

Pragmatics:

Deixis

Deixis

□ **Definition:**

The word “Deixis” is a technical term (from Greek) for one of the most basic things we do with utterances, which means “pointing via language.”

Typical examples of Deixis

**I, you, he, she Here, This,
Now that,there, then**

News narratives show many examples of deixis:

Example 1 - from a CBS Evening News broadcast.

- 1. The Americans arrested three suspects, but they made many more enemies here,**
- 2. when the soldiers shot back at the gunmen hiding in these houses**

Example 2

But it's clear the situation here could grow far worse

- 2. before the U.S. even has a chance to win it.**

Person Deixis

I: the speaker

You: the addressee

He, she, it : neither speaker, nor addressee

Social deixis (in French, “vous” “tu”) → social status

Example

- **Tom: Hello. Is that the teacher speaking? My little Tom caught cold today and he can't go to school. He asked me to ask you for a day's leave**
- **Teacher: Who is that speaking?**
- **Tom: it's my father, sir!**

Space/Spatial/Place Deixis:

Here / There

This / That

They indicate distance or proximity from the speaker,

Physical distance or proximity

Mental and psychological distance or proximity

e.g.--The station is two hundred yards from the college.

--Bring that here and take this there

example

- **Teacher: Tom, where is Mexico?**
- **Tom: It is on the 11th page of the geographic book, sir!**

Temporal/Time deixis

Now → proximal

Then → distal (both past and future)

**Temporal events that move toward us
(into view) → *this weekend***

**Temporal events that move away from
us (out of view)**

example

- Professor: when is your birthday?**
- Boy: February 20th**
- Professor: which year?**
- Boy: every year!**

Deictic center

- **The time of the utterance's time; the place of the utterance's place, the person just giving the utterance.**
- **Near speaker—proximal—this, here, now**
- **Away from speaker—distal—that, there, then**

Using Deixis

□ **Certain words like here, there, this, that, now, then, yesterday as well as most pronouns such I, you, him, her, them can only be understood if we know about the context in which they are used.**

Using Deixis

For example, the sentence, “you’ll have to bring that back tomorrow, because they aren’t here”, out of the context will be quite unintelligible. Because this sentence contain large number of certain expressions (Deixis) which depend for their interpretation on the immediate physical context in which they are uttered.

Using Deixis

- All these expressions have to be interpreted in terms of what person, place or time the speaker has in mind. There is a broad distinction between what is marked as distant (that, there, then). It is also possible to mark whether the movement is happening toward the speaker's location (come) or away from speaker's location (go) if you are looking for someone and he or she appears moving towards you, you tend to say "here she comes! If, however, she is moving away from you in the distance, you are more likely to say, there she go goes!"

Intriguing question

- **Deictic expressions are a pragmatic concept**
- **Why?**
- **Because their interpretation depends on the context, the speaker's intention, and they express relative distance.**



The End

Thank You!