
THE USE OF DEIXIS IN THE FORMS OF SENTENCES IN THE NOVELLA *OF MICE AND MEN* BY JOHN STEINBECK

Yayang Chandrakusuma¹, Rosmiati²

Universitas Balikpapan^{1,2}

yayang.chandra@gmail.com

Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>This research analyzes the use of deixis in the forms of sentences in the novella 'Of Mice and Men' by John Steinbeck. The purposes of this study are two: 1) to identify the types of deixis that appear in the novella, 2) to describe deixis used in within the novella. The research applies a descriptive qualitative. since the data are presented and analyzed in the form of words and utterances rather than numbers. The findings reveal five types of deixis used in the novella: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. In addition, the study shows the use of each deixis: person deixis has primary, social, referential and textual function. Place deixis has primary, psychological, and metaphorical function. Time deixis has primary, textual, and psychological function. Social deixis has primary, politeness, identity, and pragmatic function. Discourse has primary, cohesive, referential, and structuring function. From the 400 excerpts found by the researcher the most dominant are the primary function of person deixis with over 390 out of 400 excerpts, meanwhile the least dominant is pragmatic function of social deixis with over 1 out of 400 excerpts found by the researcher.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Functions as deixis, Types of deixis, Use of Deixis, Novella</p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 28/11/2024</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 04/12/2025</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 10/12/2025</p>

INTRODUCTION

Language is a complex and multifaceted system of communication that enables individuals to articulate ideas, emotions, and experiences. It is a crucial component of human culture, facilitating the exchange of information, the construction of meaning, and the establishment of social relationships. The study of language encompasses various elements, including vocabulary, grammar, syntax, phonology, and pragmatics, which collaboratively function to create a nuanced and dynamic medium of communication.

Language, while fundamentally a tool for communication, often presents challenges in the form of ambiguity within spoken utterances. In the English language, this ambiguity can complicate a hearer's ability to accurately identify the referent of the speaker's comments,

the temporal context of the action, or the spatial setting of the event being discussed. Consequently, the concept of context serves as a pivotal element in the exploration of language dissemination within societal frameworks. Since the early 1970s, there has been a marked increase in scholarly attention directed towards understanding the relevance of context in language interpretation.

This research focuses on Pragmatics, specifically the concept of Deixis. Deixis refers to linguistic expressions that are context-dependent, meaning their interpretation relies heavily on the speaker's situation at the time of utterance (Yule, 1996:9). These expressions—such as "here," "now," "I," and "you"—cannot be fully understood without contextual information.

The object of this study is John Steinbeck's novella, *Of Mice and Men*. This novella intricately portrays the lives of George Milton and Lennie Small, two itinerant migrant ranch workers grappling with the challenges of rural California during the Great Depression. The narrative provides a rich context for examining how deictic expressions are used because it contains numerous utterances that reflect various aspects of the characters' interactions and settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines how context influences the way language is interpreted. Levinson (1983:9) states that, "Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized or encoded in the structure of a language." This field highlights how context is systematically embedded in language, aiding in the construction and conveyance of meaning in communication.

Deixis

Deixis is a fundamental concept in pragmatics that refers to the linguistic phenomenon where certain expressions require contextual information for their interpretation. According to Levinson (1983), the term deixis comes from Greek and means "to point" or "show."

Types of Deixis (Levinson) :

1. Person Deixis: Essential for identifying the roles of participants in communication (First person: I/we; Second person: you; Third person: he/she/it/they).
2. Place Deixis: Indicates the physical location relative to the speaker and listener (e.g., here, there).
3. Time Deixis: Explains the time when the utterance is spoken (e.g., now, today, tomorrow, then).
4. Discourse Deixis: Refers to parts of the discourse itself, linking parts of the conversation or text (e.g., this, that).

5. Social Deixis: Highlights social dynamics, status, and relationships (e.g., sir, ma'am, titles).

Functions of Deixis

Each type of deixis serves specific functions, such as the Primary Function (identifying speaker/listener, location, or time), Social Function (showing respect or intimacy), Referential Function (referring to specific entities), and Textual Function (organizing the sequence of events).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the use of deixis in the novella *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because the data are presented in the form of words, phrases, and utterances rather than numbers. According to Denzin (1978), qualitative research focuses on interpreting social phenomena and understanding meaning in texts. In this study, the researcher analyzes linguistic expressions that contain deixis in the dialogues and narration of the novella.

The object of this research is the novella *Of Mice and Men* written by John Steinbeck. The researcher focuses on identifying and analyzing the types and functions of deixis used in the sentences found in the novella. The analysis is based on the theory of deixis proposed by Levinson (1983), which classifies deixis into five types: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis.

The data of this research consist of words, phrases, and sentences in the novella that contain deictic expressions. The data were collected from dialogues and narrative parts that indicate references related to participants, time, place, social relations, and discourse context. In total, the researcher collected 400 excerpts containing deictic expressions from the novella.

The data collection technique used in this research is documentation and note-taking. First, the researcher read the novella thoroughly to understand the context of the story. Second, the researcher identified sentences containing deictic expressions. Third, the researcher classified the identified data based on the types of deixis according to Levinson's theory. Finally, the researcher recorded and organized the data into categories for further analysis.

The data analysis technique follows several steps. First, the researcher identifies the deictic expressions found in the novella. Second, the researcher classifies the expressions into five types of deixis: person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis. Third, the researcher analyzes the function of each deixis within the context of the sentences and dialogues in the story. Finally, the researcher interprets the findings to determine which type of deixis is most frequently used and how it functions within the narrative.

Through this methodology, the researcher aims to provide a clear description of how deixis is used in the novella and how contextual references contribute to the meaning of communication between the characters.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Types of Deixis

Based on data have been analyzed, the researcher found five types of deixis in the novella. There are Four-hundred data from the all types of deixis that the researcher got such as person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis.

Types of deixis that are found by the researcher in the novella, Person Deixis found three hundred ninety data, place deixis forty one found data, time deixis found forty four data, discourse deixis found twenty five data, and social deixis found twenty three data. The data indicates that **Person Deixis** is overwhelmingly dominant, accounting for most of the deictic usage. This reflects the novella's focus on character interaction and dialogue.

1. Person Deixis

a. First-person deixis

“No reason at all for you. I like it here. Tomorra we’re gonna go to work I seen thrashin’ machines on the way down. That means we’ll be bucking grain bags, bustin’ a gut. Tonight I’m gonna lay right here and look up. I like it.”
(Steinbeck, p.9)

George says to Lennie that there’s no special reason for staying where they are, he just likes it. He imagines that the next day they’ll start working, maybe with threshing machines he spotted earlier. That means they’ll be doing hard labor: carrying grain sacks, working themselves to exhaustion (“bustin’ a gut”). For tonight, George plans to lie down right where they are, stare up at the sky, and relax because he really likes being here. The quotation provided illustrates the concept of deixis. The term "I" represents a person deixis, specifically referring to the first-person pronoun. Similarly, "You" functions as a person deixis that pertains to the second-person pronoun. In this context, "I" signifies the character George, while "You" denotes the character Lennie, who are discussing their work plans for the following day.

b. Second-person deixis

“Lennie. You gonna be sick like you was last night” (Steinbeck, p.4)

Lennie, startled, dips his whole head into the pool water to rinse it, getting his hat soaked. Then he sits up, smiles, and encourages George to drink too. George places his bundle (their pack) beside him, remarks that the water looks a little “scummy,” and warns Lennie not to drink from stagnant sources. The quotation above is a person deixis, specifically through the use of "You," which denotes the second person. In this context, the speaker, identified as "George," directly addresses "Lennie" as he makes a leap into the pool, attempting to drink from the water.

c. Third-person deixis

*“Yeah. Nice fella too. Got a crooked back where. a horse kicked **him**. The boss gives **him** hell when **he’s** mad. But the stable buck don’t give a damn about that. **He** reads a lot. Got books in his room.” (Steinbeck, p.21)*

Lennie describes a man (the “stable buck”) who’s been physically damaged his back is crooked from a horse kick. The boss is quick to angrily blame or punish him when upset, but the stable buck doesn’t seem to mind or care about that treatment. He keeps to himself, he reads a lot, and he has books in his room, suggesting he is thoughtful, or educated despite his harsh circumstances. In this excerpt, the pronouns “he” and “him” serve as examples of person deixis, specifically functioning as third-person references. These deictic expressions point to a particular individual within the context of the conversation. Here, “he” and “him” clearly refer to Crooks, the stable buck, whom Lennie is describing to George.

2. Place Deixis

”Awright. You got that. But we’re gonna sleep here because I got a reason.” (Steinbeck p.9)

George and Lennie have been walking for a long distance under the hot sun, hoping to reach the ranch where they can work. Exhausted and thirsty, they stop by a river to rest and drink. As dusk approaches, George suggests they stop early and sleep where they are instead of pushing onward to the ranch that night. George’s decision hints that he sees some advantage in staying by the river perhaps rest, safety, or simply respite from the journey. Lennie, trusting George, agrees, and George takes care of gathering firewood and preparing dinner for them. They settle down beneath the trees, listen to the evening sounds, and eat beans by the fire, looking upward at the darkening sky. The excerpt highlights the term "Here," which serves as a deictic expression indicating proximity to the speaker in this case, "George." He indicates that both he and Lennie are resting in the Gabilan Mountains.

3. Time Deixis

“O.K. Now when we go in to see the boss, what you gonna do?” (Steinbeck, p.8)

George reminds Lennie of the rules they must follow when they meet the ranch boss. He tells Lennie that Lennie must stay silent and not say a thing, to let George do the talking. This is because if the boss hears Lennie speaking and senses something odd, they might be refused work. The excerpt indicates that the term "Now" functions as a time deixis, signifying that the event is presently occurring from the perspective of the speaker. In this context, the speaker, George, is questioning Lennie about his actions upon meeting the boss.

4. Social Deixis

“No, sir. I ain't gonna talk to you or nothing.” (Steinbeck, p.86)

George and Lennie arrive at a new ranch for work. George has warned Lennie not to speak to the boss or anyone, just stand quietly and let George do the talking, so as not to draw suspicion. But when Curley's wife asks Lennie questions, despite George's instructions, Lennie stammers and tries to explain. In the excerpt above, the word "sir" functions as a form of social deixis, which is used to express the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. The term "sir" is a respectful title typically used to address a male individual of perceived higher status or authority. The term "sir" represents a social deixis, specifically “Lennie” addressing to “Curley’s wife”.

5. Discourse Deixis

“So you forgot that already, did you? I gotta tell you again, do I? Jesus Christ, you're a crazy bastard!” (Steinbeck, p.5)

George is exasperated with Lennie. He asks, “So you forgot already, did you? Do I have to tell you again? Jesus Christ, you're a crazy bastard!”. What he means is: Lennie keeps forgetting the plan or instructions George gives him, and George is frustrated by having to repeat things. Lennie, in his gentle and childlike way, responds that he did forget, even though he tried not to. He also says he remembers something about rabbits (their dream), but George is impatient and wants Lennie to focus on immediate instructions so they won't get into trouble. In the excerpt above, the word "that" functions as a discourse deixis. It refers to a previous part of the conversation, specifically to something that has already been mentioned by the speaker. In this context, "that" points back to Lennie forgetting their destination, a detail that had just been discussed. The speaker, George, expresses frustration at having to repeat himself, highlighting Lennie's forgetfulness.

The Use of Deixis

The use of deixis are different per each deixis, some have either three or four functions. The text(s) it analysed were constantly talking about people (the speaker, listener, and others). Pointing to time, location, social status, or the text itself happened far less frequently. The researcher can't find any data for Psychological Function, Metaphorical Function, and Structuring Function due to the structure of the writing of the novella or the way the speaker talks in the novella.

Use of Deixis

1. Person Deixis

a. Primary Function of Person deixis

“**I** ain’t sure it’s good water” (Steinbeck, p.4)

The word “**I**” In this sentence, it identifies the speaker (George) who is feeling "unsure" of the water.

b. Social Function of Person deixis

“An’ I got **you**. We got each other, that’s what, that gives a hoot in hell about us,” (Steinbeck, p.104)

Since the speaker uses informal language to George “An’ I got you” it means to express their legitimate friendship or closeness, so the word “you here to show closeness.

c. Referential Function of Person deixis

“Where’d you get **them** bruises on your face?” (Steinbeck, p.78)

The speaker “Curley’s wife” used the word “them” refers specifically to the visible injuries on Lennie's face.

d. Shifting Perspective of Person deixis

“**You** give me a good whore house every time," (Steinbeck, p.85)

The speaker “Whit’ is using "you", to reflecting the past times where both Whit and George (addressee) go to a good “whore house”

2. Place Deixis

a. Primary Function of Place deixis

“You seen a girl around **here**?” (Steinbeck, p.38)

The word “here” is used to identify the where something or someone is compared to the speaker or listener, in which here the speaker asks about a girl inside the bunkhouse.

3. Time Deixis

a. Primary Function of Time deixis

“*I might jus’ as well go away. George ain’t gonna let me tend no rabbits **now**.*”
(Steinbeck, p.100)

The word “now” is used to identify It tells *when* an event takes place — in the past, present, or future, in which here the speaker now tells himself he won’t tend to the rabbits.

b. Textual Function of Time deixis

“Maybe you better go along to your own house **now**. We don’t want no trouble” (Steinbeck, p.78)

The speaker “Crooks” is using "now", implying the addressee “Candy” that in the current time and the future its best to return to her own house to avoid any future trouble between them.

c. Psychological Function of Time deixis

“Look out, now, you’ll muss it ” (Steinbeck, p.90)

The speaker “Curley’s wife” is using "now", implying that currently Lennie (addressee) is playing with her hair and warns him to not ruin the hair.

4. Social Deixis

a. Primary Function of Social deixis

“Come on now. Carlson's gonna take you to a doctor” (Steinbeck, p.78)

The speaker “Slim”, is carrying the addressee “Curley”, injured as Slim tells Curley that he will look for a doctor, with a formal and respectful tone.

b. Politeness Function of Social deixis

“I tried, Aunt Clara, ma’am. I tried and tried.” (Steinbeck, p.110)

The speaker “Lennie” is talking to ma’am “Aunt Clara” desperate, but formal tone after the bad things Lennie committed before.

c. Identity Function of Social deixis

“Well, you look her over, mister. You see if she ain’t a tart.” He stepped out the door into the brilliant sunshine.” (Steinbeck, p.30)

The speaker “Old man” is using “Mister” to the addressee “George” acknowledging that he’s just a man looking for work like the “Old man”.

d. Pragmatic Function of Social deixis

“Yes sir. Jesus, we had fun. They let the nigger come in that night. Little skinner name of Smithy took after the nigger. Done pretty good, too. The guys wouldn’t let him use his feet, so the nigger got him. If he coulda used his feet, Smitty says he woulda killed the nigger. The guys said on account of the nigger’s got a crooked back, Smitty can’t use his feet.” (Steinbeck, p.21)

The speaker “Old man” is using “nigger”, addressing “Crooks” in a Distant, Friendly tone telling George about the events last night with Crooks and Smithy.

5. Discourse Deixis

a. Primary Function of Discourse deixis

“You’re the new fellas that just come, ain’t ya” (Steinbeck, p.32)

The speaker “Candy” is using “that” referring to both George and Lennie, who have arrived at the barn earlier.

b. Cohesive Function of Discourse deixis

“After that the guys went into Soledad and raised hell, didn’t go in there. I ain’t got the poop no more.” (Steinbeck, p.21)

The speaker “Old man” is using “that” referring the duel between Crooks and Smithy as both men headed for the soledad to “raise hell” afterwards.

c. Referential Function of Discourse deixis

“There’s plenty done that.” (Steinbeck, p.21)

The speaker “George” is using “that” referring that Crooks may have married many different women previously.

CONCLUSION

From the analyzed data, it can be concluded that the researcher found 5 types of deixis by applying Levison’s deixis theory (1986). Five types of deixis could be find in the novella Of Mice And men. The researcher found 400 deixis in the Novella. 400 deixis including, person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. here are 390-person deixis including first person deixis, second person deixis, and third person deixis, 40 Place deixis. 45 Time Deixis, 23 social deixis, and 25 discourse deixis. The type of deixis which is more dominant used in the novella is person deixis. Many characters in the novella use person deixis as replacement of their name and it repeatedly continuously and more often so it makes person deixis is more dominant used in the novella than the other deixis, the second conclusion is the use of deixis used in the novella are separated per deixis. Person deixis has primary, social, referential and textual function. Place deixis has primary, psychological, and metaphorical function. Time deixis has primary, textual, and psychological function. Social deixis has primary, politeness, identity, and pragmatic function. Discourse has primary, cohesive, referential, and structuring function. Based on the data that have been shown before, out of all 400 excerpts found by the researcher the most dominant are the primary function of person deixis with over 390 out of 400 excerpts, meanwhile the least dominant is pragmatic function of social deixis with over 1 out of 400 excerpts found by the researcher.

REFERENCES

- Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2013). *The Functional Analysis of English: A Hallidayan Approach (3rd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *Sociological Methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill
- Fillmore, Charles J (1971) *Lectures on Deixis*. Stanford, Calif. : CSLI Publications.
- Fromkin, V, Rodman, R and Hyams, N. (2011). *An Introduction to Language*. Boston: Michael Rosenbery.
- Griffiths, Patrick. (2006). *An introduction to English Semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press.

- Gundel, Jeanette K. (2005). *Yan Huang, Anaphora: A Cross-Linguistic Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Levinson, Stephen C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. (1977). *Linguistic Semantics an Introduction*. New York: Cambridge.
- Mey, Jacob L. (1993). *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell (2nd ed. 2001).
- Mar'atus, S., Susilawati, E., & Wardah, W. . (2022). *An analysis of deixis in “catching the sun” novel by Tony Parsons. Journal of English Education Program*, 3(1).
- Haryanti, I. N., Sri Wahyuni, W., & Panggabean, W. . (2021). *The References of Using Deixis in the Novel The Kite Runner. Prologue: Journal on Language and Literature*, 6(1).
- Steinbeck, J. (1994). *Of Mice And Men*. London: Penguin Group fromx <https://giove.isti.cnr.it/demo/eread/Libri/sad/OfMiceAndMen.pdf>
- Velin, Jusbina. M., Lisbeth, S. . (2022). *Analysis types of deixis in the speech taylor swift at new york university 2022. Universitas Kristen Indonesia* 6(1).
- Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language* (4th ed.). Cambridge University Press.