

Deixis Analysis of Drama “Trifles” by Susan Glaspell

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ABSTRACT

The use of language in making meaning is strongly related to the context. This relation can be seen through deixis that refers to different things based on the speaker/writer's intention. The hearer/reader's ability to identify the referents is undoubtedly a necessity for a text to be comprehended. Deixis can be found in almost any text, including drama scripts like *Trifles* (1916) by Susan Glaspell. This research has two objectives. First, it aims at analyzing the types of deixis and its referents in the *Trifles* drama script by Susan Glaspell. Second, it is conducted to analyze the dominant type of deixis found in the script. This study applies the descriptive qualitative approach, in which the data are collected using documentation technique with five steps analysis data: 1) reading the dialogues, 2) identifying the deixis, 3) classifying deixis types, 4) describing the referents, 5) making a conclusion. The finding shows that there are 794 deictic expressions with various referents found in the drama script. It consists of 591 person deixis (74%), 62 place deixis (8%), 57 social deixis (7%), 52 discourse deixis (7%), and 32 time deixis (4%). Hence, the dominant type of deixis found in the drama script is person deixis.

Keywords: deixis; drama script; text analysis.

First Receive:

2 May 2024

Revised:

25 May 2024

Accepted:

16 June 2024

Final Proof Received:

27 June 2024

Published:

30 June 2024

How to cite (in APA style):

Prasasti, T. G., & Nadhif, A. (2024). Deixis Analysis of Drama “Trifles” by Susan Glaspell. *ELITE Journal*, 6(1), 53-60.

INTRODUCTION

As a medium for human's communication system (Els, 1984), language is used in a daily basis for many purposes. It can be used to ask for and give people information or to express indignation and annoyance, as well as admiration and respect. Interestingly, one single utterance often conveys both information and expression of feelings (Holmes, 2013: 2).

An effective communication happens when both speakers and addressers understand things that they are talking about (Siregar, 2020: 28). However, the people who are involved in communication do not always have the same background, in terms of age and social status, for instance, for which the meaning of the speaker sometimes may be misunderstood by the listeners (Margareta, et al, 2022: 24). Moreover, the participants in communication also need to share the same context. It is because the analysis of context in language use will affect the utterance interpretation (Levinson, 1983: 54). The expressed utterances, therefore, rely on

the context and situations in which the communication takes place (Izaadeen and Majeed, 2020: 269).

One of the obvious relationships between language and context can be seen through deixis (Levinson, 1983: 54). Deixis, based on a technical term from Greek, means 'pointing' by language (Yule, 1996: 9). According to Crystal (2008: 133) deixis is defined as a linguistics term that refers to the personal, temporal or locational characteristics of the situation within which an utterance takes place, whose meaning is thus relative to the situation. Meanwhile, according to Levinson, deixis deals with the process of words or expressions that are being completely seen depending on the context (Levinson, 1983: 54). Words or phrases which contain contextual information are called deictic. However, sometimes, it is also called as indexicals (Yule, 1996: 9). That contextual information contains about the speakers, the addressee, the time, and the place when utterances are produced (Fillmore, 1997: 59).

Deixis is divided into five types: person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis (Levinson, 1983: 62). Person deixis focuses on defining the participants' role in the speech event. This deixis is classified into three types: first, second, and third person deixis. First person refers to the speaker himself or the speaker and particular group which includes the speaker that is expressed in subject pronoun (I, we), object pronoun (me, us), possessive adjective (my, our), possessive pronoun (mine, ours) and reflexive pronoun (myself, ourselves). Second person deixis refers to the person or persons who is identified as addressee, such as you, yourself, yourselves, your, yours. Meanwhile, third person deixis refers to persons and entities which are neither speakers nor addressees in some utterances (Ulfaningtiyas and Pramudyawardhani, 2021: 161).

Secondly, place deixis deals with the spatial locations relevant to the speech participants. The locations may be either those of the speaker and addressee or those of persons or objects being referred to, for examples the adverbs here and there, and the demonstratives this, these, that, and those. Thirdly, time deixis shows the internal state of time relevant to an utterance, such as now, then, yesterday, tomorrow, tonight, today, next week, last week, this week, and so on (Levinson, 1983: 74).

The last two deixis are discourse and social deixis. Discourse deixis focuses on showing deictic reference toward a discourse in which speakers' utterances are located. Most discourse deixis can be identified by the use of 'this' and 'that' words. Meanwhile social deixis focuses on encoding social distinction relative to participants' roles, especially related to the social relationship aspect between the participants. Social deixis also concerns with the social situation reflection when the utterances produced. The social deixis divided into two types, they are relational and absolute (Levinson, 1983: 90). Relational concerns on the use of honorifics between the speaker and referent, addressee, bystander, and/or setting; while, absolute social deixis deals with authorized speakers and authorized recipients in a discourse.

The use of deixis can be seen in many places, including in written form such as literary work. Drama, literary work written by a playwright (Betti, 2015: 5), is one of literary works that strongly related to language use. Although drama is made in written form, the dramatic texts are usually transformed into theatrical performance (Lethbridge and Mildorf, 2004: 90). There are many types of drama, one of them is one-act play. This drama basically has limited time during its performance. Unimportant details, ambiguous incidents, bombastic speech, length digressions, extra statements, and complicated plots are usually avoided in this kind of drama (Betti, 2015: 39). Those characteristics can be seen in *Trifles*, an one-act play written in 1916 by Susan Glaspell.

The researchers choose *Trifles* as the object of the research due to the fact that it is as one of literature works which has direct examples of meaning and context used by the

characters. *Trifles* as kind of one-act play is performed in only one setting place. The audiences, hence, should be carefully attentive while interpreting the context of characters' utterances to gain the most appropriate meaning. For this reason, *Trifles* can also be used as a medium in learning deixis.

Through current study, the researchers decide to conduct a deixis analysis in the *Trifles* drama script by Susan Glaspell based on the Levinson's theory to examine the kinds of deixis used and its referents, and investigate the dominant type of deixis used.

METHOD

In line with the nature of its objectives, this study is conducted in a descriptive-qualitative research design. This method is used to describe the object that is being investigated based on the factual facts. The function of that method is appropriate with this research because the data found in the *Trifles* drama script later will be served in descriptive forms.

The data analysed for this study is collected from the script of *Trifle*, which consists of complete dialogues among the characters. The researchers take some steps in collecting data: firstly, downloading the drama script from <https://www.one-act-plays.com> in November 22, 2022; secondly, reading the script comprehensively; and thirdly, selecting utterances containing deictic expressions from the dialogues.

Those data are then analysed and categorized based on the types of deixis according to the Levinson's theory: person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Besides, the researchers also investigate and subsequently describe the references of each deixis. The final step is making conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing data, the researchers found five types of deixis based on Levinson's theory which are expressed within utterances in the *Trifles* drama script by Susan Glaspell. They are person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis as presented below.

Person Deixis

In this study, the researchers find 591 data of person deixis, consisting of three categories: first person deixis, second person deixis, and third person deixis. The results of person deixis analysis can be seen as follow.

a. First person deixis

There are 223 data of first person which used by the characters of *Trifles* drama script. An example of the utterances that contains first person deixis can be seen below.

[Line 136]

MRS PETERS: (*takes the bottle, looks about for something to wrap it in; takes petticoat from the clothes brought from the other room, very nervously begins winding this around the bottle. In a false voice*) My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear **us**. wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they laugh!

In that scene, Mrs. Peter takes a bottle of fruit which belong to Mrs. Wright. She wraps it in clothes that she took from the other room, so that the men could not find

it out. There, Mrs. Peters says, “*it’s a good thing the men couldn’t hear us*”. The word “**us**” here is categorized as first person deixis based on Levinson’s theory, indicating an inclusive pronoun, which means that the pronoun is not only pointing to the speaker himself or herself, but also pointing to the addressee who heard the speaker when the utterance spoken. Looking at the context, the pronoun “**us**” referred to Mrs. Peters as the speaker and Mrs. Hale as the addressee that heard the utterance’s spoken.

b. Second person deixis

The researcher found 68 utterances with second person deixis in it. One of them, for instance, can be seen below.

[Line 99]

MRS HALE: *I could’ve come. I stayed away because it weren’t cheerful—and that’s why I ought to have come. I—I’ve never liked this place. Maybe because it’s down in a hollow and **you** don’t see the road. I dunno what it is, but it’s a lonesome place and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now—(shakes her head).*

That utterance stated when Mrs. Hale says to Mrs. Peters that she feels regret because she never come to the place of Minnie Foster. However, at the same time, she feels that she never liked the house. It looked as a lonesome place and is not cheerful. That is the reason why she never come there.

Mrs. Hale uses a deictic expression in her utterance “*Maybe because it’s down in a hollow and you don’t see the road*”. She uses the pronoun “**you**”, which is categorized as a second person pronoun. The pronoun “**you**” here refers to Mrs. Peters, who is the addressee of that utterance.

c. Third person deixis

There are 300 data of third person deixis usage in this research. An example can be seen as follow.

[Line 57]

MRS PETERS: **She** *said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want, for there isn’t much to get dirty in jail, goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel more natural. She said they was in the top drawer in this cupboard. Yes, here. And then her little shawl that always hung behind the door. (opens stair door and looks) Yes, here it is.*

In that scene, Mrs. Peters is talking about some things that asked by Mrs. Wright. Mrs. Wright asks for an apron and her little shawl. While talking about Mrs. Wright’s request, Mrs. Peters decided to use a deictic expression.

The deictic expression which used in that utterance is the pronoun “**she**”. This pronoun included as third person deixis. Thus, the pronoun aimed to neither speakers nor addressees. In that utterance, Mrs. Peters is talking about Mrs. Wright. In conclusion, the pronoun “**she**” refers to Mrs. Wright due to her absence neither as speaker nor the addressee in that utterance.

Time Deixis

Based on the analysis result, the researcher found 32 times deixis within utterances in *Trifles*. One of them is written below.

[Line 53]

MRS HALE: (*eyes fixed on a loaf of bread beside the bread-box, which is on a low shelf at the other side of the room. Moves slowly toward it*) *She was doing to put this in there, shame about her fruit. I wonder if it's all gone. (gets up on the chair and looks) I think there's some here that's all right, Mrs Peters. Yes—here; (holding it toward the window) this is cherries, too. (looking again) I declare I believe that's the only one. (gets down, bottle in her hand. Goes to the sink and wipes it off on the outside) She'll feel awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries **last summer**.*

The utterance stated when Mrs. Hale is checking on Mrs. Wright's cherries in the bottles. Almost all of them are already broke. She finally finds one bottle of cherries in good condition on the shelf. Then, Mrs. Hale remembered how she also put up her cherries last summer.

In the utterance above, Mrs. Hale decided to use “**last summer**” for pointing to particular time. The adverb of time “**last summer**” indicated as coding time of past tense. In other words, the speaker mentions the particular time which is not the same as the time when the utterance spoken. The adverb time “**last summer**” refers to the time when Mrs. Hale pick up her cherries, just like what Mrs. Wright did.

Place Deixis

There are 62 place deixis found by the researcher. The example below is an utterance with place deixis in it.

[Line 133]

MRS HALE: (*not as if answering that*) *I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang. (a look around the room) Oh, I wish I'd come over **here** once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?*

In this scene, Mrs. Hale says that she wishes Mrs. Peters sees when Mrs. Wright was still Minnie Foster. She wore a white dress with blue ribbons and sang in the choir. Mrs. Hale hardly wished she would come over sometimes when Minnie Foster was already married.

In that utterance above, there is an appearance of place deixis. The adverb “**here**” is indicating the particular place which nearby the speaker when the utterance produced. There, Mrs. Hale is standing in the Wright's house at that time. In conclusion, the adverb “**here**” refers to the house of Wright's family.

Discourse Deixis

The researcher finds that there are 52 discourse deixis in the *Trifles* drama script, one of them can be seen as follow.

[Line 99]

MRS HALE: *I could've come. I stayed away because it weren't cheerful—and **that's** why I ought to have come. I—I've never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I dunno what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now—(shakes her head).*

In that scene, Mrs. Hale explains her reason about why does she seldom visited Mrs. Wright's house. Based on the utterance, she says that the house of Wright is not looks cheerful. That is why she decided to stay away from there.

Mrs. Hale used a demonstrative “*that*” which functioned as discourse deixis. The demonstrative “*that*” refers to the utterance preceding about how Mrs. Hale decided to stay away from the house of Wright because it is not cheerful, although she also thinks that is the reason why she ought to come.

Social Deixis

In this study, the researcher finds 57 data of social deixis. An example of the usage of social deixis can be seen below.

[Line 31]

COUNTY ATTORNEY: *(with the gallantry of a young politician) And yet, for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies? (the women do not unbend. He goes to the sink, takes a dipperful of water from the pail and pouring it into a basin, washes his hands. Starts to wipe them on the roller-towel, turns it for a clearer place) Dirty towels! (kicks his foot against the pans under the sink) Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?*

In that scene, the County Attorney says about what the men would do without the women. Then, he washes his hand and finds out that the roller towels are dirty. It made him said that women not much of a housekeeper.

The utterance that spoken by the County Attorney is contained social deixis. There is an aspect of power here. The truth was that the County Attorney, as a man, felt he had higher authorized than the women. This can be seen as there is a phrase “a housekeeper” which is paired with the word “*ladies*” in that utterance. This kind of social deixis is categorized as absolute social deixis.

In addition to the several examples presented above, there many other deictic expressions found in this research. The whole data that are found in *Trifles* drama script within its types of deixis can be seen in the following table.

Table 1 The types of deixis in *Trifles* drama script by Susan Glaspell

No	Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentage
1	Person Deixis	591	74%
2	Time Deixis	32	4%
3	Place Deixis	62	8%
4	Discourse Deixis	52	7%
5	Social Deixis	57	7%
TOTAL		794	100%

Based on the data displayed above, there are 794 deixis found in the *Trifles* drama script by Susan Glaspell. The person deixis occurs 591 times, which make up 74% of the total data, making it the dominant type of deixis found in the drama script. As for the time deixis, the researchers find 32 data, which equals to only 4% of the total data, making it the least deictic type in the script in terms of the frequency of occurrence. Meanwhile, the place deixis is

found 62 times or 8% out of the total data. Furthermore, discourse deixis that appears in 52 utterances (7% of the total data). Finally, the social deixis is found in 57 utterances through out drama script.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that among hundreds of deictic expressions found in *Trifles*, most of them fall under the category of person deixis (74%) followed by place deixis (8%), social deixis (7%), discourse deixis (7%), and time deixis (4%) respectively. Each of these deictic expressions certainly refers to particular referents based on their contexts. Furthermore, the dominant type of deixis, which is the person deixis, is comprised of 223 first person deixis (38%), 68 second person deixis (11%), and 300 third person deixis (51%).

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