

Pragmatic Study of Deictic Expressions in Political Debates: Donald Trump and Joe Biden

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate and analyze deictic expression in some selected texts from political debates of Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Additionally, it provides an adequate background knowledge for those who are interested in this topic. It hypothesizes that politicians, in their debates, tend to exploit particular types of deictic expressions. In political debate, politicians tend to show certain characteristics of their own with respect to the use of deictic expressions. Logically, the question should be raised, why do they use a certain types of deictic expressions? The results of analyses of deictic expressions show that Trump and Biden tend to use personal deixis, more than other deixis. The reason behind such use is the effect of context requirements that pull together with the political and psychological status of the speakers in which they show their belonging to their community.

Keywords: reference, cohesive, person deixis, spatial deictics

Introduction

One of the fruitful groups of expressions in several areas of linguistics, especially in pragmatics, is "deictic expressions" which indicate their references always change relying on the context. They have association with some words or expressions that change due to the context. Such change is usually effected by the change of context involving person, place, time, social status and discourse sign. Deictic is a term which is used in linguistic theory so as to subsume those characteristics of language which point directly out the personal, locational, and temporal characteristics of the situation within that an utterance occurs and whose sense is concerned with that situation, e.g., "*I/you, here/there, this/that, now/then*". Deictic expressions can be classified into three main sub-kinds of deixis which are "spatial, temporal, and person deixis", and two minor sub-kinds that are "social and discourse deixis".

The current paper, however, aims to analyze some selected texts from political debates of Donald Trump and Joe Biden. The political debate means the ability to openly discuss political, commercial and strategic issues in public or in the media. The main challenge in debate is that politicians want to show themselves in way to have acceptability by community. They tend to use all available means of language to convince general public or the audience.

1.1 Concept of Deictic Expressions

Levinson (1983:79) mentions that both of the terms "deixis and indexicality" can be used interchangeably i.e. contextually dependent references, though, they involve various histories and tradition concerned with them. Lyons (1994: 636), in his turn, states that "the word deictic has its roots in the Greek word "deiktikos", meaning "able to show"; that derives from the word "deiktos"; which is a verbal of the word *deiknynai*, meaning to show". Deictic is utilized interchangeably with "deixis" which is employed in "linguistics and pragmatics" where it denotes a procedure whereby whether words or expressions may rely absolutely on context, (ibid).

On this occasion, Besides, Hurford and Heasley (2007: 67) illustrate that deictic expressions are the words which take the items of their sense from the situation, i.e the addresser, the hearer, the time and the location of the utterance in that it is used. These deictic expressions are discussed to facilitate the hearer distinguish the referent of a referring expression through its spatial or temporal relationships with the situation of an utterance, (ibid: 64).

For (Huang 2007: 132-133, Elaf & Hussien 2020), deictic expressions are widely named "indexical expressions" or "indexicals" in the philosophy of language literature. Deictics are words that have a deictic usage as core or central; non-deictic words are expressions which do not convey such a usage as core or central. He (ibid) illustrates that deictic words are expressions, phrases and properties of grammar that should interpreted with reference to the situation in that they are performed, like, *me* "the sender of this utterance" or *here* "the place where the sender is".

In this respect, Allot (2010: 55) views that deixis is closely associated with the sensitivity of truth-conditions to context. He (ibid) adds that "indexicality" is the fit term for this general field in philosophy whereas the term "deixis" is mostly favored in linguistics. Nevertheless, on the normal interpreting of the expressions, deixis is a wider concept than indexicality since indexicals are described as concepts which consider "the truth-conditions of an utterance context-sensitive".

Crystal (2011:133) argues that deictic is a term which is used in linguistic theory so as to subsume those characteristics of language which point directly out the personal, locational, and temporal characteristics of the situation within that an utterance occurs and whose sense is concerned with that situation, e.g., "*I/you, here/there, this/that, now/then*".

Thus, the study of deixis is a significant subfield within psycho-linguistics, since most sentences in most normal languages are deictically stated, that is, they have linguistic items with inbuilt contextual parameters whose comprehension is associated with the context of utterance. So, to interpret what accurately is meant by "*She brought this flower for me yesterday*" and if this statement is acceptable, one first requires to realize who pronounced it, on what occasion, and where. Moreover, one may also require a referring gesture to distinguish the female referent and the flower that is indicated, (Senft, 2014: 43).

1.2 Usage of Deictic Expressions

Cummings (2010: 102) affirms that there are two kinds of deictic usages of deictic terms which are:

- **Gestural usage** is basically relied on a type of physical monitoring of the speech setting. For instance, an utterance such as "*I don't agree with you but with you*" can be interpreted if the addresser physically denotes the identity of the intended hearer (s). Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 22-23) Alakrash et.al. (2020), Alakrash et al.(2021) add that "gestural usages", such as, *this foot*, are established by a gesture such as indicating; these are deictic (Elaf & Hussien 2020).
- **Symbolic usage** needs knowledge of the essential spatiotemporal parameters of the speech setting, or its discourse, or social parameters, like "*This room is badly lit*". For the interpreting of this utterance, it is adequate to realize the general place of the speaker and no concrete pointing is needed, although it may fully coexist, (Cummings, 2010: 102). Besides, Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 22) claim that "symbolic usages" rely on general spatio-temporal knowledge; they could be connected with a gesture, but would still be interpreted without. For instance, "*Let's make this country the best*", it is clear to most UK-based Guardian readers that this country indicates the UK, with no gestures.

The opposed is also acceptable: typically "non-deictic expressions" can be employed deictically. For instance, *he* or *she* would not naturally be discussed as deictic expressions, as they are typically "anaphoric" meaning pointing back to something explained previously in the conversation rather than associating with the ext-ralinguistic context, (ibid).

As a result, Cummings (2010: 102) concludes that there is a difference to be stated between "deictic and non-deictic usages of deictic terms". For instance, in the utterance "*Her mother walked in. This woman was the tallest female I had ever seen*", the expression "*this woman*" is utilized anaphorically indicating "*her mother*" in the first utterance. So, there is no based on extra-linguistic context for the description of the referent, (ibid).

1.3 Classification of Deictic Expressions

Cruse (2006: 45) classifies deictic expressions into three main sub-kinds of deixis which are "spatial, temporal, and person deixis", and two minor sub-kinds that are "social and discourse deixis". Nevertheless, these types will be illustrated as follows:

1.3.1 Person Deixis

Allot (2010: 57) clarifies that, in person deixis, there may be two focuses that are the addresser and the hearer. Obviously "I" normally picks out the previous, "you" the last. On this basis, third person pronouns are usually considered as "non-deictic expressions", since they do not associated with either focus. However, they are recurrently used deictically. For instance, A: (pointing at her husband) "*He's going to drive*". One signal of the distinction between basically deictic "I" and "you" and it is said that non-deictic "he/she" is that it is much more difficulty to employ "I" and "you" anaphorically.

In various languages, pronouns can also be distinguished by number: normally "singular/plural (as in English) or singular/dual/plural (as in Arabic)", even though more complex systems present. "Number and person" interact in various ways. One instance is the first person plural ('we'/'us'), that raise from context a set involving the addresser and occasionally but not constantly containing the addressee too. Other languages label this inclusive-we/exclusive-we contrast linguistically, whether on the verb, or with various forms of the pronoun, (ibid). In this respect, Allan and Jaszczolt (2012: 464) mention that "person deixis is concerned with discourse-internal and discourse-external participants".

1.3.2 Spatial Deixis

Cruse (2006: 166) describes spatial deictics as "location in space relative to the speaker. The most basic spatial deictics are the adverbs here and there". Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 28) denote, in their view, that spatial deixis usually expresses a relation relating to distance between the deictic focus of the addresser and a referent.

Fromkin et al (2014: 450) affirm that words of place deixis need contextual information regarding the location of utterance such as *here, that place, this city, there, etc.* In this respect, Hudson (2003: 316) states that "there are the demonstrative pronouns such as, *this, that, these and those*". The word "*this*", in, "*I'll take this*", may indicate a flower, a pen or whatever relying on the context of its usage. "*Here*" may refer to a place in "*Chicago*" when one talks about Chicago (Alakrash & Bustan 2020).

As far as directional terms are concerned, Fromkin et al (2014: 168) point out that "*before/ behind, left / right, front / back*" are deictic when one needs to realize the orientation in space of the conversational participants to distinguish their reference.

1.3.3 Temporal Deixis

Huang (2007: 144) views that "temporal deixis" is concerned with the encoding of temporal points and spaces in relation to the time at which an utterance is achieved in a speech setting. He (ibid) elaborates that "time is one-dimensional and unidirectional". Generally speaking, the passage of time is realized in two difference ways:

- To concern time as stable and the 'world' as changing through time from the past to the future.
- To believe of the 'world' as stable and of time as outflowing through the "world" from the future into the past.

In terms of the "moving world" metaphor (i), one may talk about "*the years ahead*"; from other angle, via the "*moving time*" metaphor (ii), he/she may talk about "*the coming years*".

1.3.4 Social Deixis

Huang (2007: 163) points out that social deixis is concerned with the claim of the social position of the addresser, the hearer, a third person or entity indicated, in addition to the social relationships establishing between them. He (ibid) adds that "the information encoded in social deixis may include *social class, kin relationship, age, sex, profession, and ethnic group*". Thus, social deixis is especially dealt with person deixis. In fact, there are linguists who argue that "person deixis cannot be studied independently of social deixis".

On this occasion, Allot (2010: 59) assumes that social deixis can be considered as "deictic terms which are context-sensitive in a different way from indexicals include socially deictic terms". Their usage in an unsuitable context would be inappropriate or rude, but it does not state the utterance false (Bustan & Alakrash 2020).

1.3.5 Discourse Deixis

Cruse (2006: 51) claims that "discourse deixis occurs when reference is made to discourse items which occur either before or after the current time of speaking". He (ibid) adds that when working as "discourse deictics", that usually point out a previously taking place item, and "this" to something that is still to bring: "*That was the best story I've heard for a long time, Wait till you hear this ... Expressions such as therefore, however, on the other hand*", which deal pieces of previous discourse with pieces of next discourse, are occasionally involved within discourse deictics. Besides, discourse deixis is concerned with the usage of a linguistic item within other utterances denoting the present, previous or next utterances in the same spoken or written conversation, Huang (2007: 72)

Data Analysis

2.1 Introduction

The current section will highlight on the analysis of deictic expressions of four political texts from debate that takes place between Trump and Biden. The concerned texts are elected randomly and collected from Internet Website.

2.2 Data Analysis and Results

Text (1)

"**I** want to open the schools. The transmittal rate to the teachers is very small. But **I** want to open the schools. **We** have to open **our** country. **We**'re not going to have a country. **You** can't do **this**. **We** can't keep **this** country closed. **This** is a massive country with a massive economy. People are losing **their** jobs. **They**'re committing suicide. **There**'s depression, alcohol, drugs at a level **that** nobody's ever seen **before**. **There**'s abuse, tremendous abuse. **We** have to open **our** country. **I**'ve said **it** often, the cure cannot be worse than the problem **itself**, and **that**'s what's happening. And **he** wants to close down. **He**'ll close down the country if one person in **our** massive bureaucracy says **we** should close **it** down", said *Donald Trump*

Table (1)

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentages
Personal deixis	19	70%
Time deixis	0	0%
Place deixis	6	22%
Discourse deixis	2	7%
Social deixis	0	0%
Total	27	100

In terms of the above table, the most prominent of all types is the personal deixis with the percentage of (70%) followed by place deixis which scores (22%). Both of time deixis and social deixis are not used in the text concerned.

Text (2)

"**Simply not true**. **We** ought to be able to walk and chew gum **at the same time**. **We** ought to be able to safely open, but **they** need resources to open? **You** need to be able to, for example, if **you**'re going to open a business, have social distancing within the business. **You** need to have, if **you** have a restaurant, **you** need to have Plexiglas dividers so people cannot infect one another. **You** need to be in a position **where you** can take testing rapidly and know whether the person is in fact infected. **You** need to be able to trace. **You** need to be able to provide all the resources **that** are needed to do **this**. And **that** is not inconsistent with saying **that we**'re going to make sure **that we**'re going to open safely. **And by the way**, all **you** teachers out **there**, not **that** many of **you** are going to die, so don't worry about **it**. So don't worry about **it**. Come on", said *Joe Biden*

Table (2)

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentages
Personal deixis	18	66%
Time deixis	0	0%
Place deixis	2	7%
Discourse deixis	7	38%
Social deixis	0	0%
Total	27	100

As for table (2), personal deixis scores (18) frequencies with the percentage of (66%) followed by discourse deixis which has (7) frequencies with the percentage of (38%). For place deixis, it outcomes (2) frequencies with the percentage of (7%) whereas both time and social deixis are not utilized in the current text.

Text (3)

"**By the way, I** will say **this**. If **you** go and look at what's happened to New York, **it's** a ghost town. **It's** a ghost town. And when **you** talk about plexiglass, **these** are restaurants that had dying. **These** are businesses with no money. Putting up plexiglass is unbelievably expensive, and **it's** not the answer. **I** mean, **you're** going to sit **there** in a cubicle wrapped around with plastic. **These** are businesses that are dying, Joe. **You** can't do that to people. **You** just can't. Take a look at New York and what's happened to **my** wonderful city. For so many years, **I** loved it. **It** was vibrant. **It's** dying. Everyone's leaving New York", said *Donald Trump*.

Table (3)

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentages
Personal deixis	14	60%
Time deixis	0	0%
Place deixis	4	17%
Discourse deixis	5	21%
Social deixis	0	0%
Total	23	100

With reference to table (3), personal deixis scores (14) frequencies with the percentage of (60%) followed by discourse deixis which scores (5) frequencies with the percentage of (21%). For place deixis, it outcomes (4) frequencies with the percentage of (17%). As for time and social deixis, they have empty percentages in the current text.

Text (4)

"Take a look at what New York has done **in terms of turning the curve down, in terms of the number of people dying**. And **I** don't look at **this in terms of the way he** does, blue states and red states. **They're** all the United States. And look at the

states **that** are having such a spike in the coronavirus. **They**'re the red states, **they**'re the states in the Midwest, **they**'re the states in the upper Midwest. **That**'s **where** the spike is occurring significantly. But **they**'re all Americans. **They**'re all Americans. And what **we** have to do is say, wear **these** masks, number one. Make sure **we** get the help **that** the businesses need. **That** money's already been passed to do **that**. **It**'s been out **there** since **the beginning of the summer**, and nothing's happened", said *Joe Biden*

Table (4)

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentages
Personal deixis	11	44%
Time deixis	1	4%
Place deixis	6	24%
Discourse deixis	7	28%
Social deixis	0	0%
Total	25	100

In relation to table (4), personal deixis scores (11) frequencies with the percentage of (44%) followed by discourse deixis which has (7) frequencies with the percentage of (28%). For place deixis, it outcomes (6) frequencies with the percentage of (24%) whereas time deixis scores only (1) frequency with the percentage of (4%) with no frequencies of social deixis.

Thus, the total frequencies with percentages can be provided in the table (5):

Table (5)

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentages
Personal deixis	62	60%
Time deixis	1	0.98%
Place deixis	18	17%
Discourse deixis	21	20.58%
Social deixis	0	0%
Total	102	100

In the above table, it explicates that the most prominent of all types is the personal deixis which scores (62) frequencies with the percentage of (60%) followed by discourse deixis which scores (21) frequencies with the percentage of (20.58%). For place deixis, it outcomes (18) frequencies with the percentage of (17%) whereas time deixis scores only (1) frequency with the percentage of (4%) with no usage of social deixis are found in all the concerned texts.

Conclusion

The study concluded the following points:

1. The analyses of deictic expressions show that Trump and Biden tend to use personal deixis, more than other deixis. The reason behind such use is the effect of context requirements that pull together with the political and psychological status of the speakers in which they show their belonging to their community. They tend to use personal deixis, of language to show themselves in way to have acceptability by community and to convince the audience. The speakers (*Trump/Biden*) use the personal pronouns *I, we* and their forms mainly to claim or disclaim responsibility about some decisions.
2. The use of discourse deixis add to the strength of the relationship between discourse and context. They help to construct the speech in the coherent and cohesive way in which they show the percentage of 20.58% in comparing to others.
3. Political debate has especial characteristics in which politicians want to praise themselves and blame their rival, they use the linguistic resources provided by deixis or deictic expressions. It is designed to obtain the aim which is convincing the audience and creating good impressions in them.
4. With reference to the results of the current paper, it explicates that the most prominent of all types is the personal deixis which scores (62) frequencies with the percentage of (60%) followed by discourse deixis which scores (21) frequencies with the percentage of (20.58%). For place deixis, it outcomes (18) frequencies with the percentage of (17%) whereas time deixis scores only (1) frequency with the percentage of (4%) with no usage of social deixis are found in all the concerned texts

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