| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Deictic Expressions and their Contribution to Create a Viewpoint in Discourse

Mariam Albadi

Assistant Professor of Narrative and Literary Criticism, Arabic Department, University of Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman.
Corresponding Author: Mariam Albadi, **E-mail**: mariamalbadi80@gmail.com

| **ABSTRACT**

This paper provides an overview of the main three deictic expression categories, which are: person deictics, temporal deictics, and spatial deictics. It will explain their forms, meaning and their relationship to the speech reference. It will argue that there are a certain class of expressions in Arabic which can be considered in their linguistics usage as spatial deixis. This class of words is known as ''The Vocative/ Call Elements'' (أدوات النداء). Therefore, this paper attempts to answer these questions: What is a deictic expression? What is a deictic centre? What are The Vocative Elements in Arabic? How can they be considered as a category of linguistics deictic expression? and how can a deictic expression be applied to create a particular point of view in discourse? These main points will be considered through the discussion. A variety of different examples will be quoted or created alongside the theoretical discussion in order to clarify these mentioned points.

1. Introduction

At the most basic level, pragmatics is the study of meaning related to the context. (Yule,1995: 3, Verschueren,1999: 18). Dealing with language according to this point of view reframes the relationship between utterance and meaning, this relationship which had been largely ignored through the former linguistics approaches such as formalism and structuralism (Jameson, 1974). Therefrom, considering the context as a central dimension of the meaning justifies the importance of considering *deixis* as one of the widely common perspectives in pragmatics since it was employed in its pragmatics sense by Karl Bühler in 1934. Bühler showed the distinguished nature between the deictic field (*Zeigfeld*) of language [and] its symbolic field, "and named the orientational axes of the deictic field *the origo of Here/Now/I*'' (Galbraith,1995:21). Since then, these expressions considered as a class of linguistics elements which are used to indicate elements of the situational context (Diessel, 2012: 1). The situational context contains the physical, temporal, social location and spatial of the speaker at the moment of utterance (Kramsch, 2003: 127). Consequently, viewing the deictic expressions as independent units from their original discourse context will lead to an ambiguous and vague meaning; because these words have a ''direct, pragmatic interpretation depending on parameters of the speech situation, rather than a stable semantic value'' (Yang, 2011: 128). In fact, this point of view provides the more convincing interpretation of classifying this class of expressions constantly in primary Arabic linguistics references under the name: ''*ambiguous nouns*'' (e.g. Sibawayh, 1973: 186).

2. Nature of in deictic expressions language*:*
The deictic expressions are considered as fundamental sources for the meaning, which create a direct relationship between the two dimensions of human communication: *the speech* and *the world* (Diessel, 2012: 1). For this, I would like to think of deictic expressions in language as a mirror which reflects at least three main dimensions related to the utterance. The first dimension, and the main, is the speaker and his/her relationship with the addressee. Second is the temporal dimension of utterance, and the final dimension is the spatial space where the utterance occurred.

In fact, deictic expressions raise significant concerns and challenges for semantic theory, and they are considered as a class of signs which ''have no substantial descriptive content so that once the contextual parameters have been fixed, they are directly referential'' (Levinson, 2004: 106). However, in the more recent perspective related to this linguistic issue, the deictic expressions depend on the contextual situation and for this, they require a special method of analysis. This is because the deictic expressions are 'typically used to individuate referential objects in relation to the indexical ground of utterance context'' (Hanks, 2008: 10).

Here, this paper is an attempt to provide some discussion related to these main three categories of deictic expressions, which are: person deictics, temporal deictics, and spatial deictics. Specifically, it will explain their relationship to the reference, as well as the following questions: What is a deictic centre? and how it can be applied to create a particular point of view? These two main points will be considered in the discussion. A variety of different examples will be quoted or created alongside the text in order to clarify these main points.

3. The deictic expressions categories:
3.1 Person deixis:
This term specifies the deictic reference to the participant role of a referent, namely: the speaker, the addressee, other referents ''*third person* or *others*''(Gjergji, 2015: 136). Verschueren (1999) pointed out that the person deixis expressions underline ''the basic three-fold distinction between the first person, the deictic centre along the social dimension, second person or addressee, and third person or ''others'' (p. 20). For instance, in English, there are *I*, *me*, and *we* for first person pronoun and noun phrases. *You* for the second person, and *she*, *he*, and *they* for the third person. Such linguistic forms have no stable semantic meaning because their references are changeable regarding their function and the contextual parameters they define (Yang, 2011: 128). Consider the title of Alberto Moravia's novel ''*Me and Him*'' for example. This title indicates 2 different and semantically clear deictic expressions, yet far away from the situational context, it might be very difficult to know to whom they refer without extracting the meaning from the novel itself.

This dilemma might be even more complicated in political and literary texts where the speaker tends to use some indirect styles to deliver the meaning of their texts. For instance, consider the following quotation adopted from the speech of Sultan Qaboos on the 11th December 1975:

1. ''*We* now have to be more careful because world communism, whose pride has been hit, will regard Oman as the axe which shattered the rock of communism" (Qaboos, 2005: 65).

The first-person pronoun, *we*, is repeated more than 11 times in the whole of this speech. In some of these times, the speaker refers to himself as a leader, and in some others, refers to the government council as well as himself, yet in the previous quotation, he used *an ''inclusive we''* which means that he intended to include the whole Omani citizens (the addressee) in the reference. This is because he wanted to raise the hearers' awareness of the importance of knowing the danger of the communist ideology, which was the main cause of the Dhofar[1] War at that time, as well as he wanted them to share the responsibility of saving the country from any problem.

For this, the deictic pronoun *we* can be described as an ''*inclusive we*'' (Verschueren, 1999: 20) because it includes the direct addressee within the scope of it, while in some other examples might be interpreted as an ''*exclusive we*'' when it excludes the direct addressee.

To illustrate this point, consider **_we_** in these sentences:

2. *We* should go to visit Shakespeare Theatre someday. (Uttered as a suggestion between couples).
3. *We* want beyond the station. (Uttered by passengers to the taxi driver).
4. Are *we* hungry? (Uttered by a mother to her child).

In (2), the addressee is included in the scope of the pronoun *we* with the speaker, while in (3), the addressee does not include in the reference- ''*exclusive we*''. However, *we* in (4) is clearly different from "*we*" in (2) & (3) because it is meant to replace the second pronoun "*you*".

In addition to this point, Grundy (2018: 26) argues that the third pronoun (she, he, her) is not always can be used ''indexically''. To clarify this point, consider these two utterances:

5. Look at **him**.

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[1] Dhofar is the southern region of Oman, and Dhofar War took place in the period of June 9, 1965 - December 11, 1975. (see. e.g. Hughes, 2009: 271-305)

6. I was at Sara's birthday party, and **she** wasn't very happy!

In (5), the pronoun ''him'' derives its meaning not from the inside of the utterance but from some other independent unit in the world, which is, of course, should be known from both; the speaker and the addressee. While in (6), the second person pronoun *she* is different from *him* in (4), where it develops its meaning from another noun phrase in the utterance context, which is Sara. So *Sara*, in this example, is an *antecedent* because it gives its meaning to the pronoun *she*.

Another way of explaining this point, the pronoun *him* in (5) does not refer to some other noun phrase in the same sentence, yet it receives its meaning from an independent unit outside the sentence. This means it is used as an indexical unit, while in (6) is used ''*anaphorically*'' (Grundy 2018: 26) to index a reference in the previous part of the sentence.

3.2 Spatial deixis:
The core of spatial deixis in English includes a number of very common demonstrative adverbial expressions, which are: *here vs. there*, *this* vs. *that* (Diessel, 2012: 10). In addition to this, there are a variety of noun phrases such as *this way, those people*, and some motion verbs such as: *come, go, bring, take*... which can be used to determine the spatial point of reference (Grundy 2018: 28).

To illustrate this point, the following example is quoted from a conversation between my Oman-based friend, Lyla, and me before I travel from Leeds to Oman in November 2016 for a few days.

7. A1: I am *coming to* Oman in the 21st of November!
    B: ... So are you *going to* spend the Christmas holiday *here* or *there*!
    A2: No, I need to be *here* during the Christmas (I won't be *there*).

The expression *coming to* in 7, A1 shows the utterer's perspective to the receiver; this is because the verb *come* (in contrast to *going to*) ''indicates movement away from a spatial point of reference'' (Verschueren, 1999: 19), which means that the speaker moves narratively, to present the event from the receiver's point of view. However, this is called deictic projection, where ''the deictic centre can be transferred from the speaker to a person in an imaginary situation'' (Diessel, 2012: 6), and the speaker in such utterance is not speaking as a deictic centre. This is different from the state of the addressee at the same location where the speaker is delivering the message from; then the expected way of delivering the same message will be: I'm *going to*...The expression *going to* will then be considering the perspective of the speaker and hearer together.

In addition to this, the two expressions *here* and *there* in *7. B* & *A2* represent different points of view, and actually, they are used as proximal and distal deictics. To clarify this point, in *7.B*, the speaker used the place where she is standing and addressing A as a reference to mean Oman by *here* and Leeds by *there*. While in *7.A2*, the same speakers at the same locations took some different standpoints in order to give different meanings by the two expressions: *Here*: Leeds as the deictic centre, while *there*: Oman, which is not included in the utterance area as the deictic centre. For this, these two expressions, *here* and *there*, according to Diessel (2012), ''can be used to express a contrast between two different locations based on their relationship to the origo'' (p.3). Yet the place which can be included by *here* and *there* as a deictic centre could be varying with the construal of the speech situation, consider for instance, these examples (see Diessel, 2012:3):

8. *Here*, where I am sitting to write this essay.
9. *Here* is this university...
10. *Here* is Leeds ...
11. *Here* in the UK ...
12. *Here* in this world ...

In all of these sentences, the distal term *here* indicates a variety of different areas including as deictic centre, yet in example *(8)*, and because of its connection with the first-person pronoun, *I*, the deictic centre became more specific and definite, but in all other stated examples the deictic centres include a much larger area structured around the speaker's place in the moment of the speech. In (9), the deictic centre is the university in which the speech event is taking place; in (10), the city of Leeds is the deictic centre; in (11) is the country; and in (12), the deictic centre comprises of the whole world. For this, the referent of *here* is ''varies with the conceptualization of the speech situation'' (Diessel, 2012: 3). Differently ''the distal term there is used in contrast to *here*; it can refer to any location in the speech situation as long as it is not included in the area conceptualized as the deictic centre'' (Diessel, 2012: 3).

According to Diessel (2012), the interpretation of relational expressions such as left, right, in front of... is not inherently fixed to the speaker's point of view, yet it can be shifted linguistically to others' perspective. This topic was mentioned similarly in Grundy (2008: 31) under the concept of non-deictic usage of such expressions. Consider the following, for example:

13. Beautiful trees grew *in front of* the building.
14. For Sara, the mug is *behind* the table.

None of the two utterances represents the speaker's body or location. In fact, (*13*) is quite general, while (14) might be a good example of the ability in the language to adopt the perspective of another person or shift the deictic centre from the speaker's location at the time of utterance.

The language itself, without considering the context, might not be very helpful to indicate the deictic centre of the such linguistic phenomenon, and this is why some sources tend to provide some explanation and knowledge of the real-world context to the receiver in order to guide them to interpret the deictic centre and consequently the meaning. Consider, for instance, the following example:

15. The Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) said: ''When a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of the body except *this* and *this*, *and he pointed to his face and hands''* (Abu Dawud, 2000: 4092).

There is no need to explain, the part shown in parentheses in the above quote is not an original part of the utterance, yet it was added by the narrator for the purpose of providing clarification to the receiver to understand the deictic centre of *this* and *this*.

Though this is not only in written language; also it is quite ''common for a speaker to update the deictic centre in more extended discourse'' (Grundy, 2008: 34). For instance, I was asking a staff member in the Ziff building in the university if they know some travel agency close to the university where I can buy travel insurance. They used some expressions like: ''*You know the main entrance of Parkinson Building? There is one office is just across the street from there... So you'll cross the traffic lights... then turn left, walk a few minutes...*'' Such details are used as signals to help the hearer (who was me) to update the deictic centre.

Moreover, in addition to words such as *here* vs. *there* and *this* vs. *that*, which are available in several languages, there are a certain class of expressions in Arabic which can be considered in their linguistics usage as spatial deixis. This class of words is known as ''The Vocative/ Call Elements''.

Table .1 represents three different vocative elements in Arabic. *Yaa*/ Aya, which can be used only in calling someone who is far away from the speaker's location, and *A'* to call someone who is partially close to the speaker. Finally, *Ay* can be used to hold someone's attention who is psychologically close to the speaker or someone who stands in the same place as the speaker.

Tab.1: The Vocative Elements in Arabic

		in English	
يا أ/ أيا	*Yaa*/ Aya	O'	*The addressee far away from the speaker*
أ	*A'*	O'	*The addressee close to the speaker*
أي	*Ay*	O'	*The addressee very close (psychologically or physically) to the speaker*

Nevertheless, in fact, the interpretation of these words, especially in literary texts, involves at least considering two different entities: the physical distance between the speaker and the addressee and the social relationship between them as well. These two entities should be considered in order to distinguish between deictic usage and not deictic one. For instance, a variety of different examples can be found in the very well-known stories collection *''One Thousand and One Nights''* where some narrative figures address each other by using such words without applying the role of it as shown in fig.1. Thus, such usage could be understood as markers of *social deixis* where these characters want to show, for example, their proximity psychological, or their respect to the addressee, or even to give special status to the addressee.

Fig.1: *The conceptualization of the deictic centre of the Vocative elements in Arabic:*
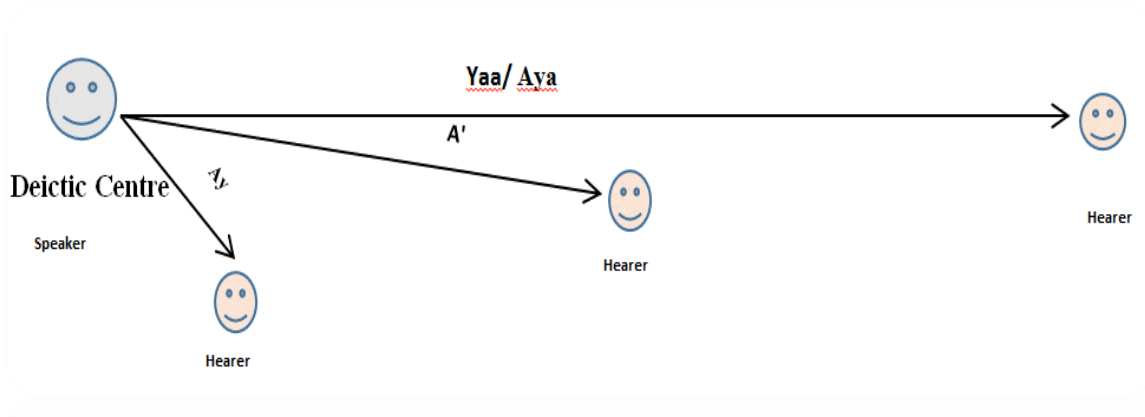
3.3. Temporal deixis:

Signs of temporal deixis include some sort of expressions which reflect the relationship between the speaker and the time of the utterance. For instance: *now, this moment, yesterday, tomorrow, this coming week, this year* (Grundy, 2008: 31). In addition to this, *the features of tense* as well one of very significant and common expressions which can be taken as deictic expressions because they grammaticalize ''the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero-point of the deictic context'' (Lyons, 1977: 678).

These types of expressions cannot be precisely clear nor have value without understanding their original context. In general, as Verschueren (1999) has pointed out related to this, ''even to determine the deictic centre, the point of reference from which the dimension is looked at (typically now where time is concerned), information is needed about the deictic context'' (p.18). So the interpreting of time deictic elements in the language is not always straightforward and easy. For instance, consider the following citation taken from a speech given by President Trump at the *2017 Governors' Ball*:

16. ''... *tomorrow morning*, we're going to meet and have some pretty big sessions on healthcare and other things ...''.

Therefore, the meaning of *tomorrow morning* can be really ambiguous without knowing the deictic center,s which is the date of this speech. This is because as we are reading this speech, the word *tomorrow* might be a time that has already past or also can be assumed to be the coming day after today. Subsequently, one has to know the exact date of when this speech was delivered in order to know the correct meaning of *tomorrow mooring*.

Another example from the same context is:

17. ''...we're going to have a speech on *Tuesday night*...''.

Accordingly, to interpret such an expression, it is essential to know the day when this speech was given, and here it should not be Monday; otherwise, the speaker will use the expression tomorrow. So Tuesday must be some other day that comes after the speech is presented, but not the following day (not the tomorrow of the day when this speech was given), or not in weeks after; otherwise, the speaker should clarify this by saying: *tomorrow*.

However, the deictic centre of time varies with the conceptualization of the speech situation; for instance, yesterday, tomorrow, and now can refer to the time differently. For example, according to Diessel (2012) *Now* can refer to the very moment of the speech event, but also it can be used to ''refer to a large time period that includes the time of the current speech event'' (p.18). Consider, for example, the deictic expression *now* in:

18. ''We *now* have to be more careful because world communism, whose pride has been hit, will regard Oman as the axe which shattered the rock of communism'' (Qaboos, 2005: 65).

Which actually does not refer only to the moment of the speech event yet also includes a general period of time. Similarly, *yesterday* and *tomorrow*, the following example is adopted from the speech of Sultan Qaboos on 23rd July 1970:

19. ''*Yesterday* it was complete darkness, and with the help of God, *tomorrow* will be a new dawn on Muscat, Oman and its people''. (Qaboos, 2005: 7). To mean by yesterday was a long period of time when the country passed through some hard-political issues. And tomorrow does refer to the future and not to the day after when the speech was presented.

4. Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to highlight the three main categories of deictic expressions, which are: person deixis, spatial deixis and temporal deixis, focusing on their contribution to creating a viewpoint in discourse. Considering a number of examples, we have seen the deictic center can be shifted from the speaker to the hearer in the speech situation or even to another person or entity in an imaginary situation. The current study has shown a different class of expressions in Arabic that can be considered in its linguistics usage as spatial deixis. This class of words is known as ''The Vocative/ Call Elements''. While there are many different studies focusing on the main categories of deictic expressions (person deixis, spatial deixis & temporal deixis), I have not found enough studies on The Vocative Elements in Arabic and their deictic features. It is thus hoped that this study will be a threshold for future studies.

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