selected verbal discourse-informal conversation(talk). In analyzing the discourse, extracts of communicative interactions lifted from books were used to demonstrate the different contexts (formal and informal) in which deixis can be applied in solving ambiguity in utterances. The formal contexts include office and school settings while the informal contexts involve friendly chats between friends, and at home.

A total of six (6) different contexts of communicative interactions were adopted from Verdeber & Verdeber (2005) as basis on which the theoretical framework was applied. The reason for this choice- as opposed to the use of narrative discourse- is that spoken discourse, usually referred to as natural discourse; is often unplanned and involves people, speaking. It is characterized by false-starts, hesitations, partial sentences, phrases not completed and the like. These elements combine in complex ways to relate to the extra - linguistic reality, to achieve a communicative effect.

Spoken discourse captures the physical mannerism, body language and gestures associated with communication which aid in decoding utterances and essentially the scope of deixis. This deliberate choice is aimed at accommodating the paralinguistic features of communication. Similarly, the researcher chose the Speech Act Theory (Searle,1969) as an effective tool for this research for these reasons:

- i. To use sentences that perform acts, and report to state of affairs.
- ii. To capture the three dimensions of the speech act namely- the locutionary (act of uttering of a sentence with some meaning); the illocutionary (intentions of the speaker); and the perlocutionary act - the effect the utterance has on the hearer (Chapman,2011).
- iii. To capture the interpretation of what people say and do in dialogue as opposed to written discourse.

The study combines the theoretical approach of subjectivity in deixis with speech acts as the method of analysis placing the speaker at the centre of the utterance with emphasis on the ultimate meaning conveyed within the utterance. This theoretical standpoint and the attributive speech act employed in the different contexts above give deixis a scientific orientation resulting in a unified account of meaning-and the significant role of context which is basically spatial and temporal in nature.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research questions are subtitled and adequately analyzed, as regards its constituency, similarity and relation to deixis using the six different contexts presented as data for the study.

Research Question 1: Are deictic elements relevant to communication?

Deixis deals with the ways in which some expressions can only be interpreted in terms of their relationship with the speaker. For example, if a speaker were to say, 'I am going to ask *you* to help *me* lift *this* and put *it here*', a listener would need to know who was speaking (to identify the referents of I, me), to whom (to identify the referent of this) and the place of speaking (to work out which location the expression 'here' refers to).

Basically, deixis is relevant to communication for these reasons:

- i. It identifies interlocutors;
- ii. It facilitates successful communication;
- iii. It indicates what is expected (attention focus).

The use of language in communication implies the existence of an encoder who directs a message to an addressee in a communicative situation. Deixis is a language tool by which the sender in the communicative process transfers his message to the receiver. Construction and reconstruction of any message based on the encoder's perspective are achieved through the use of deictic expressions which include pronouns, demonstratives, time adverbs, verb tenses and place adverbs.

Illustrating from *Context I*:

"Troy, *that* was a terrific speech. I haven't heard so many good stories *in a long time*".

"You're right, Brett, the stories were interesting, but I had a hard time following it."

"Well, he was talking about ways that we can help save our environment."

"Yes, but can you remember *anything* more than *that* one point about recycling."

Let me think. Didn't he say *something* about fuel efficiency?"

Yes, but can you remember what *his* main point was?"

"I assume *he* wanted *us* to economize- *that* one story he told, had something to do with fuel."

"But what? I can't really recall what he was trying to get *us* to understand."

"Come on, you have to admit *his* story about the car was funny".

"Right, just *about everyone* laughed, but where did *he* go from *there*?"

"Ok, so he didn't really give *us* much information, but *I* still enjoyed the stories."

"Let's see, what were *the other* key points?". (Verdeber & Verdeber, 2005: 335)

The speaker Brett and the addressee Troy were discussing a speech presentation they attended. In the first instance, the interlocutors have a previous knowledge of what they want to discuss- and so we find the use of *that* was a terrific speech; *that* one point about recycling; *that* one story *he* told; *you* have to admit *his* story; where did *he* go from *there*? These deictic terms suggest that the participants in this

conversation share a common knowledge of the subject matter within the same location (deictic centre); and it will take a person outside of this discussion some basic information as to what is a terrific speech; which one point about recycling; which one story who told? to follow this discussion. He will need to get the information at the speech presentation, which is the subject of discussion and a clue to the host of the speech, referred to as *he* in the context. The deictic terms therefore serve as pointers to the relevant information needed to decode a particular utterance.

Brown (p.13) summarized this in her words” You have to provide a context to arrive at any sort of interpretation since the ‘thin’ semantic meaning of a sentence(utterance) derived just from a series of vocabulary items in a syntactic structure yields only such a sketchy and partial content that it cannot provide the material for an interpretation. It is not until the ‘thin’ meaning is enriched by the provision of extra material which you infer from the immediate context and from your previous knowledge that you know what the utterance means’.

Summarily, deixis is that part of grammar that facilitates the encoder’s construction of his message according to his perspective, and the decoding and reconstruction of the listener, based on the encoder’s perspective.

Illustrating the deictic use of personal and demonstrative pronouns from *context 2*:

You don’t want me to buy *that* leather jacket *we* looked at *this* morning, do you? Clay asked.”

“What do you mean I don’t want you to? Maya replied.”

“You’ve got *that* look on your face.”

“What look?

You know *the look* you always get on your face when you don’t want me to do *something* I want to do. But forget *it*, I ‘m going to buy *that* jacket.”

“I still don’t know what you are talking about, Clay.”

“Sure, you do. You know how I can tell you do? Because *now* you are embarrassed and so *you are raising your voice*.”

“I am not raising my voice, Clay.”

“Oh yes, you are.”

“Clay, you are making me angry.”

“You are just saying *that* because *I’m unto you*.”

“On to me? Clay, I don’t care whether you get *that* jacket or not.”

“You are right. I can tell you don’t have to spell it out.”

“Clay, it’s up to you. If you want the jacket, get it.”

“Well, I don’t think I will buy *it*- but don’t think you talked me out of *it*. ”

(Verdeber & Verdeber:71)

Clay and Maya were arguing about buying a jacket they saw ‘*this*’ morning. In the sentence – you’ve got *that* look on your face- describes an unusual look on Clay’s face which is gestural, and conveys a desired meaning, as against his normal looks. The following relative pronouns are used deictically in English: *who, that, which, whom, whose, of which, where, when*. When reference is made to either person(s) or thing / concepts, *who, that, which* are used as subjects, but when it is in the objective case, *that, who, whom, which* and *that* are used. The possessive use of relative pronouns in both person(s) and things are represented by *whose* and *which*. References to place and time are made with such relative pronouns as *where* and *when*, respectively. In English, there are some special uses of relative pronouns in restrictive clauses namely *that / who*. When referring to people, both *that* and *who* can be used in informal language. ‘*That*’ may be used to refer to the characteristics or abilities of an individual or a group of people. For example- He is the kind of person *that / who* will never let you down. However, when speaking about a particular person in formal language, ‘*who*’ is preferred.

For example: The old lady *who* lives next door is a physician.

The concept of deixis is therefore of immense importance to the use of English because deixis is concerned with both the lexical and symbolic interpretations of an utterance. Understanding the referents of deictic terms like ‘*this*’ or ‘*that*’, here ‘*and now*’ will facilitate the construction of concise and well-formed sentences in English, as well as, aid a proper interpretation of utterances to achieve coherence and competence in English usage.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between deixis, pronoun and demonstrative in English?

The relationship between deixis, pronoun and demonstrative is the indicative tendencies of these elements used for reference purpose.

Similarly, the following illustrates the deictic use of pronouns in *Context 3*:

“Garson, do you have an extra key to the document cabinet? I misplaced *mine*, and I have to get into *it* right away.”

“No, *I* don’t have a key, but it doesn’t matter because . . .”

“I can’t believe it. When I left home *this morning*, I was sure I had *it*. ”

“Bart it’s ok . . .”

“I pulled out my keys-but I just had my car key and main door key.”

“Bart, I’ve been trying to tell you, just try the...”

“*It’s just like me. I think I got everything, but before I check the last time, Sue will say something to me and I get sidetracked. Then I just take off.*”

“Bart, calm down. The door’s . . .”

“Calm down?! If I can’t get *those* documents to the meeting, there’s going to be *hell to pay*. We’ve got six people coming from *all over the city* just to look at the documents. “What am I supposed to say to *them*?”

“Bart, you don’t have to say *anything*. I’ve been trying to . . .”

“Oh sure-I just go in *there* and say, ‘By the way, the documents are locked up in the cabinet and I left the key at home.’ Come on, Garson- who’s got the other key?”

“Bart, listen!!! I’ve been trying to tell you- Miller was in the cabinet and, knowing you’d be along *in a minute*, he left the door open.”

“Well, why didn’t you tell me?” (Verdeber & Verdeber:77-8)

This context featuring the discussion between Bart and Garson in an office setting demonstrates the changeable signification of pronouns when used deictically. The use of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ in the expression- *I misplaced mine* refers to Barth who is the speaker, while Garson becomes the addressee. But in the course of the conversation, we see a shift in the use of the personal pronouns as shown in the sentence – Barth, *I’ve* been trying to tell *you*, just try the.....From this expression, Garson takes on the ‘I’ referent and the previous speaker Barth, now becomes the addressee, referred to as *you*.

The most common attribute of pronoun is its indicative, indexical and changeable signification characteristics. The relationship between pronouns, demonstratives and deixis is largely referential. Pronouns and demonstratives are elements which are used in making reference in utterances and deixis deals with the act of referring and indicating based on the contextual situation of a given utterance, usually centered on the speaker’s perspective. That explains why pronouns and demonstratives can be used deictically in utterances, to represent the concept of deixis.

Research Question 3: Does the absence of deictic element cause impediment in communication?

The importance of deictic terms can also be appreciated in written expressions where contextual information are missing. The reader will hardly understand the message intended resulting in vagueness and misinterpretation.

If a doctor places a notice in his consulting room which reads ‘‘see you in *two hours*’ time’’. The patient will need to know *when* the notice was placed in order to determine when two hours will be. The absence of such contextual information nullifies the whole message since it will make little or no sense to the decoder.

In another instance, the deictic centre could shift as the speaker shifts. Amongst the deictic categories in English, pronoun such as *I*, *we*, *they*, etcetera and certain sets of verb tense, for example, *come*, *go*, *bring*, *take*, normally carry the sense of movement towards the speaker. The listener therefore needs to understand this shift, in order to decode an expression.

The following Yiddish joke from Levinson (1983:68) captures the movement from participant to participant that can change the meaning of such linguistic items as *I* and *You* in person deixis:

A melamed (Hebrew teacher) discovering that he had left his comfortable slippers back in the house sent a student after them with a note for his wife. The note read; ‘‘send *me* *your* slippers with *this* boy’’. When the student asked why he had written your slippers. The Melamed replied that she would read *my* slippers and send *her* slippers. What could I do with her slippers? So, I wrote ‘your’ slippers; she ‘ll read ‘your’ slippers and send *me*, *mine*’’. The philosophical problem of ‘referring’ has serious consequences not only for theoretical linguistics but also for our use of the language. According to Mey (53), Buhler is of the opinion that unambiguous reference is what is demanded of language and that words with ‘unclear reference’ such as *I* or *You* should be abolished because there is no way of checking whether they correspond to something out there; their reference is always shifting. However, the deictic elements such as *I* and *You*, when supported by their contextual information conveys the desired information.

Barriers to successful communication include message overload, physical barriers, ambiguity of words and phrases, individual linguistic incompetence, physiological barriers and the misrepresentation of information. Though the above factors could hinder understanding in communication, the absence of deictic elements in communication could also lead to ambiguity of words and phrases resulting in linguistic incompetence.

In summary, there are basically three sources by which knowledge of the speaker’s intention of a message can be gained namely:

1. That computable from the physical context
2. That available from what has already been said.

3. That available from background or common knowledge.

Deixis fall under the area by which knowledge of the speaker's intentions and perspective of an utterance is gained by filling in the deictic expressions which are grammatical elements of language that are contextually bound.

The canonical situation of utterance which deixis is centered on, according to Lyons (p.637) "involves a one to one or one to many signals in the phonic medium along the local – auditory channel, with all the participants present in the same actual situation, able to see one another and to perceive the associated non-vocal paralinguistic feature of an utterance'.

The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence and to overcome ambiguity in expression, consideration must be given to linguistic elements as it relates to manner, place and time of utterance.

Research Question 4: How does deixis contribute to meaning in language?

Deixis is an essential part of semantics, though considered within the domain of pragmatics. Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics which studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning and deixis centers on how the transmission of meaning, depends not only on the linguistic knowledge of the speaker and the listener, but also on the context of the utterance, knowledge about the status of those involved and the inferred intent of the speaker.

The whole essence of language is to communicate with one another in the process of transmitting messages with intended meanings. In linguistics, a sentence is an abstract entity comprising of a string of words divorced from non-linguistic context. This is opposed to an utterance which is a concrete example of a speech act in a specific context. In other words, sentences do not have meaning intrinsically and no meaning is associated with a sentence but it can only symbolically represent an idea. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/deixis).

Illustrating from *Context 4*:

It was Monday, between classes, and Jennifer had an hour before her *next* class. She decided to walk over to the bookstore. On the way, she looked up and spotted Maria, a woman in her accounting class. Hey, how are *you* doing?

Ok. Maria replied, 'What did you think of *that* text *we* had *yesterday*? Not sure I want to think about it *now*, Jennifer replied with a little laugh.

'I know *what* you mean', Maria said. I hope we get *them* back soon. See you in class *tomorrow*."

‘Right, Jennifer replied as Maria made her way *across the street*.

A minute later, Jennifer was startled as she heard, Hey! *beautiful*, what are you doing *here*?

“Greg,” Jennifer said with a big smile on her face. *You startled me. I thought you were off someplace today!*”

‘Well’, Greg replied, as it turned out, my plans to work with Ken *went up the smoke*. Have you got time to stop at the cafeteria?

‘You know I’ve always got time to spend with you.’”

Like to decide what we’re going to do *this weekend*?

“Sounds good to me!. (Verderber:175)

Jennifer was excited to meet a woman in her accounting class, who asked her, ‘What do you think of *that test we had yesterday?*’. The use of ‘that’ and ‘yesterday’ in that expression, conveys the message of the speaker, which in this context is familiar to the addressee. If the speaker were to say the same thing to another person outside this context, the message passed across becomes confusing because the addressee who does not have an idea of the test referred to, and the reference to yesterday, will find it confusing and may misinterpret the message (because a test presumably done in a hospital sends a different message compared to a test conducted within the school setting), thereby distorting the communication process .

Similarly, the use of *we* could also be misjudged since the referred persons were not identified in the expression to know who and who make up the ‘we’. This also applies to the statement:

I hope *we* get *them* back *soon*. See you *tomorrow*; which is determined from the speaker’s point of view and that, can affect meaning if not properly decoded. Also, in the use of *yesterday* and *tomorrow* respectively, one needs to decipher from what day yesterday and tomorrow will be determined, and if different from what the speaker has in mind, the meaning will obviously be distorted.

The speech act approach to meaning studies interpersonal meaning. It studies what the interlocutors within a given discourse situation do with words .The theoretical standpoint and the attributive speech act employed by deixis makes the concept of deixis theoretical, with its scientific approach of a unified account of meaning taking into consideration the act of the speaker and its intended influence on both the addressees and other interlocutors outside the speaker and the addressees in addition to the significant role of the context which is basically spatial and temporal in nature.

In summary, Deixis contributes to meaning in these ways:

- i. It directs attention to what is involved.
- ii. Without deixis in its proper place, meaning is impaired.
- iii. Deixis is part and parcel of utterance (speech)
- iv. Proper use of deixis shows the syntactic and socio-linguistic competence of a user.

Specifically, deixis explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity since meaning relies on the manner, place and time of an utterance.

Deixis therefore is grossly significant in the transmission of message between the encoder (speaker) and the decoder (listener) with the use of lexemes that take into account not just the lexical properties of such linguistic entities but the extra -linguistic properties of context, and non-verbal attributes of language to arrive at the holistic meaning as intended.

Research Question 5: What are the implications of deixis to communication?

The whole essence of deixis is to facilitate a hitch -free communication between the sender and the receiver. Some linguists believe that the use of deictic elements create confusion, since the use of such linguistic elements do not have a straight- jacket means of deciphering the exact sense it is used in an utterance without considering the contextual basis of such utterance.

According to Levinson (p.57), the use of indexical pose formidable problems for logical analysis, and therefore makes the assimilation of indexical token -reflexives unnecessary. However, further studies on deictic elements, reveal the indispensability of such use because since language is conventional, only the pragmatics of the situation can give meaning to one's word. (Mey:43). This means that the same utterance can obtain different interpretations and meaning, based on the convention and context of usage.

Another factor of importance to be considered here is that not all referential elements can remain constant across utterances. For example, the use of I by Clara implies a different meaning from the use of I by Mary, therefore if Clara says I am beautiful, the peculiar characteristics of the speaker conveys a different meaning, when compared to Mary's assertion of being beautiful.

Deictic elements still remain relevant to communication in terms of eliminating ambiguity, vagueness and misinterpretation of the intended message in the communication process.

In summary, deixis can be related to various linguistic concepts like meaning and communication because of its relationship with language and context.

Conclusion

The concept of deixis encompasses the *personal, spatial and temporal* orientations of linguistic elements on the primary level. This implies that these three dimensions of deixis are the traditional categories in language use; involving the grammatical persons that make up an utterance (person); the spatial locations relevant to an utterance (spatial), and the various times involved in and referred to, in an utterance (temporal). Though the traditional categories of deixis are perhaps the most obvious, there are other types of deixis which are similarly pervasive in language use. These are the social, discourse and empathetic forms of deixis which operate on the secondary level as opposed to the aforementioned.

Generally speaking, deixis concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depend on the analysis of that context of utterance. The analysis of context situation is systematized making use of certain theoretical elements that must be considered for any utterance to be regarded as deictic which includes -the deictic determination with egocentric and localistic phenomenon; the deictic dimension of the primary and secondary deixis and the use of deictic terms which could be anaphoric or nonanaphoric (not context-dependent).

The study of deixis is therefore important because the understanding of its contextual implication to language use eliminates ambiguity and misunderstanding- either in speech or written text-which could result in communication breakdown. For example, in the sentence, *I will be back in an hour's time*; one cannot determine when the sentence was made or written, and therefore cannot determine when the writer will return (that is an hour from when?)

Ultimately, the study identifies deixis as a language phenomenon and how its application can aid better communication.

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