ABSTRACT

As a field of language study, pragmatics is a systematic way of explaining language use in context. It studies aspects of meaning which cannot be traced in the plain sense of words. Deixis is an important field of language study and it is relevant to the analysis of conversations. It means pointing through language. The linguistic forms of pointing are called deictic expressions. Deictic expressions fall into seven categories--Person, Spatial, Temporal, Discourse, Social, Proximal and Distal Deixis.

The objective of this study has been to examine Elam’s finding concerning the use of deictic items in drama and fiction and to find out whether there is any interrelationship among different categories of deixis with reference to plays and novels. Elam (1980) notes that dramatic discourse is egocentric. The speaker is at the centre of the dramatic world and he defines everything in terms of his own place. His position as the speaker is marked with reference to ‘here’ and ‘now’. It is for this reason that in drama proximal deictic items relating to the speaker’s present context and situation of utterance are more frequent than distal deictic items, which are typical of the language of fiction. The analysis of the selected passages indicates that the plays employ more proximal deictic devices than distal deictic devices. The percentage of the occurrence of proximal deictic devices in the selected passages is 67.16. The maximum percentage of proximal deictic devices in a passage in these plays is 74.38 and the minimum percentage of proximal deictic devices in a passage is 49.46. This analysis reveals that Elam’s claim regarding the use of proximal and distal deixis in drama is substantially true and valid.

The analysis of the selected passages in the novels indicates that they employ more distal deictic devices than proximal deictic devices. The percentage of the occurrence of distal deictic devices in the selected passages is 65.85. The maximum percentage of distal deictic devices in a passage is 96.51 and the minimum percentage of distal
deictic devices in a passage is 27.51. The analysis brings out that Elam’s claim regarding the use of proximal and distal deixis in drama and fiction is substantially justified and this reflects Elam’s insight into the phenomenon of deixis.

The other point which has emerged from the analysis is that there is no necessary and inherent relationship among the different categories of deixis. Each category is independent and not many regular patterns of correspondence among different categories have been observed in this study.