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THE USE OF DEIXIS AND DEICTIC EXPRESSIONS IN BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY REPORTS: A STUDY OF SELECTED BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY REPORTS BY THE MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the uses of deictic expressions in Boko Haram insurgency reports by the media in the four affected countries of West Africa. The study was carried out using qualitative approach to explore the incidences and functions of deictic expressions in Boko Haram insurgency reports by the media. The result of the investigation shows that media reporters use person, time/temporal and place/spatial deixis to locate the participants in discourse. Spotting of the participants in discourse via deictic expressions give the audience clear picture of the incidence of insurgency reported on. Deictic expressions as used in insurgency reports point to the insurgents, or the victims, the place of operation and time. These put together enhances cohesion and coherence in the discourse of Boko Haram insurgency reports.

Key words: Pragmatics, deixis, Person, place/spatial, time/temporal, and discourse

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication among human beings. It is a tool that human beings use for doing almost everything such as transmission of thoughts; ideas, messages or information to the target audience. In communication enterprises, the meanings of words and expressions vary to some extent depending on the context in which they are used. The concepts 'meaning and context' are dynamic entities which are objects of study in both Semantics and pragmatics. While semantic meaning is independent of context, that is, conventional; pragmatic meaning is context dependent. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams(2003) are of the view that Pragmatics focuses on the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context. In other words, it studies the use of language in communication especially the

relationship between utterance and sentence and the context of situation in which they are used. Pragmatics covers the interpretation and the use of language in the real world; how interlocutors in discourse share meaning or understand themselves; and how the structure of expression is affected by the relationship of the participants in discourse

Contexts are of different types. One is linguistic context, which is also known as co-text. The co-text of a word is the set of words used in the same phrase or sentence. This surrounding co-text has a strong effect on what we think the word means. Another context that influences interpretation of discourse is physical context-the physical environment in which language is used (Yule 2006). In communication, there are some words which can only be interpreted contextually.

These words are technically called deixis. Their functions are context-dependent and subjective. Also their interpretations are usually determined by the time, place and persons involved in the discourse. According to Levison (2006), deixis introduces subjective; intentional and, of course, context-dependent properties into natural languages. He further says that it is a much more pervasive feature of languages than normally recognized. This complicates a tidy treatment within formal theories of semantics and pragmatics. Deixis is also critical for our ability to learn a language, which philosophers for centuries have linked to the possibility of ostensive definition. Despite this theoretical importance, deixis is one of the most empirically understudied core areas of pragmatics; we are far from understanding its boundaries and have no adequate cross-linguistic typology of deictic expression. This study investigates how media reporters use deixis to create effects when reporting Boko Haram insurgency in the four affected countries of West Africa-Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad to determine

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the application of deictic expressions by the media reporters in reporting Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, Cameroun, Niger and Chad Republics. The specific Objectives are:

- (i) To identify the prevalent deictic expressions in the selected Boko Haram insurgency reports.
- (ii) To discuss how the identified prevalent deictic expressions enhance clear reports and comprehension by the audience.
- (iii) To point out how the application of deictic expressions affect cohesion and coherence in discourse of insurgency.

Scope of the Study

The Study covers Boko Haram insurgency reports in the three countries mentioned above. This is because the activities of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria have spilled into the three neighbouring countries (Cameroun, Niger and Chad). The study is restricted to the investigation of deictic expression as pointing devices in order ascertain to what extent the use of deictic expressions enhances

clear report, comprehension by the audience, as well as cohesion and coherence.

Corpus and Corpus Selection

The corpus for the study is made up of eight reports selected from the print media on the activities of Boko Haram insurgency in the four countries. The limitation of the reports to eight reports is based on the fact that the study focuses on only one aspect of discourse features which does not necessarily depend on large data. In addition, the selection of the corpus is thus guided by representativeness and accessibility.

Representativeness according to Nwogu (1990) refers to the fact that the data must be drawn from all the affected countries by Boko Haram insurgency.. Accessibility on the other hand refers to the ease with which the researcher obtains the data. Any report by any media house on Boko Haram insurgency available could be selected.

Source of Data

The data for the study were downloaded from the internet. They comprise of the print media reports as well as broadcast media report scripts posted to the internet. The data downloaded covered the Boko Haram insurgency in the four neighbouring Countries-Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad).

Method of investigation

Qualitative approach has been employed for the study in order to give adequate and in-depth descriptions of the application and functions of the prevalent deictic expressions in the reports subjected to analysis. Qualitative research according to Dörnyei (2007) involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods. The data obtained were studied to identify the deictic expressions and how they enhance clear reports as well as comprehension of the reports by the audience.

Review of Literature

In this section, related literatures are reviewed to uncover the views of scholars on the concept of deixis. The aim is to orient the audience on what are deixis, types of deixis and the functions of deictic expressions.

The term 'deixis' is defined by linguists and language philosophers from different perspectives. Etymological definitions trace the word to Greek. Yule (2006) for instance defines the word it as a Greek word which is pronounced as 'day -icksis, and means pointing via language. It is a linguistic device used to trace or locate participants in discourse. Similarly, Nawangwulan¹⁹ (2013) is of the view that the word 'deixis' comes from Greek, meaning 'pointing, or indicating'. It is the marking of the orientation or position of entities and events with respect to certain points of reference.

Deictic expressions like other discourse devices function primarily to point to or show the location of an entity or entities in a discourse. Black (2006) opines that deixis is a 'pointing' word. There are various types of which the common ones are tense of verbs (temporal deixis), personal pronouns, demonstratives (*these, this, that*), and time and place expressions such as *now, then, here, yesterday, today*, and so forth. These words relate our linguistic expression to the current situation. They are used to provide context in discourse. Black further notes that they take their basic meaning from the so-called canonical situation of discourse: face-to-face interaction

Griffiths (2006) refers to deictic expressions as words, phrases and features of grammar that have to be interpreted in relation to the situation in which they are uttered. He further states that deixis is pervasive in languages, probably because, in indicating 'when', 'where', 'who', 'what' and so on, it is very useful to start with the coordinates of the situation of utterance. This means that deixis or deictic expression provide context clues for the participants in discourse. They locate the persons, as well as the time and place in which language is used.

Deixis according to Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003) include first and second person pronouns *my, mine, you, your, yours, we, ours, us*. Saeed (2007), emphasizes the roles that deictic devices play in language. They commit a speaker to set up a frame of reference around him/her. He asserts also that every language carries an implicit division of the space around the current speaker, a division of time relative to the act of speaking, and,

via pronouns, a shorthand naming system for the participants involved in the talk

Matthew (1997) describes deixis as the way in which the reference of certain elements in a sentence is determined in relation to a specific speaker and addressee and a specific time and place of utterance. Deixis as described in many linguistic studies such as cited above are reference devices through which participants in a discourse are traced or identified; and their time and place of actions are specified. These devices help participants in a discourse to give the reader or listener the clear picture of the context in which language is used.

Lyons 2009 distinguishes between reference and deixis thus:

Deixis is like reference, with which it overlaps, it relates to their context of occurrence. But deixis is both broader and narrower than reference. Reference can be either deictic or non deictic, and deixis does not necessarily involve reference. The essential property of deixis (the term comes from the Greek word meaning "pointing" or "showing" is that it determines that structure and interpretation of utterances in relation to the time and place of their occurrences, the identity of the speaker and the addressee, and objects and events in the actual situation of utterance. (Lyons 2003:170)

Lyon further points out that deixis are a grammatical device in many languages categorized as person and tense. The person deixis refer to the participants in a discourse-the speaker, the hearer and sometimes the referent in the real world. On the other hand, tense echoes the time of interaction or occurrence of events. The linguistic features used to locate time place or persons in communication encounter is called deixis. Generally, deixis perform pointing or orientation functions in discourse. Meyer (2009) is of the view that in addition to having meaning, words also have a pointing function commonly referred to as **deixis**. It is the ways in which languages encode features of the context of utterance or speech event. In other words it refers to the ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context

of utterance. The relationship between language and context is reflected in the language structures themselves (Levinson, 1997).

Types of Deixis

Deixis as pointing devices in discourse are categorized into different forms depending on the scholars' perspectives. Yule (2006). Dylgjeri & Kazazi (2013) indentify three types and explained them thus:

- 1 **Person deixis:** personal deixi is used to point to objects as this, that these, and those (demonstratives) and people (her, him, them, me (pronouns
2. **Spatial deixis,** which is used to point to a location (here,or there,)
3. **Temporal deixis,** which is used to point to a time (now, then, next week, last month)

She is also of the view that in order to interpret all these deictic expressions, we must know which person, time and place the speaker has in mind. There is a great difference on what is close to the speaker (this, here, now) and what is distant (that, there, then). We can also realize whether there is a movement away from the speaker (go) or there is a movement towards the speaker (come). If somebody is moving towards you, you say: He is coming! If somebody is moving away from you, you say: He is going! Deixis grouping by Dyigjeri & Kazazi (2013) is shown in the diagram below:

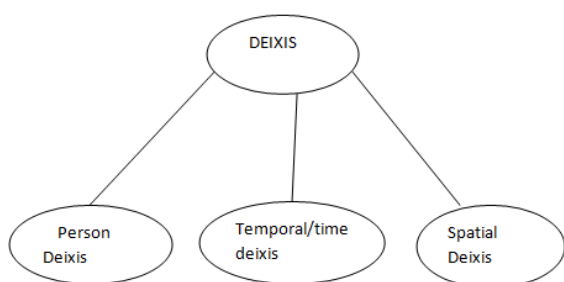


Fig.1: Dylgjeri & Kazazi(2013) classification of deixis

Another classification of deixis is by Meyer (2009). He recognizes referential, spatial and temporal deixis. Citing Halliday and Hasan (1976), Meyer identified two types of referential dexis-exophora and endophora. Exophora refers outside the text to the particular situational context.while the endophora refers within the text. Spatial deixis situates the speaker/writer with respect to what these expressions are referring to. They include this

,that, these and those. This kind of deixis are also associated with the adverbs *here* and *there* and some uses of prepositions such as *in, on, at by etc.* *Temporal deixis is synonymous with time deixis. They include spatial prepositions* such as *in* and *on* in the two previous examples, developed temporal meanings over time, a reflection of the general trend for notions of space to develop into notions of time. Thus, prepositions such as *in, on, at, and by* in the phrases *in the morning, on time, at noon, and by the evening* can now be markers of temporal, or time, deixis. Temporal deixis in English is marked linguistically by both temporal adverbials (e.g. *yesterday, tomorrow, in the morning*) and tense`markers (present and past) on verbs.

Griffiths (2006) identifies four kinds of deixis, relating to:

- (i) **Time:** *now, soon, recently, ago, tomorrow, next week*
- (ii) **Place:** *here, there, two kilometres away, that side, this way, come, bring, upstairs*
- (iii) **participants,** persons and other entities: *she, her, hers, he, him, his, they, it this, that*
- (iv) **discourse itself:** *this sentence, the next paragraph, that was what they told me, I want you to remember this ...*

Griffiths emphasizes that our semantic knowledge of the meanings of deictic expressions guides us on how, pragmatically, to interpret them in context. Thus we have *yesterday* 'the day before the day of utterance', *this* 'the obvious-in-context thing near the speaker or coming soon', *she* 'the female individual' and so on. His classification can be diagrammatically presented thus:

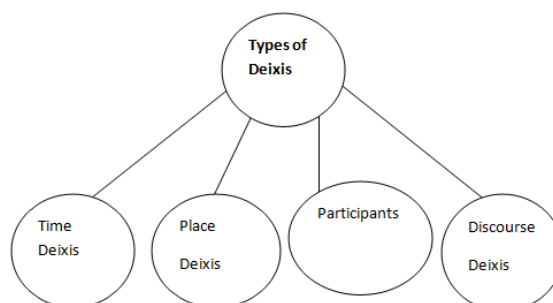


Fig 2:Griffiths(2006) classification of deixis

As could be seen from the diagram, the last category which Griffiths adds points to parts of the discourse itself. These elements do not relate to

time, place or participants. Cruse (2006) recognizes spatial, temporal and person as main deixis and social and discourse deixis as minor. **Social deixis** are expressions whose function is to indicate the position of the referent on the scales of social status and intimacy relative to the speaker. **Discourse deixis is a situation where** reference is made to discourse items which occur either before or after the current time of speaking. When functioning as discourse deictic, *that* typically refers to a previously occurring item, and *this* to something which is still to come: *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 relate portions of earlier discourse to portions of later discourse, are sometimes included under discourse deixis (Cruse 2006)

The diagram below shows Cruse's classification of deixis.

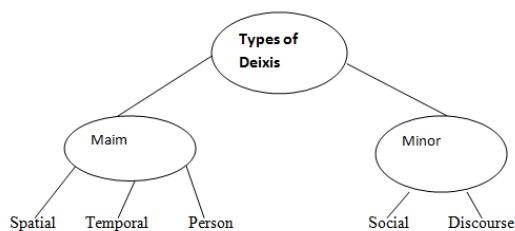


Fig 3 Classification of deixis by Cruse

Cruse considers the social and discourse deixis as aspects of projected deixis. This is when deictic expositions are used in their usual ways, but the deictic centre is not the speaker but other participants in the speech event, most commonly the **addressee**. For instance, the verb *come* has deictic properties in that its basic use is to denote movement towards the speaker, as in *Come here!* However, in *Shall I come and see you?* the movement in question is towards the addressee. In reported speech in English (but not in all languages) it is normal to project the deictic centre from the original speaker to the reporting speaker: Pete (on Tuesday): I'll go there tomorrow. Bill (on Thursday): Pete said he would come here yesterday.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the internet were subjected to analysis using qualitative methods. No statistical method was employed in the analysis. Excerpts from the texts showing incidences of deictic expressions are provided and explained to

support claims. The prevalent deixis identified in the reports are discussed under the types of deixis in the literature review.

Person Deixis

Person deixis are the personal pronouns such as the first, second and third used as a means of locating the referents in relations to the events taking place in the discourse. The texts subjected to analysis exhibited the use of person deixis for locating the insurgents and their victims in discourse. The excerpt below shows some examples.

"We are extremely concerned about the humanitarian situation, as several thousand people are at present without any assistance," UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards said in a press release "We are working with authorities to securely deploy aid workers as soon as possible and at the same time **we** are preparing for rapid evaluation and response assessments."(Text 7)

We in the above excerpt is first person which marks for number (plural). It expresses that the speaker is inclusive in the referents. The pronoun "we" refers to UNHCR of which the spokesperson Adrian Edward is a member. Text 8 and 2 below also exhibits second and third person pronouns.

"If **you** insist on continuing the aggression and the coalition with the government of Chad, then **we** give **you** glad tidings that the land of Niger is easier than the land of Nigeria and moving the war to the depth of **your** cities will be the first reaction toward any aggression that occurs after this statement," it said, according to SITE's transcript(Text 8) **They** wanted to attack the camp where elite soldiers were garrisoned "with a booby trapped car, but the soldiers were one step ahead of **them** and destroyed it" the police officer said(Text 2)

You in the above excerpt is used by Boko haram spokesman to locate the UNHCR spokesman Adrain Edward. 'We' on the other hand refers to Boko haram insurgence and their spokesman in the discourse who is sounding risk if they are attacked. They and them in text 2, refer to the Boko Haram fighters. As could be inferred from the above excerpts, all the personal pronouns are deictically used as their interpretations are context dependent.

Spatial Deixis

Spatial deixis refers to the physical and social environment or simply the space around the participants in a discourse. The most commonly used words as spatial deixis are the demonstrative pronouns *this, that, these and those*. Other words often used as deixis include *here, there, in, on, at etc*. The texts subjected to analysis contain some incidences as could be seen from the excerpt below:

Boko Haram rebels carried out their first attack Friday **inside neighbouring Chad**, targeting a village **on the shores of Lake Chad** as part of a widening insurgency that has sucked **in four countries**. The Islamist fighters crossed the vast lake by boat under cover of darkness to attack the village of Nougouba, **across the water from the Nigerian town of Baga**(Text 1).

Boko Haram rebels, who have been waging attacks **in northern Nigeria** and who kidnapped more than 200 school girls in April, frequently cross **into neighbouring Cameroon**(Text 2).

Some hours later, an explosion **in Diffa's market** killed at least one person, left 20 injured but six of in a critical condition, a Doctor **in the town hospital reported**.(Text 3)

The words and phrases in bold in the excerpts above are deictic expressions performing pointing or showing functions. All of them locate or point out where the Boko Haram militants launched attacks in the four countries. As shown in the excerpts, they are prepositional phrases performing locational or directional functions in discourse. Without even knowing where exactly these places are, the reader through the prepositional phrases will have the idea of where the insurgency occurred.

Temporal deixis

Temporal deixis are words used to denote the notion of space developed into the notion of time. According to Dylgjeri & Kazazi(2013), this explains why spatial prepositions like *in* and *on* have developed into notions of time. In English, temporal deixis is expressed by adverbs of time and tense markers on the verb. There are two tenses in English that are morphologically marked on verbs. They are the present and the past. To refer to events taking place in the future, English uses modal verbs, *will* or

shall and the phrasal modal *be going to*. The following excerpts contain some examples:

The fierce fighting started **late Wednesday** and after pause resumed **on Thursday**, ending with Boko Haram fleeing back over the border, according to the ministry (Text 2) The military is **now** in control of a large part of the Sambisa Forest and the insurgents are moving in bands and launching attacks on the communities that are far from where the soldiers checkpoints are." The attack came shortly after the military liberated 11 communities from the insurgents. **On Tuesday**, the military said it killed over 300 of the insurgents and seized several calibre of arms and ammunition (Text7).

A multinational force to fight Boko Haram is expected to be formally launched **in coming weeks**. Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin initially pledged to help Nigeria. **On Monday**, Burundi and Central African Republic also agreed to contribute troops to fight the militant group The Islamic extremist group has fought a five-year insurgency against Nigeria's government, leaving 10,000 people dead **last year alone** (Text 8)

The adverbs of time in bold in the above excerpts make reference to the time an event occurred. "Late Wednesday" refers to unspecified evening hours; "on Tuesday" emphasizes the day the Boko Haram sects resumed attack, "now" draws attention to ongoing action at the time of report; "in coming weeks" points to weeks ahead; "on Monday" is also a emphasizes that day, while last year draws the attention of the reader away from the present year to the previous. The above incidences of the application of temporal deixis demonstrate media reporters draw attention of the readers to the time events that the events they report on occurred.

Another form of temporal deixis prevalent in the texts is tense. It is normally reckoned to be part of the deictic system, since it locates actions or events in relation to the moment of speaking. In media reports, the normal tense is the simple past, though other forms of past tense are used. The reporters relate events as they occurred in the past through tense as time deixis. The texts subjected to analysis have past tenses running across them.

Military sources **said** several people **were killed** during the furious **early morning** fighting, when Boko Haram gunmen **made** an unsuccessful attempt that was **repelled** by the army, to advance toward the town. Residents also **confirmed** hearing heavy weapons fire(Text3) Rampaging Boko Haram insurgents **attacked** three villages in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State between Thursday and Friday, killing at least 40, residents and security officials **said**.The attack **came** shortly after the military **liberated** 11 communities from the insurgents. On Tuesday, the military **said** it **killed** over 300 of the insurgents and **seized** several calibre of arms and ammunition.

All the verbs in bold in the excerpts above are temporal deixis. They related the events in the texts as occurred in the past. The reporter who relates the events is like the narrator in prose fiction. The reporter is detached from the events as he is not part of it..

Discourse deixis

This is referred to as text deixis. It refers to the expressions used as part of the discourse. These expressions include the utterances themselves. This means that they are deixis, since they do not locate or point to any of the participants in the discourse. Examples are shown in bold in the excerpts below.

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan will not be attending **this week's African Union Summit** his office has confirmed, even though discussions on terrorist group Boko Haram feature high on the agenda across the African continent **this year**. Nigeria will be represented by foreign minister Aminu Wali. City Press reported on Thursday. Jonathan is currently touring Nigeria to campaign ahead of that country's elections which are due to take place on February. Analysts say **this is one of the hotly contested elections (Text 5)**.

The Phrases in bold in the excerpts above serve as deixis but are not pointing to any participant in the discourse. They point forward as in "this week's African summit or to the previous as in 'this is one of the hotly contested elections'" which points to the preceding sentence.

Discussion of Findings

The texts subjected to analysis showed pervasive use of deictic expressions. Prevalent are person, place temporal deixis. The temporal and place deixis are also known as time and spatial deixis respectively. The result of the analysis exhibited the spatial or place deixis as the most frequently used deixis. This could probably be so since the reporters relate events as they occurred in a place at a time in the past to the audience. The reporters only serve as participants in media report discourse in interview with the active participants.

The result also showed frequent use of prepositional phrases as temporal deixis. The use of temporal deixis in media report is marked by past tense and prepositional phrases especially 'in' and 'on' such on Monday, on Friday, on Thursday etc. Others are last week, coming weeks, in coming week etc. Person deixis identified are mostly the personal pronouns used to locate or trace the participants in discourse. The deictic expressions identified from the texts subjected to analysis are interpretable only in their linguistic, physical and situational contexts. The personal pronouns either locate or point to the Boko Haram insurgency or their victims in the four countries (Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria). Deictic expressions as revealed by the analysis enhance clear report by the reporter. In addition, cohesion and coherence are achieved as the deictic devices link the reader with persons, places and time in the text.

CONCLUSION

Deictic expressions in linguistics constitute an aspect of pragmatics. They are categorized as spatial (place), time (temporal) and person deixis. The words and phrases that fall into the above classifications are interpretable only in relation to the context in which they are used. This means that they could mean something different out of a given linguistic or situational context. Deictic expressions enable the media reporters to locate interlocutors in discourse as if in the real world. It is in this regard that they are considered as important aspects of pragmatics-the study of language use in context).

Deictic expressions also function to give orientation of the actors in the report, the place of report and time to the mass audience. As pointing

devices, they serve as means of fusing the participants, places and time in order to give the reader a comprehensive knowledge of the discourse. These words and phrases function as grammatical devices, because they are not content words.

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