CHAPTER II
SURVEY OF THE STUDIES ON DEIXIS

2.1 Introductory Remarks

The present chapter focuses on current approaches to theories of deixis and its different categories—person, spatial, temporal, discourse, social, proximal and distal by some renowned linguists. It is attempted to review their fundamental ideas, discover the similarities and differences among these theories.

2.2 Studies on Deixis and Its Different Categories

Some scholars, notably Fillmore (1975), Lyons (1977b), Elam (1980), Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996) have extensively written on ‘Deixis’. Some of their definitions and theories are given below.

2.2.1 Lectures on Deixis (1975) by Fillmore

The most dominant studies on deixis can be credited to Fillmore. At the beginning of the book the question ‘May we come in?’ is examined. There are certain conclusions about the sentence that the question involves the permission-granting sense of ‘May’ and it is the addressee who is having the right to grant permission. The pronoun ‘we’ is considered as exclusive i.e. someone else and me and distinct from the addressee. The verb come indicates a change of location towards the location of the addressee at the time of the speech act. According to Fillmore, deixis can be categorized into five types—Person, Space, Time, Discourse and Social. He clarifies the difference between deictic and non-deictic conceptions of space and time. The non-deictic use of space is built on a three-dimensional system—up/down, front/back and left/right. He (1982:36-37) notes ‘Up/down axis is determined by our recognizing the direction of the pull of gravity. The front/back axis is determined by
certain inherent asymmetries of a reference object, that object’s front side determined with reference to its ability to move with a fixed orientation, to a canonical means of human access to the object. The left/right axis is cognitively available; it seems, through unanalysed personal experiences with the basic bilateral asymmetries in the workings of our own body. These spatial concepts which are made on a three-dimensional system are not basically deictic. They can become deictic if the speaker of the utterance using them takes his or her body as a ‘deictic centre’. The first feature to consider about time is that time is one-dimensional and unidirectional. If two events can happen at different moments of time, one of them is earlier and the other one is later. These two concepts are main temporal notions and the temporal axis is made by the earlier/later relationship between events. Units of time measurement may either have fixed starting point in absolute time, which can be called calendric or time measure periods such as today, yesterday, this week, last week, which can be called non-calendric. Thus, ‘I’ll finish it this week’ is vague between reaching the result within seven days from the utterance time, or within the calendar unit starting on Sunday containing utterance time. He believes that many of the time measure words in English have calendric and non-calendric uses.

Apart from the non-deictic use of space and time expressions, he examines their deictic usage, too. Spatial deixis denotes the locations relative to the anchorage point in the speech event. In English, place deictic words are the adverbs here and there and the demonstratives this and that. There are some differences in the uses of these deictic expressions. Deictic expressions in utterances can be used gesturally, symbolically and anaphorically. Gestural use of a deictic expression refers to those expressions whose interpretation needs some kind of audio-visual information. Symbolic use of a deictic expression needs only basic spatio-temporal knowledge of the utterance; and anaphoric use refers to something within a text that has been previously mentioned. Fillmore (1975:64) believes, ‘For words that can
refer to areas or spaces, the word this followed by the appropriate noun locates an object as being in the same area as the speaker is at the coding time. Thus I can talk about something being ‘in this room’, ‘on this planet’, ‘in this city’, etc.’. The English locative adverb here is paraphrasable as ‘in this place’ in the gestural or symbolic use of this. These distinctions have been very useful to this study. Verbs of motion come and go determine direction relative to the place of the speaker and the addressee. Come shows motion towards the speaker’s location at the coding time, whereas go shows motion away from the speaker’s location at the coding time. The destination in relation to expressions having the verb ‘come’ is more complicated. Fillmore (1971) assumes that ‘come’ indicates that
a) The speaker is at the destination at the coding time.
b) The speaker is at the destination at the reference time.
c) The addressee is at the destination at the coding time.
d) The addressee is at the destination at the reference time.

To clarify the different uses of motion verb ‘come’, consider the following examples.
(26) She’s coming.
(27) When I reach home, you can come to visit me.
(28) I’m coming.
(29) I will come to see at your office at 8 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The first example clarifies a simple use of motion verb come. The second example indicates that the speaker is at the destination at the reference time. The third utterance makes use of a deictic shift to the addressee’s point of view and the last utterance shows both the significance of the reference time and the deictic shift to the addressee’s point of view.

Time deixis is connected with adverbs of time, tenses and other deictic expressions. The main distinction is between the use of now and then. Now is the time at which the speaker makes an utterance and then is the time before and after the time of speaking. Both Fillmore (1975) and Levinson (1983) believe that it is important to
differentiate between the time an utterance is made (coding time) and the time of receiving by the addressee (receiving time). If coding time and receiving time are the same we consider it deictic simultaneity. When coding time and receiving time are not the same difficulties arise whether the deictic centre will remain on the speaker or will be shifted to the addressee. Time is measured in days, months and years. They are used non-calendrically or calendrially to place events in absolute time. For example,

(30) I’ll come there this week

The utterance can be interpreted both calendrically and non-calendrically, i.e. it assures being there within the calendar unit beginning on Sunday and including utterance time or within seven days from the utterance time. Tenses are a combination of deictic temporal distinctions and aspects. The present tense generally represents the time span including the coding time, the past tense is the time span before the coding time and the future tense is the time span following the coding time.

Discourse deixis deals with expressions within an utterance to refer to the parts of discourse that contains the utterance. Time deictic expressions like this and next can be deployed to refer to parts of discourse. Thus, along with deictic terms like next week or this year, we have the phrases in the next paragraph or in this chapter. There are expressions in discourse deixis, which show the relation of the utterance to the surrounding text, like anyway and therefore. This and that are discourse deixis markers. This refers to upcoming portion of the discourse and that refers to the prior portion of the discourse. Apart from the distinction between this and that in discourse deixis, this sometimes has a backward pointing function as well.

(31) This has been a nice experience.

Here this is used to refer to a preceding portion of the discourse. Social deixis involves those aspects of language structure that encode the social identity of the interactants or the social relationship between them. Fillmore (1975:112) suggests
several linguistic phenomena to get information on social deixis. They are ‘the devices for person marking, such as the pronouns of English and most other languages; the various ways of separating speech levels; formal distinctions in utterances of various types that depend on certain properties of the speech act participants; the various ways in which names, titles, and kinship terms vary in form and usage according to the relationships among the speaker, the addressee, the audience, and the person referred to; the various ways in which linguistic performances can count as social acts, as in insults, greetings, and expressions of gratitude; the ways in which linguistic performances can accompany other social acts, such as the ‘there you go’ of the waitress; the various devices that a language provides for a speaker to be able to establish and maintain a deictic anchoring with a given addressee’. In contrast with Fillmore, Levinson (1983:89) explains ‘Here we shall restrict the term to those aspects of language structure that encode the social identities of participants (properly, incumbents of participant-roles), or the social relationship between them, or between one of them and persons and entities referred to’.

2.2.2 Semantics (1977b) by Lyons

In VOL 2 Lyons examines the linguistic semantics. Three chapters are about the study of the relation of semantics to grammar and five chapters about specific topics in linguistic semantics, including the nature of lexicon, stylistic variation, deixis, temporal reference, speech acts and modality. Chapter 14 in the book deals with context, style and culture and chapter 15 with Deixis, Space and Time. In chapter 14, he mostly focuses on the context of utterance. He lists six diverse kinds of knowledge which have a bearing on the situational appropriateness of utterances. Among them two points are influential. The first point is that participants must know their role and status. The roles are of two kinds—deictic and social. Deictic role comes from the fact that in a conversation the speaker addresses his utterance to
the listener who is present in the situation and it may refer to himself, to the
listeners and to the other people by means of personal or demonstrative pronouns
and its reference is determined by the participation of the referent in the
conversation at the time of the utterance. Social roles have more culture-specific
functions. They are reciprocal. Social status means the relative social relation
between the participants. The status of each participant must be known in relation
to the other. The second point is that the participants must know where they are in
space and time. The speaker knows the here and now of the utterance situation. In
chapter 15 he examines three traditional categories of Deixis, viz Person, Time and
Spatial Deixis. Considering the first category, he believes that the canonical situation-
of-utterance is egocentric. The speaker defines everything according to his/her
viewpoint. Person Deixis deals with the grammatical persons involved in an
utterance directly the speaker and the addressee and overhearers who are not
directly involved. There are three categories of person in English--- first, second and
third person pronouns. Person deixis is deictic reference to the role of a participant
of a referent, such as the speaker, listener and referents which are neither speaker
nor listener. The grammatical category of person deixis reflects the difference among
the roles that individuals play in the speech event--- speaker, listener and other. In
conversation, participant roles take shifts and the deictic centre shifts with them.
The deictic centre is organized around the speaker at the place and time of speaking.
The second category concerns itself with various times involved in an utterance.
They are time adverbs like now, then, soon, today and yesterday and also different
tenses. Time adverbs can be relative to the time when an utterance is said or heard.
The tense has the distinction of past, present, future and future follows the present
in infinitely time. Tenses are traditionally categorized as absolute and relative. The
simple past is absolute and the pluperfect is relative. Absolute tenses may be
marked past versus non-past. The third category is concerned with the spatial
locations relevant to an utterance.
Lyons believes that deixis serves in a conversation to hold the speaker and the addressee to a specific point in space or time and without such anchorage every conversation would be a loose collection of disconnected utterances. Lyons (1977) thinks that spatial deixis is more basic than temporal deixis and that the usage of temporal is related to spatial by a general ‘principle of localization’. Levinson (1983) disagrees with this analysis. The core concept of deixis is what Lyons (1977) calls the ‘canonical situation of utterance’, which is mainly egocentric. He (1977:638) explains ‘The speaker is at the zero point of the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of what we will refer to as the deictic context’.

Places in the utterances of the speaker are relative to the position of the speaker’s rather than listener’s position at the time of speaking. The participants must be aware of their place in space and time. An utterance like ‘We are having a nice winter here in Switzerland this year’ written by someone in Mumbai in July is grammatically correct, but situationally inappropriate. They cannot be having a nice winter during summer in a place where they are not. Here is a deictic spatial adverb, which refers to the place where the speaker is at the time of speaking and the tense of the verb refers to a period of time which involves the time at which the utterance is made. It opposes there, which would be a place at some distance away. He also believes that places are not entities and entities are not places; but they may be used to identify the spaces that they take up. For example,

(32) I’ll see you tomorrow at school.

‘School’ is used to identify the place. It means ‘I will see you at the place where the school is’.

2.2.3 The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama (1980) by Elam

Chapter 5 in the book deals with dramatic discourse. The dramatic context contains two different components, i.e. situation in which a conversation takes place, (that is, a group of people and objects present, their physical circumstances, the time and
place of their interaction, etc.) and the context-of-utterance, containing the relationship made between the speaker, the hearer and the discourse in the immediate here-and-now. The Speaker, the listener, the time of the utterance ‘now’, the location of the utterance ‘here’ and the utterance can be considered as key elements of the context of the utterance. Dramatic discourse is related to the speaker, the hearer and its immediate spatio-temporal coordinates i.e. ‘here’ and ‘now’ all the time. Elam (1980:139) believes it is important now to note that, ‘the drama consists first and foremost precisely in this, an ‘I’ addressing a ‘you’ here and now’. It is a way of distinguishing it as a different genre of discourse from narratives. Drama is more about present instead of past, setting person, time and place because it takes place as a performance in the ‘here’ and ‘now’. The ‘here’ and ‘now’ is determined by a number of linguistic markers which can be referred to as deictic determiners. They contain who, when and where of the action and interaction; person, possessive and demonstrative pronouns; place and time adverbials; tense; social markers and so on. Performability and above all potential gesturality are inseparable elements of dramatic discourse, which makes it different from the language of narrative as its context is described instead of pointing to. It is the relation between I- speaker and you- addressee that the dramatic dialectic is formed. Elam (1980:143) notes, ‘Dramatic discourse is egocentric: the speaking subject defines everything (including the you-addresssee) in terms of his own place in dramatic world. The here-and-now simply marks his position as speaker. It is for this reason that the semantically marked ‘proximal’ deictics relating to the speaker’s present context and situation of utterance (‘here’, ‘this’, ‘these’, ‘now’, the present tense, etc.) have a far more important function in the drama than the unmarked ‘distal’ variety regarding distant or excluded objects, times and places (‘there’, ‘that’, ‘those’, ‘then’, the past tense, etc.), which instead are typical of narrative language.’ Elam’s observation has been the focal point of the present research and the analysis of the novels and plays is made to find out its authenticity.
2.2.4 Pragmatics (1983) by Levinson

Levinson’s book deals with different categories of pragmatics—deixis, conversational implicature, presupposition, speech acts and conversational structure. Deixis is dealt with in the second chapter. At the beginning of the chapter he examines two types of approaches—philosophical approaches and descriptive approaches.

Philosophers have considered indexicality as the way into reference. Context-dependency is a main feature of indexical expressions. Such expressions which have context-dependency are demonstratives, first and second pronouns and morphemes indicating tense. Levinson makes a relationship between logic and context of utterance. Sentences can express different propositions on different occasions of use. Consider the following examples.

(33) John Henry McTavitty is six feet tall and weighs 200 pounds
(34) John Henry McTavitty is six feet tall
(35) I am six feet tall and weigh 200 pounds
(36) I am six feet tall  [Re-produced from Levinson (1983:58]

Thus the inference from (35) to (36) will be valid only if the speaker index and time index are held constant.

Linguists have the same idea that deixis is the source of reference. The traditional categories of deixis are person, place and time, but Levinson assumes two more deictic categories—discourse deixis and social deixis. ‘Person deixis concerns the encoding of the role of participants in the speech event in which the utterance in question is delivered’. (Levinson,1983:62) It concerns itself with grammatical categories of person which are involved in an utterance—those who are directly involved e.g. the speaker and the addressee and those who are not directly involved e.g. bystanders. The main grammatical differences are the categories of first, second and third person. The first person pronouns—I and we—are used for the speaker reference to himself, the second person pronoun—you—is used to refer to the
addressee(s) and the third person pronouns—-he, she and they---are used to refer to bystanders. When participants take turns in a speech event, the deictic centre shifts with them from the speaker to the addressee and the reverse. Furthermore, there is a distinction between the first person plural inclusive ‘we’, which includes the hearer and exclusive ‘we’, which excludes the hearer. He points out that the deictic usage of this centre appears in pronouns, vocatives and greetings. Although pronouns are often used non-deictically there are some uses which cannot easily be understood. An example is given by Fillmore (1971b) of the editorial ‘we’ of the New Yorker. It takes the plural verb agreement (thus we are not we am). Levinson further points out that person role is identified in many ways. Title and proper names are one of the ways, which come in two groups. One is applied in address as vocative in the second person usage. His example is the following.

(37) Hey you, you just scratched my car with your Frisbee.

The other way is used in reference, referring to individuals in the third person role.

(38) The truth is, Madam, nothing is as good nowadays.

The difference is that the first example has a gestural usage and the second one has a symbolic usage. Another example of proper names is in a situation when a mother says to the father in the presence of little Billie, something such as:

(39) Can Billie have an ice-cream, daddy?

In this example, he shows that there has to be a crystal-clear distinction between the addressee and the hearer.

Levinson (1983:62) notes, ‘Time deixis concerns the encoding of temporal points and spans relative to the time at which an utterance was spoken (or a written message inscribed)’. Time deixis interacts in calendrical and non-calendrical units. Time is measured in days, months, years, seasons—-these units are measured against a fixed point of reference (including the deictic centre) or they are used calendrically to locate events in absolute time. For example, the deictic use of the time adverb ‘today’ means the diurnal span in which the speech event takes place, while
caledrically it refers to span of time running from midnight to midnight. Levinson (1983:73) believes, ‘Like all aspects of deixis, time deixis makes ultimate reference to participant-role’. Therefore, Fillmore (1975) and Levinson (1983) think that it is important to make a distinction between the time an utterance is made (coding time or CT) and the time of receiving by the addressee (receiving time or RT). If the CT and the RT happen at the same time, it is called deictic simultaneity. When the CT and the RT differ there can be difficulties made in the decision if the deictic centre will remain on the speaker or will be shifted on the addressee. Time deictic expressions are deictic time adverbs like now, then, soon, and recently and the verb tense past, present and future. Adverbs like today, yesterday or tomorrow are combined with absolute units of time and they can be interpreted if the hearer knows the relevant utterance time. He (p.74) explains, ‘today glosses ‘the diurnal span including CT’, yesterday as ‘the diurnal span preceding the diurnal span that includes CT’, and so on’. He shows that in the usage of next to calendrical names of days, an ambiguity may arise. For example, next Thursday can either be referred to the Thursday of the week that succeeds the week that includes CT, or that Thursday that first follows the CT. Tenses are a combination of deictic temporal distinction and aspect. The present tense represents the time span including CT, the past tense is a relevant time span before CT and the future tense is the time span following CT. Tenses are classified into absolute and relative. Finally, he mentions that greetings function as time deictic-elements as they are time restricted. Thus, ‘Good morning’ is used in the morning and so on. Place deixis concerns itself with the special locations relative to the location of a participant in the speech event. Places can be deictically specified in relation to a fixed reference point or the location of the interlocutors at the time of speaking. The grammatical items of place deixis are adverbs of place, demonstrative pronouns, spatial prepositions and motion verbs. Levinson identifies some pure place-deictic words, the adverbs here and there, and the demonstrative pronouns this and that. He distinguishes between gestural and symbolic uses of
place deictic words. He mentions (1983:79-80), ‘The symbolic usage of here can be glossed as ‘the pragmatically given unit of space that includes the location of the speaker at CT’ and gesturally it must be glossed a little differently as ‘the pragmatically given space, proximal to speaker’s location at CT, that includes the point or location gesturally indicated.’ Consider the following examples.

(40) I am in India and I enjoy being here. (symbolical)

(41) Put it here. (gestural)

The place adverbs here and there can be considered as simple contrasts on a proximal /distal basis, but sometimes there, which is distal from the speaker’s location at CT can apply to indicate the proximity to the speaker’s location at RT (e.g. when receiving a letter). Spatial prepositions have deictic and non-deictic usage. When there is reference to the speaker’s place they can be considered deictic. Non-deictic terms are all those distinctions between surfaces, spaces, enclosures, containers, fronts, backs, tops, sides, widths, lengths, heights, etc. For example,

(42) She is behind the rock. (non-deictic)

(43) She is behind the rock, hiding from me. (deictic)

Finally, motion verbs come and go indicate direction relative to the location of the participants in the speech event. Go is used to show movement away from the speaker’s location at CT, but come is used to show movement towards the speaker’s location at CT. Levinson (p.83) suggests that come can also be considered as ‘movement towards either the location of speaker, or towards the location of the addressee, at CT’, as in:

(44) I’m coming

He brings out the fact that some other time can be involved when taking the movement and he calls it reference time. Consider the following example.

(45) When I am home, you can come to me.
Here *come* means ‘movement towards the location of the speaker at the time of some other specified event’. There is another usage of *come*, which indicates not the speaker’s actual location but his/her home base.

The other two categories which can be added to traditional categories are discourse deixis and social deixis in his book. Levinson (p.85) believes, ‘Discourse, or text, deixis concerns the use of expressions within some utterance to refer to some portion of the discourse that contains that utterance’. Discourse deixis is related to the concept of space and time. Since discourse unfolds in time, it seems normal that time-deictic expressions can be used to refer to parts of the discourse. Thus, like *last night* and *next month*, we have in the *last paragraph* and in the *next unit*. *This* and *that* are discourse deictic items. *This* refers to the forthcoming portion of the discourse and *that* refers to the preceding portion of the discourse. Levinson makes a distinction between discourse deixis and anaphora. Anaphoric expressions refer outside the discourse to other entities as a prior linguistic expression. He claims that discourse markers such as *but*, *therefore*, *anyway*, *nevertheless* and *besides* make a current relationship between an utterance and prior portions of the discourse. Levinson adds one more category to these categories of deixis--- the one of social deixis. It is concerned with social information and the role of the speaker and the hearer in the speech event. Levinson distinguishes two categories of social deixis---relational and absolute. The first includes relations between a) the speaker and the referent b) the speaker and the addressee c) the speaker and the bystander d) the speaker and the setting. The other kind includes forms which are reserved for certain kinds of participants, i.e. authorized speakers and authorized recipients. There are some forms which can be used by a certain kind of speakers like ‘khrab’ the Thai polite particle, which is used only by male speakers and ‘kha’ by women. We can refer to both gender groups as authorized speakers. Authorized recipients are forms identifying titles of address, pronouns which are different not only with the sex of
the referent but also with the sex of the addressee, and other forms employed for a certain kind of recipient.

2.2.5 Pragmatics (1996) by Yule

Yule (1996:9) argues, ‘Deixis is clearly a form of referring that is tied to the speaker’s context, with the most basic distinction between deictic expressions being ‘near speaker’ versus ‘away from speaker’. The referents near the speaker are called proximal terms such as this, here and now. Those away from the speaker are distal terms such as that, there and then. He classifies deixis into three types— Person, Spatial and Temporal.

Most of Yule’s views concerning these classifications are similar to those expressed by other scholars here and not considerable differences can be found among them.

2.2.6 Conclusion

In this research an eclectic model to the study of deixis has been followed. Views and material found on deixis are classified and applied to the analysis of selected plays and novels. Theories and observations of different scholars are compared wherever it is possible. Conclusions reached by other scholars form the background of this study.