

TIME AND SPACE IN ENGLISH: A PRAGMATIC LINGUISTICS APPROACH

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Abstract: *In this article, the pragmatic expression of time and space in English is examined. Examining the interactional and context-dependent functions of temporal and spatial deixis is the primary goal. In this study, the usage of time and space deixis in written and spoken English is examined using qualitative discourse analysis techniques. Research reveals that these expressions have interactional functions as well as referential ones, including controlling conversation, organizing stories, and signaling social proximity. Strict grammatical restrictions are frequently superseded by contextual inference, which is ultimately crucial in the understanding of these statements. The study's conclusions include recommendations for translation techniques, intercultural communication, and language acquisition.*

Keywords: *pragmatics, deixis, time, space, context, inference, discourse, Introduction*

The universal cognitive concepts of time and space have a fundamental influence on human experience, perception, and language structure. Though their pragmatic functions in communication are just as important, these categories are frequently examined in linguistic theory in terms of their grammatical and lexical representations. Time and distance are conveyed in English through deictic markers, adverbs, prepositions, and tense systems that encode both objective and subjective interpretations. Frames are crucial to comprehending how temporal and spatial concepts function in language, according to renowned linguist Charles Fillmore (1975). Fillmore contends that context and prior knowledge dynamically create meaning rather than words having a fixed quality. The foundation of pragmatic competence, according to Stephen Levinson (1983), is deixis, which allows interlocutors to control reference and coordinate their discourse. Time and space markers support coherence and interpretability, which is another way that Halliday and Hasan (1976) emphasise the need of cohesiveness in text development. Using pragmatic linguistics, this article examines the use of temporal and spatial deixis in real-world English conversation. Our objective is to reveal the contextual and inferential processes that support the interpretation of time and space in communication by looking at examples from narrative texts, media discourse, and everyday conversation. Both theoretical and practical applications in domains like translation studies and language teaching are covered in the paper.

MAIN BODY

1. Deixis and Contextual Dependence

Deixis, which comes from the Greek word for "pointing," describes linguistic components that need context in order to be correctly understood. As noted by Levinson

(1983), deictic expressions serve as a link between the speaker's physical or mental reality and language. Particularly, the speaker's viewpoint and the utterance's context influence temporal and spatial deixis. In English, words like "this," "that," "now," "then," "here," and "there" have no set referents and must be understood in light of the context. The term "there" in a statement like "I'll meet you there," for instance, has no significance unless both interlocutors agree on the precise location. The same is true for the word "now" in "I'm busy now," which, depending on the speaker's intention, could apply to several time periods. Deictic expressiveness is based on this context-dependence, which calls for reciprocal awareness and inferential reasoning (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Thus, by facilitating real-time communication, Deixis allows speakers to rely on common cognitive surroundings while using less words.

2. Temporal Deixis in English Discourse

Expressions that place events in time in relation to the speaking moment are referred to as temporal deixis. Such indicators are crucial for maintaining narrative coherence and structuring discourse, claim Halliday and Hasan (1976). To establish temporal consistency, English uses tense, temporal adverbs (such as "soon," "later," and "recently"), and phrases like "a moment ago" or "in the near future." The word 'then' can be used to indicate a particular historical event or to move the storyline along in historical narrative or storytelling. For instance, "She walked in." Then he yelled. The word "then" creates tension in the story in addition to indicating chronological sequence. When employed narratively (historically), the present tense creates a sense of immediacy: "So I go in, and he's just sitting there." The listener enters the speaker's temporal frame when this is used. Interestingly, there may be argumentative and emotional power in these temporal manifestations. A politician who says, "Now is the time for change," evokes a sense of urgency and mobilisation, but a casual statement that uses the same term, "Now I'm tired," only expresses physical state. The pragmatics of temporal deixis are reaffirmed by the way context influences interpretation.

3. Spatial Deixis and Interactive Function

Terms referring to the position of objects or acts in relation to the speaker or listener are included in the category of spatial deixis. Words like "here," "there," "above," "behind," and "on the left" are examples. In addition to being geographical markers, these phrases have practical uses like directing attention, expressing emphasis, and forming bonds with others. Rather than focussing on a specific location, a teacher may use the metaphorical word "here" to guide students' cognitive attention. While there is no physical place in digital worlds, phrases like "click here" mimic physical deixis. According to Talmy (2000), this flexibility exemplifies how spatial references are cognitively anchored. Furthermore, rhetorical framing is aided by spatial deixis. "We stand here today as one nation" is a ceremonial speech that combines literal and symbolic meanings. The expression "on the other side of history" suggests ideological positioning through the metaphorical use of spatial deixis. These features demonstrate how spatial expressions convey meaning that is both social and physical.

4. Pragmatic Inference and Interpretative Flexibility

Deixis's dependence on inferential reasoning is one of its most important characteristics. Interlocutors can comprehend speeches even when the language expression is unclear thanks to pragmatic inference. According to Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory, human mind reflexively looks for relevance and extrapolates intended meanings from context. Expressions involving time and space are especially well-suited to this approach. Take, for instance, the phrase "We'll meet there." "There" is ambiguous if the context is unknown. However, in real-world scenarios, presenters and listeners frequently use their common knowledge to easily resolve such difficulties. Similarly, depending on the situation, "later" may refer to hours or weeks. Instead of failing to communicate because they are ambiguous, these expressions' adaptability enables speakers to use less language, leaving interpretation up to the hearer's capacity for inference. The use of pragmatic inference is most noticeable in irony, implicit meaning, and indirect communication. The statement, "He's always late these days," for example, suggests a recent pattern of behaviour, which the listener deduces from prior shared experiences. Contextual memory and pragmatic signals, rather than language, control this type of inference.

5. Implications for Language Education and Translation

Practical comprehension of time and space expressions is essential for both teaching and translating languages. Grammar rules are frequently mastered by students, but context-based deixis interpretation is a challenge. This is particularly difficult in English since words like "soon," "here," and "then" have a lot of different meanings. The role of context may be overlooked in traditional training, which could result in pragmatic failure. Thus, discourse-based activities that introduce students to the natural usage of deixis should be incorporated into instructional materials. Students can better understand how deictic expressions work in real-time communication through role-plays, narrative activities, and discussions with lots of context. As argued by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), fluency requires pragmatic skill just as much as grammatical ability. Deictic expressions present a difficult problem in translation studies. The way that time and space are encoded varies among languages. For instance, English uses speaker-relative terminology, whereas other languages utilise absolute directional systems. 'Back then' might not have the same narrative structure if translated literally into a language that lacks temporal deixis. As a result, translators must modify expressions pragmatically, maintaining the meaning instead of the style. Cross-cultural knowledge and a thorough understanding of discourse conventions are essential for translating deixis effectively. Misunderstandings frequently result from a failure to grasp the pragmatic intent of a deictic marker rather than from poor language.

CONCLUSION

English time and space expressions are much more than just grammatical or lexical identifiers, as this article has shown. They have a crucial role in the development of interaction, meaning, and narrative coherence. By facilitating the listener's comprehension through common knowledge and inferential reasoning, deixis acts as a link between language and context. Reflecting speaker attitude and intent, managing social interactions,

and structuring discourse are all aided by temporal and spatial deixis. Their adaptability makes them effective communication tools even though it also poses learning and translation difficulties. Ignoring their pragmatic aspect leads to a lack of comprehension of the language being used. Future studies can compare deixis across languages with different typologies or examine its use in new digital communication venues where conventional context is frequently lacking. Communication skills and intercultural comprehension can be greatly improved by including pragmatic awareness into translation procedures and curricula.

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