



Article

# Theoretical Approaches To Deixis: Analysis And Interpretation

Kurbanova Munavvara Abdujabbarovna

1. Independent Professor, Doctor of Philological Sciences (DSc), Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi  
E-mail: [munavvara2013@yandex.ru](mailto:munavvara2013@yandex.ru)

**Abstract:** The article elucidates the pragmatic essence of the concept of “deixis.” The causes underlying the emergence of this phenomenon are explained. The level of investigation of the issue in both world and Uzbek linguistics is highlighted. The role and significance of deictic units in identifying the specific characteristics of children’s speech are discussed.

**Keywords:** deixis, speech situation, context, semantics, pragmatics, speech act, deictic unit, anaphora, children’s speech, cognitive mechanism.

## 1. Introduction

In the study of communicative properties inherent in linguistic units, deictic elements function as a fundamental tool. The term “deixis” originates from the Greek word “deixis,” meaning “to show” or “to indicate,” and reflects the pointing function of linguistic units. The deictic nature of language elements is realized within a speech situation and context. The relationship between deixis and context, as well as the speech situation, demonstrates that it is a central object of investigation in pragmalinguistics [1]. The realization and perception of this phenomenon in speech activity are also significantly influenced by the age characteristics of communication participants, along with their general knowledge of reality and linguistic competence.

The term “deixis” was first used in the works of ancient Greek philosophers Aristotle and Apollonius Dyscolus. Initially, the concept developed through philosophical and logical approaches to analyzing the referential function of words. From the mid-20th century, this phenomenon began to be studied as an independent theoretical issue at the intersection of semantics and pragmatics[2]. Although the concept has been known since antiquity, linguists have particularly emphasized its essential role in pronouns. In European linguistics, the term “demonstratives” has often been used in relation to pronouns. The phenomenon of deixis in linguistics was first systematically studied by the German scholar Karl Brugmann [3].

The linguist and psychologist Karl Bühler also made significant contributions to the development of deixis theory. In his research, the essence, types, and functions of deictic units are described. Bühler analyzed deixis based on the triadic field of “I – here – now,” considering it as a field of indication. According to this approach, every utterance is interpreted relative to this central field. For example, in the sentence “I came,” “I” refers to the personal center, while “came” indicates temporal and action-related reference points. Thus, deixis serves as a mechanism that expresses the situational coordinates of speech and determines communicative orientation [4].

This approach later significantly influenced English semantics and pragmatics. John Lyons defined deixis as “the property of language that determines its use relative to context.” According to him, in each speech act, the deictic center is re-established because the semantic coordinates change as speakers and listeners alternate [5, 400]. This perspective has become one of the fundamental theoretical principles of modern pragmalinguistics[5].

From the above, it can be concluded that Bühler analyzes deixis from a psychosemantic perspective, whereas Lyons approaches it from a communicative-pragmatic standpoint. Accordingly, in modern linguistics, deixis is regarded not only as “pointing through words,” but also as a process of perceiving and socially interpreting the speech situation[6].

By the end of the 20th century, the concept of deixis began to be interpreted in close connection with pragmatics. In Stephen Levinson’s work *Pragmatics*, deixis is defined as a linguistic phenomenon intrinsically linked to the speech context, emphasizing that deictic units embody not only grammatical but also social and cognitive features.

Levinson’s approach paved the way for understanding deixis not merely as a referential device, but as a linguistic expression of roles, social statuses, and communicative intentions. This aspect is particularly important in the study of children’s speech. As children acquire language, they learn to perceive themselves as the “center of speech.” From this perspective, deixis is interpreted as the central component organizing communicative context and is studied in relation to cognitive mechanisms of language. It is evident that the semantic interpretation of deixis has gradually expanded, extending into pragmatic and psycholinguistic domains[7]. Today, deixis is recognized not only as a structural component of language but also as a phenomenon reflecting the cognitive processes of communication participants. In modern interpretations, deixis is viewed as the linguistic expression of shifting speech centers, human cognition, and even emotional experience in communication. This is particularly evident in children’s speech, where emotional deixis functions as a natural bridge between language and feelings. Therefore, the study of deictic features in children’s speech is crucial for identifying stages of their cognitive and emotional development[8].

### Methods

Certain deictic units of the Uzbek language have been studied by S. Rahimov from a functional-semantic perspective in comparison with English and Russian. In this research, Uzbek deictic units were analyzed within the framework of pronouns, adverbs of place and time, certain verbs with deictic semantics, personal suffixes, and affixes expressing locative meaning. However, deictic elements in Uzbek are not limited to these categories. Units belonging to nouns, adjectives, numerals, interjections, onomatopoeic words, and even syntactic constructions can also perform deictic functions. While analyzing the formal-semantic structure of complex sentences, N. Mahmudov pays particular attention to the function of deictic units within the main clause. His views on the distinction between sentences with and without referential components are aimed at explaining the indicative function of these units on a grammatical basis .

The elements described by Mahmudov as “referential components” are, in fact, deictic devices. They are not semantically independent, meaning they do not convey meaning directly; rather, they point to a referent that is determined through the speech situation. Therefore, it is appropriate to interpret them as “semantically weak, yet functionally active units due to their connective and deictic roles.” This perspective is consistent with the interpretations of deixis theory found in the works of Karl Bühler [3, 528] and Stephen Levinson.

In the study titled *Pragmatic Interpretation of Text in the Uzbek Language*, conducted by M. Hakimov, attention is given to the role of pronouns as referential elements that ensure syntagmatic and pragmatic connections between parts of a text. According to the scholar, pronouns refer to preceding parts of the text, preserve semantic cohesion, and ensure the structural and semantic integrity of context .

### Results and Discussion

Such an approach demonstrates that deixis is also an important object of study within text linguistics. Thus, according to Hakimov, deictic units function not only within individual sentences but also at the level of the text, serving as tools of reference and coherence. This view is particularly significant for pragmatic analysis, as the meaning of each deictic unit is determined in relation to the speech situation[9]. It becomes evident that the perspectives of Mahmudov and Hakimov complement one another. By synthesizing these two approaches, the multi-level nature of deixis (at both sentence and text levels) can be established. Accordingly, a deictic unit can be evaluated not only as a referential device but also as an element that ensures the logical coherence of the text, contextual connectivity among its components, and the dynamics of communication[10]. The monograph *Pragmalinguistics* by Sh. Safarov is considered one of the major studies in modern Uzbek linguistics in this field. Its section devoted to deixis contributes significantly to a deeper understanding of the communicative functions of language[11].

In this work, deixis is interpreted not merely as the semantic value of words but also as a phenomenon closely related to the speech situation. This approach corresponds to the principles of modern pragmalinguistics. The scholar thoroughly analyzes the similarities and differences between deixis and anaphora, distinguishing between mechanisms of reference and indication. While deixis directly refers to real-world entities, anaphora points to elements previously mentioned within the text. This distinction represents an important theoretical link between deixis and text linguistics[12].

The monograph explains each type of deixis with examples, and this systematic approach serves as a methodological foundation for subsequent research in Uzbek linguistics.

The research conducted by G. Boltaqulova is noteworthy for examining the interrelation between deixis and temporality, as well as identifying their pragmatic value. Based on a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek, the study reveals the pragmatic features of temporal deictic units, their syntactic positions in the text, and their role in forming temporal syntagmatic structures. This research is valuable in that it explains the category of time through deixis using a cognitive-pragmatic approach. It demonstrates that temporal expression is connected not only to the language system but also to human cognition and culture in real communicative processes. Its findings provide a theoretical basis for the comparative pragmatic analysis of temporal deixis, the identification of functional features of Uzbek deictic mechanisms, and the study of temporal deixis in text analysis. The results of such investigations are also reflected in the research of R. Davlatova[13]. In her work, alongside the previously mentioned types of deixis, another form—propositional deixis—is identified in Uzbek communicative texts. This type refers to specific situations, events, or information through linguistic units. Davlatova identifies the linguistic means that form different types of deixis and analyzes them from a functional-pragmatic perspective. She also explains the essence of deixis and its modes of expression in texts. The author substantiates that deixis can be expressed in both primary (direct) and secondary (indirect) ways, revealing implicit forms of expression and uncovering hidden deictic mechanisms in texts[14].

This approach highlights that deixis is not only realized through traditional grammatical means but is also shaped by contextual and pragmatic factors, making it a complex phenomenon. The study also identifies paralinguistic means expressing deixis in Uzbek and scientifically distinguishes them from core deictic units. This aspect reveals the interrelation between Uzbek speech culture, communicative pragmatics, and extralinguistic factors. In the research, deixis is interpreted as a functional-semantic field, with its core and peripheral zones clearly defined. The scholar divides this field into microfields and determines the position of deictic units within them. Such an approach allows for interpreting the system of deixis in Uzbek as an integrated, coherent, and hierarchically structured phenomenon[15].

## Conclusion

Deixis is a universal phenomenon that reflects the pragmatic nature of language and ensures reference, indication, and semantic cohesion in communication. According to modern interpretations, deixis is not merely a linguistic unit within the language system

but also a cognitive mechanism that expresses personal perception, emotional state, and social roles. In Uzbek, deixis is expressed through both linguistic and extralinguistic means, contributing to the effectiveness of communication. Studies conducted on this issue serve as a theoretical foundation for analyzing the communicative-pragmatic system of the Uzbek language. A systematic approach to the interpretation of deixis also facilitates the study of the specific characteristics of children's speech. Deictic units in their speech serve as important linguo-pragmatic indicators in analyzing the development of language and cognition, as well as the verbal expression of emotional experience. In studying deixis, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that considers both linguistic and extralinguistic factors, with particular attention to identifying the cognitive, emotional, and social functions of deictic units, especially in children's speech. Such an approach enables a deeper understanding of the communicative-pragmatic system of the Uzbek language and provides a scientific basis for evaluating speech development processes.

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