



# A Discourse Analysis of Deictic Expressions in Selected Literary and Scientific Texts

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## **Abstract**

Deixis is reference by means of an expression whose interpretation is relative to the (usually) extralinguistic context of the utterance such as who is speaking, the time or place of speaking the gestures of the speaker and the current location in the discourse.(Loos et.al,2004:1)

The present study aims at investigating one type of person deixis (personal pronouns) in two types of texts, literary and scientific. It falls into two parts, the first one is theoretical which presents a theoretical survey concerning personal pronouns. The second part is practical that gives an account about the frequency, distributions and some special uses of personal pronouns in the analysed texts.

The model adopted for the analysis is Quirk et al (1985). The data selected for the analysis consists of six texts, four of which are scientific and the others are literary.

The analysis of the texts has revealed that frequency of personal pronouns is higher in literary texts than in scientific ones. In addition to that in literary texts the author can deviate the norm of writing and uses personal pronouns in a way that seems ungrammatical in order to enrich his literary work.

## 1- Introduction

Deixis is collectively the orientational features of human languages that has reference to points in time, space, and the speaking event between interlocutors. A word that depends on deictic clues is called a deictic or a deictic word. Deictic words are bound to a context either (a linguistic or an extralinguistic context) for their interpretation Deixis falls into three types; spatial, social, and person deixis. Pronouns are considered to be deictic but a finer distinction is always made between personal pronouns such as I, you, etc (which will be tackled in the present study) and pronouns that refer to places and times such as now, then, here, there. Generally pronouns are one of the word classes that refer to persons and things in language. They are used to make the sentences less cumbersome and less repetitive (MacFadyen, 2007:1). Traditionally a pronoun is defined as a part of speech that takes the place of other nouns (Williams , 2006 :1) . Pronouns share several characteristics, most of which are absent from nouns . their names implies that they 'replace' nouns , but this seems to a great extent a misnomer. It is best to see pronouns as comprising a varied class of closed – class words with' noun – like' or, more frequently like a noun phrase. Note the following examples.

Sally read a book

The man invited the little Swedish girl

In the first example the nouns " Sally" and ' book' can be substituted by the pronouns "she" and "it" respectively . In the second example the pronoun " he" can stands for the noun phrase "the man" and "her" for the noun phrase "the little Swedish girl"

Quirk et al (1973:100) state that there are several features that pronouns have in common, which distinguish them from noun :

- 1- They do not admit determiners
- 2- They often have an objective case
- 3- They often have person distinction

4- They often have overt gender contrast

5- Singular and plural forms are often not morphologically related .

Pronouns are a closed system , they cannot be expanded by the creation or addition of new items . Moreover, they are outline words they lack factual content , their content must be deduced from the context or the situation in which a pronoun used ( MacFadyen , 2007:1) .

Pronouns are classified into several types, including the personal pronouns, the demonstrative pronouns, the interrogative pronouns, the indefinite pronouns and the relative pronouns .

## **2- Personal pronouns**

Personal pronouns may be regarded, by reason of their frequencies and their grammatical characteristics, as the most important pronouns. A personal pronoun refers to a specific person or thing and changes its form to indicate person, number, gender, and case (MacFadyen, 2007: 1). A personal pronoun is used in place of a noun, the noun it refers to is called the "antecedent " (Azar 1999: 139) . A singular pronoun is used to refer to a singular noun

I bought a car, it was amazing

Similarly a plural pronoun must refer to a plural noun

I met old friends. They looked well

Sometimes a personal pronoun refers to a particular individual, where gender is known whereas the noun that is referred to is not generic.

A student walked into the room, she was looking for the teacher.

In the sentence above "the student" is ambiguous it is clarified by using the pronoun "she".

### **2.1 Forms of Personal pronouns**

English personal pronouns have various forms which indicate person , number , case and gender . The form of the personal pronoun in singular is different from its form in the plural. The following table shows personal pronouns in singular and plural  
Table No.1

Singular	Plural
I	We
You	You
He ,She , It	They

#### Singular and plural personal pronouns

As it is shown above the personal pronoun "you" unlike other personal pronouns shows no number change in its form. Personal pronouns also show distinction in their form for case. The forms of personal pronoun in the subjective case is different from their forms in the objective or possessive case. The following table shows the different forms of personal pronoun with respect to case.

Table No.2

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	
		Adjective	Pronoun
I	me	my	mine
you	you	your	yours
he	him	his	his
she	her	her	hers
it	it	its	its
we	us	our	ours
they	them	their	theirs

#### Forma of personal pronouns in different cases

The subjective personal pronouns indicat that the pronoun is acting as the subject of the sentence (MacFadyen, 2007:1). In the following sentences each of the underlined words is a subjective personal pronoun and acts as the subject of the sentence.

I was glad to find the bus

You are surely a clever child  
He is a good player  
When she was young, she earned her living  
They returned to their homeland  
We will meet at 3:30  
It is an expensive ring

An objective personal pronoun indicates that the pronoun is acting as an object of a verb, compound verb, preposition or infinitive phras in the following sentences each of the underlined word is an objective personal pronoun (Ibid).

He presented her a present and she thanked him  
After reading the book he threw it a way.  
Our leader will address you in five minutes  
They will meet us at the new café  
Give the list to me

A possessive personal pronoun indicates that the pronoun is acting as a marker of possession and defines who owns a particular object or person (MacFayen , 2007 :2) . In the sentences bellow the underlined words are the possessive personal pronouns .

The smallest gift is mine  
This is yours  
His Is on the counter  
Theirs will be deliverd tomorrow  
Ours is the green one on the counter .

The forms of personal pronouns also varies with respect to gender . the form of some personal pronouns in masculine differs from those of the feminine and neuter .However such gender distinction is limited to the third person singular where " he " is used for masculine , " she " for femenine and " it " for neuter .

## 2.2 Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns can be classified into two groups reflexive and intensive . Reflexive and intensive pronouns have the



same form but they differ in function. The function of the intensive pronoun is to identify a subject or an object and to reinforce the meaning (Conline , 1961 : 104 )

I myself caught the thief

Layla herself cooked the dinner

The intensive pronouns in the sentences above are used to reinforce the meaning. Intensive pronouns have no syntactic or grammatical effect. They can be deleted from the sentence without any change in meaning. Whereas the reflexive pronouns are obligatory in the sentence . the meaning will not be clear if they are omitted

She herself cut herself

The first "herself" can be omitted from the above sentence , the second cannot because it differentiates between other possible objects such as " the meet " , her hair " and so on .

### **3. Discourse Analysis of Written Texts**

Discourse analysis is a term which has come to have different interpretation for scholars working in different disciplines . It can be applied to any text that is to any problem or situation . Since discourse analysis is basically interpretative and deconstructing reading , there are no specific guidelines to follow (Brend , 1992 :365 ) .

Discourse analysis can be characterized as a way of approaching and thinking about a problem. Yet it does not provide an absolute answer to a specific problem but it enables us to understand the conditions behind a specific problem and makes us realize the essence of that problem and its resolution , lie in its assumptions that enable the existence of that problem (Ibid) .

#### 4. Scientific Vs literary language

Writing is an essential form of communication. James (1969:1) points out that a basic function of speech or writing is the communication of ideas and this process is intimately related to the cognitive abilities of man. The process of communication presupposes an audience – real or imagined. Then a writer should take into consideration to whom he is writing. Scientific writing ;for example is a type of informative writing, its fundamental purpose is not the mere presentation of information and thought, but rather it is an actual communication of the useful material to the reader , there is no intention to amuse or entertain . Rodman (1181: 4) points out that an amusing piece of scientific writing would be refuted and described as "unscientific" . Whereas literary language must be amusing . It is characterized as having certain aesthetic features that are not found in other varieties of language .It is assumed that the aesthetic value of a literary work is derived from the unique, even deviant use of certain linguistic items . Sapir (1944:22) states that when an expression is of an unusual significance we call it literature . Then a comparison between the two languages may highlight this assumption .

A comparison between literary and scientific language is a comparison between subjectivity and objectivity . Unlike scientific , literary language is based mostly on narration and conversation which require reference to characters , places and events .Such reference is accomplished by using pronouns frequently . Scientific language on the other hand is a matter of presenting information or stating facts . It is characterized by being impersonal because there is no active agent to be referred to and the material must be put impersonally (Latsko , 2008 :1) .Scientific writing should convey one meaning it should call attention not to itself , but rather to its content , therefore information should be presented accurately , clearly , concisely and in an appropriate manner to fit the reader's need and to convey the intended meaning easily .

## 5. Quirk Model

Pronouns constitute a heterogeneous class of items with numerous subclasses. Despite their variety there are several features that pronouns have in common which distinguish them from nouns. Quirk et al (1985:335) points out that the meaning of pronouns in itself is general and undetermined; their interpretation depends to an unusual extent on what information is supplied by context. Pronouns show distinction with respect to case, person, gender and number.

### 5.1Case

Most pronouns in English have only two case forms common and genitive (possessive) , however , the personal pronouns have a further distinction between subjective and objective . The choice between subjective and objective is made on the basis of a pronoun function in the clause whether it functions as a subject or as an object. But sometimes especially in the informal style the subjective form appears not only in subject position but in that of subject complement , and also in constructions where it can be postulated that the predicate has been ellipted (Quirk et al , 1985 :335 – 337).Note the following example

eg. Him and Mary are going a broad for a holiday.



## 5.2 Person

Personal pronouns have distinction of person ; 1<sup>st</sup> person , 2<sup>nd</sup> person and 3<sup>rd</sup> person . The reference of these pronouns excludes both speakers (writers) and addressees. (Quirk et al , 1985 :339) . To clarify the implication of person (Ibid: 340) present the following figure.

1 <sup>st</sup> per.	+S	± h	± O
2 <sup>nd</sup> per.	-S	+h	± O
3 <sup>rd</sup> per.	-S	- h	+ O

Where

s= The originator (s) of the message

h= The addressee (s)

o= any other referent (s) excluded from the definition of (s) and (h)

In the figure above the meaning of the singular pronouns are limited to the boxes with thick borders .

## 5.3 Gender

Gender distinction is largely restricted to 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronouns of the categories , personal , possessive and reflexive pronouns .

Quirk et al (1985:341) present the following table to show gender distinction .

Table No. 3

Personal gender	masculine	he	him	his	himself
	feminine	she	her	her hers	herself
non personal gender		it		its	itself

The different forms of personal pronouns with respect to gender  
Gender distinction is neutralized in the plural: They , them , themselves .

The choice between personal and non-personal gender is determined by whether the reference is to animate or inanimate (Ibid :341). Yet there are some exceptional uses for example "it" can refer to babies and she can be used for replacing non human thing when they are not known in relation to their gender such as (gods , angles , fairies ) and higher animals .

The choice between he and she is primarily based on the sex of the person referred to , however , difficulties of usage arise because English has no sex neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronoun . Consequently the plural pronoun " they " often used informally in defiance with the indefinite pronouns everyone , everybody , someone , somebody everyone , anybody , no one , nobody (Ibid:342).

e.g. , Everyone thinks they have a right to be here  
Has anybody brought their racket

A similar choice may be made in referring back to a singular noun phrase with a personal noun of indeterminate gender as head .  
eg., Every student has to make up his own mind.

#### 5.4 Number

The personal ,reflexive and possessive pronouns have singular and plural forms which are morphologically unrelated .The plural of 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun is" we" but it is also used to refer to the singular when the speaker has a high social role like presedents , kings , lords etc ) .The pronoun we may exclude the speaker and the persons addressed or it may be inclusive referring to the speaker and the addressee. Quirek et al (1985:343) state that the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun "you" with plural reference normally means" you" (singular ) and one or more other persons , but not "me " . 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns have the same form for singular and plural , only the reflexive forms "yourself" and "yourselves" preserve a distinction between singular and plural .

#### 5.5 Reflexive Pronouns

A reflexive pronoun ends with – "self" ( singular ) and – "selves" (plural ) these suffixes are added to the determinative possessive forms for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person . Quirk et al (1985: 356 ) points out that " the reflexive pronouns have two distinct uses, basic and emphatic the basic use is when the reflexive pronoun functions as an object or a complement and has a subject of its clause as its antecedent

eg. they helped themselves .

The emphatic use illustrates that the pronoun is in appositional relation to its antecedent

eg. We couldn't come ourselves.

## 6. Data Analysis

The present study aims at investigating the usage of personal pronouns in two types of texts, literary and scientific. As for scientific texts two different disciplines are chosen ; physics and chemistry . A certain number of pages are selected randomly for the purpose of analysis. For literary text ; two chapters of Jane Austen novel *Pride and Prejudice* are selected for the analysis (Ch.39 and Ch48).These chapters are selected because they include some special uses of personal pronouns . The texts are going to be analysed on the basis of Quirk et al's (1985) model . The analysis is of two parts , the first part is statistical that is counting the frequency of occurrence of personal pronouns in the analysed texts . The second part will give an account about some special uses of personal pronouns in the two types of texts .

### 6.1 The Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis shows that there are differences in the distribution of personal pronouns in the analysed texts .All personal pronouns occur with higher frequencies in literary text than in scientific ones . This is attributed to the technique used in literary writing which is based on narration and conversation This technique requires frequent use of personal pronouns . whereas in scientific text , it has been observed that some pages are empty completely from any occurrence of personal pronouns. This is due to the frequent use of passive in these texts. Also it has been observed that the gender neutral pronouns are the most frequent pronouns used in scientific texts. It is used as an "empty" or "prop" subject as in the example from text no.2

eg. It is easy to explain the expansion of the universe. .

Tables no (4) and (5) show the frequency (freq.) and percentage (per.) of each personal pronoun in scientific and literary texts respectively.



Table No 4

Subjective personal pronouns	Freq.	Per.	Objective P.P	Freq.	Per.	Possessive P.P	Freq.	Per.
I	8	5.6	Me	1	0.6	Mine	Nil	-
You	1	0.6	You	1	0.6	Yours	Nil	-
He	1	0.6	Him	Nil	-	His	Nil	-
She	Nil	-	Her	Nil	-	Hers	Nil	-
It	64	44.7	It	37	25.8	Its	Nil	-
We	14	9.7	Us	11	7.7	Ours	Nil	-
You	1	0.6	You	Nil	-	Yours	Nil	-
They	2	1.3	Them	2	1.3	Theirs	Nil	-

The frequency of personal pronouns in scientific texts

✧ Per. Indicates the ratio of each personal pronoun to the total number of personal pronouns

Table No. 5

Subjective P.P	Freq	Per.	Objective P.P	Freq.	Per.	Possessive P.P	Freq.	Per.
I	47	12.7	Me	15	4.1	Mine	4	1.1
You	16	4.3	You	22	5.9	Yours	2	0.5
He	43	11.6	Him	11	2.9	His	2	0.5
She	30	8.1	Her	4	1.1	Hers	Nil	-
It	38	10.3	It	10	2.7	Its	Nil	
We	32	8.7	Us	9	2.4	Ours	3	0.8
You	25	6.7	You	11	2.9	Yours	6	1.6
They	23	3.2	Them	16	4.3	Theirs	Nil	

The frequency of personal pronouns in literary texts

The statistical analysis shows that the frequency of reflexive pronouns is low in both types of texts, yet it is lower in scientific texts than in literary ones. Tables no. 6 and 7 show the frequency of reflexive pronouns in scientific and literary texts respectively.

Table No.6

Reflexive pronouns	Freq.
Myself	Nil
Yourself	Nil
Himself	Nil
Herself	Nil
Itself	Nil
Ourselves	2
Yourselves	Nil
Themselves	Nil

The frequency of reflexive pronouns in scientific text  
Table No.7

Reflexive pronouns	Freq.
Myself	Nil
Yourself	Nil
Himself	3
Herself	2
Itself	Nil
Ourselves	Nil
Yourselves	Nil
Themselves	1

The frequency of reflexive pronouns in literary text

### **6.2 Comment on some special uses of personal pronouns in the analysed texts**

The analysis of the texts shows that there are some differences in the use of personal pronouns in the two types of the text. The author of each type of the texts tries to make use of personal pronouns in order to fulfil his own aim of writing and to fit the need of his readers. For example the objective pronoun " me "

in Jane Austen *Pride and Prejudice* is used as the subject of the verb in the following extract from ch. 39 P.219.

Kitty and me were to spend the day there

Phrases of this kind are used by Lydia Bennet only . "me" used in this way occurs three times in the same chapter . Such use of an objective pronoun may be considered ungrammatical by grammarians , but in literature it may enrich the literary work , By using the pronoun "me" in this sense Austen tries to give the reader some background about the character . No. such use has been noticed in scientific text . The author of scientific text does not violate any norm of writing . His main concern is what is being presented not the way in which he presents it .

Personal pronouns in scientific text may create some ambiguity with respect to their referent, in the following extract from text no.1

we must move on to consider the explanation ....

The personal pronoun "we" in the extract above has a general referent. It has no unique or specific referent. The author may refer to himself , to himself and the reader or most probably to himself and to the group working with him and to which he is acting as a spokesman . Similarly the pronoun "you" in the following extract from scientific text no.3

You must ask yourself whether such a discussion is necessary

The 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun can refer to anyone who reads the text. It has no specific addressee.

No such ambiguity has been noticed in literary texts . Personal pronouns refer uniquely to characters participating in the context of situation. In the following extract from *Pride and Prejudice* ch . 39

..... and we mean to treat you all .

the speaker here is Lydia Bennet and by "we" she refers to herself and Kitty and the pronoun "you" refers to their visitors.



The 1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronoun is very commonly used in scientific texts by the writer to refer to himself in a desire to avoid the pronoun "I" which may be felt to be somewhat egotistical. Such use is called by Quirk et al (1985:350) as "editorial". The following example from scientific text no.3 shows the editorial "I" .

Before we can discuss the basic problem of the origin of our universe

Another comment to be mentioned concerning what is called by (Ruba : 1993:4)" a singular their or they ". Most grammarians assumed that there must be agreement between the personal pronoun and its antecedent , a word ; a whole group of words either a pronoun or unimplied noun to which a pronoun refers , but in *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen uses "they" and " themselves" with a singular antecedent .The following extracts from ch.48 P.(291 and 294) show this respectively.

Everybody began to find out, that they had always distrusted the appearance of his goodness  
...for who, as Lady Chtherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family

Rubba (1993:5) points out that such plural pronoun can only be used with a morphologically and syntactically singular antecedent when what it refers to is semantically collective and for generic and /or indefinite and/or unknown. In other words a lack of knowledge about the gendar of what is referred to will in many cases help to make the use of "singular they" sound acceptable (Ibid) .

## **7.Conclusion**

The analysis of the texts reveled that personal pronouns are hardly used in scientific texts. This is attributed to the frequent use of passive constructions in these texts whereas in literary texts personal pronouns are used very frequently . Moreover , they have various uses of which an author can make use to achieve the easthetic value of his work .

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