Deixis in Pragmatics

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Pragmatics is:

- The study of “speaking meaning” what people mean by their utterances rather than what the words or phrases might mean by themselves.

- Concerns with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker(or writer) and interpreted by a listener(or readers)

(George Yule, 1996: 3)
Definition of Deixis

➢ The term ‘Deixis’ comes from the Greek word deiktikos (=‘pointing via language’)

➢ Words are deictic if their semantic meaning is fixed but their denotational meaning varies.

➢ The linguistic forms of this pointing are called deictic expressions, deictic markers or deictic words; they are also sometimes called indexicals.
Deictic Expressions

- Deictic expressions include such lexemes as:
- Personal or possessive pronouns (I/you/mine/yours),
- Demonstrative pronouns (this/that),
- (Spatial/temporal) adverbs (here/there/now),
- Other pro-forms (so/do),
- possessive adjectives (my/your),
- Demonstrative adjectives (this/that),
- Articles (the).
Types of Deixis

Deixis fall into three basic categories:

1. Personal Deixis
   a) Terms referring to speaker and addressee: *I, me, my, mine, you, your or yours*
      
      E.g.: I want to see *you, you* but not *you.*
   b) Terms not referring to speaker or addressee *he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its, they, them, their, theirs*
   c) Honorifics - *Your Majesty, sir,*

   These terms of **social deixis** indicate social status
2. Spatial deixis

Spatial deixis as:

❖ - determiners: this/ that
❖ - verbs specifying motion toward/away from speaker: come, go, etc.
   - e.g.: Go to the school
❖ - adverbs
   (here/there)
3. Temporal Deixis

Time, or temporal deixis concerns with the various times involved in and referred to in an utterance. This includes

➢ **Time adverbs** like "now", "then", "soon", and so forth

  i.e: “I am in Scotland now”

  “I’ll see you then”
verb tenses

- **Present** – proximal form

- **Past** – distal form, not only in time but also from reality

  Ex: If I had a yacht….

- The distal forms of temporal deixis are used to communicate not only distance from current time but also distance from current reality or facts.

Bühler (Buhler, 2011, p. 67)
Other deictic categories:

- **Social Deixis**: is a deictic expression used to distinct social status. Social deixis separated in to two kinds:
  - **Relational social deixis**: is a deictic reference to asocial relationship between the Speaker and the Hearer. (e.g: my husband, teacher, cousin…)
  - **Absolute social deixis**: is adeictic reference to some social characteristic of a referent (especially person). It is expressed in certain forms of address. (e.g.: my president, your highness, your majesty,…)

- **Discourse Deixis**: is any expression used to refer to earlier or forthcoming segments of the discourse
  
  Ex: (earlier, later, the preceding x, in the following paragraphs, in the following weeks, or in the next chapter)
  
  - E.g.: I bet you haven’t heard *this* story.
  - Use of *this* refer to a story one is about to tell in:
Deixis and Anaphora

The same words and expressions which are used deictically can also have an anaphoric or non-anaphoric meaning.

Its anaphoric if it will refer to an antecedent that was mentioned earlier.

Its non-anaphoric if it doesn’t require a referent at all.

Examples:

- *John believes she is beautiful.* (deictic use)

- *John thinks I heard him.* (anaphoric use)

(Levinson, 1983: 65)
Interpretation of deictic terms

We interpret deictic terms by looking at aspects of context such as:

➢ who is speaking
➢ the time or place of speaking
➢ the gestures of the speaker, or
➢ the current location in the discourse.

Near speaker à proximal terms (this, here, now)
Away from speaker à distal terms (that, there, then)
Deixis is a linguistic notion within the domain of pragmatics, since their interpretation depends on the context, the speaker’s intention, and they express relative distance.
QUESTION TIME
References


