

PROXIMAL AND DISTAL DEIXIS
IN THE TRANSCRIPTIONS OF BARRACK OBAMA
INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

BY

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Abstrak

Studi ini membahas tentang penggunaan kata atau frase dalam sebuah ungkapan yang muncul dalam komunikasi. Kata atau frase tersebut memiliki arti tersendiri bila dikaji berdasarkan konteksnya dan hal tersebut akan memberikan dampak kepada makna ungkapan secara keseluruhan yang dikenal dengan fenomena deiksis. Fenomena ini juga berkaitan dengan kemunculan dan partisipasi dari pembicara dan lawan bicara dalam sebuah komunikasi yang dapat diketahui dari dua istilah umum dalam deiksis, yaitu 'proksimal' dan 'distal'. Jenis kata atau frase yang muncul dalam ungkapan-ungkapan yang disampaikan oleh Barack Obama diklasifikasikan dan dianalisis berdasarkan kategorinya masing-masing dengan tujuan mencari makna kata atau frase tersebut dan juga untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pengkategorian tersebut. Dalam memperkuat analisis, terdapat dua teori yang digunakan, antara lain teori mengenai jenis-jenis ekspresi deiksis oleh Levinson (1983) dan teori deiksis dan jarak oleh Yule (1996).

Hasil analisis dalam studi ini menunjukkan terdapat tiga kategori ekspresi deiksis yang dapat dikategorikan kedalam dua istilah umum dalam deiksis, yaitu deiksis persona dengan kata ganti 'saya, kamu, dia (laki-laki)', deiksis waktu menggunakan keterangan waktu 'hari ini' dan deiksis tempat dengan menggunakan keterangan tempat. Semua kategori deiksis tersebut dapat diklasifikasikan kedalam 'proksimal' ataupun 'distal' yang tentunya dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor yang sifatnya umum, antara lain konteks dari ungkapan itu sendiri, partisipasi pembicara dan lawan bicara dalam sebuah komunikasi, waktu dan tempat saat ungkapan tersebut diucapkan.

Kata kunci : deiksis proksimal- distal, ungkapan, pembicara-lawan bicara

1. Background of the Study

Communication requires the people to convey the information through the use of words, phrases or expressions which are involving contextual information in order to catch the meaning of whole utterance or which part they refer to. The phenomenon of communication shows that there is an interpretation of those things which is being put in the context and requires the existence of addressor and addressee to give influence in another way. It shows the distance among interlocutors as well as the interlocutors and the thing which is being indicated. These situations reflect the phenomenon of **deixis** and it is related to the two terms in deixis, such as '**proximal**' and '**distal**'. In everywhere communication, those phenomena can be found in order to interpret the meaning of whole utterances in the communication. In relation to those phenomena, "two transcriptions of Barack Obama Inaugural Addresses" were used as the data source in this study. Inaugural address is the appropriate data since it requires much kind of deictic expressions in the utterances that can be categorized into '**proximal**' and '**distal**'. Besides, the transcription is chosen because it can show the information clearly or more accurate rather than the video of the speech.

2. Problems

Based on the phenomena of communication in the background above, the problems to be discussed are as follows:

- a) What kinds of deictic expressions are found in the transcriptions of Barack Obama Inaugural Addresses to be categorized into 'proximal' and 'distal' deixis?, and
- b) What factors influencing the categorization of deictic expressions to be 'proximal' and 'distal' deixis in the transcriptions of Barack Obama Inaugural Addresses?

3. Aims

In response to the problems, the aims of this study can be formulated as follows:

- a) To find out and identify the kinds of deictic expressions found in the transcriptions of Barack Obama Inaugural Addresses to be categorized into 'proximal' and 'distal' deixis
- b) To analyze the factors influencing the categorization of deictic expressions to be 'proximal' and 'distal' deixis in the transcriptions of Barack Obama Inaugural Addresses.

4. Research Method

The data used in this study were taken from some utterances in the two transcriptions of Barack Obama inaugural addresses which were collected by applying library research with reading-note taking technique. They were analyzed by using qualitative- descriptive method by applying the theory of Levinson (1983) about *Descriptive Types of Deixis* and Yule (1996) who proposed about *Deixis and Distance*.

5. Result and Discussion

Five types of deictic expression proposed by Levinson (1983) were found in those transcriptions of speeches, however there are only three types that can be categorized into '**proximal**' and '**distal**' deixis, such as person deixis, time deixis and place deixis. The utterances based on its categorization are presented below.

a) Person Deixis

According to Levinson (1983 : 68), person deixis is one of fifth kinds of deictic expression that deals with the categories of person or persons in the speech event. It can be realized that there is the role of participant of communication in the utterances of speech event. There are three types of person deixis that are required in the speech event, such as first person deixis with singular and plural forms, second person deixis and third person deixis. The participant belongs to first person deixis if he or she is the addressor of communication and another referent in the speech event that is grouped by the addressor. Meanwhile second person deixis refers to the participant that is

being the addressee of communication and third person deixis for those who are not involved directly in the communication or not identified as the addressor and addressee in the speech event.

1. *I* stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors (**speech 1, line 1**).

According to the utterance above, pronoun *I* is found and can be categorized as a kind of first person singular deixis in which the utterance is narrated by someone in a communication. The use of singular pronoun *I* in the data above has already given information that Barrack Obama gives his speech in front of citizens after winning the election to be the new president of the United States of America. Therefore, it can be assumed that first singular pronoun *I* refers to himself in terms of saying introduction in his speech.

Besides, the use of first person singular deixis *I* could indicate the existence of 'proximal' deixis. It is seen through the meaning (refers to whom the pronoun *I*) and can be suggested that the singular pronoun *I* refers to addressor which is influenced by the position of addressor (Barack Obama) in the speech event who directly involved in the interaction as well as the contextual information which refers to his feelings.

2. *You* and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time -- not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals (**speech 2, line 134**).

In the second speech, Barrack Obama as the addressor uses pronoun *you* that identifies persons as addressee which is referring to the American people. In this case, Obama tries to express his thankfulness to the American people for trusting himself to be a President of the United States of America in two periods.

The existence of pronoun *you* in the data above show the use of *distal deixis*. It is related to the position of American people in the speech which has no direct response from them in the form of words (dialogue) except facial expressions. As having been explained, the categorization is influenced by the contextual information, the position of American people as the addressee in the speech event.

3. I thank President Bush for *his* service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation *he* has shown throughout this transition (**speech 1, line 3**).

There are two pronouns in the data above that can be categorized as third person deixis, they are *his* and *he*. Generally, pronoun *he* is a kind of subjective pronoun that is used to show the gender of participant of communication, meanwhile pronoun *his* is categorized as possessive adjective, which is showing possession. As having been explained, third person deixis refers to those who are not directly involved in the communication or not identified as the addressor and addressee in the speech event. It can also realize that the referent is being outsider and have no direct interaction with them. In this case, the uses of pronoun *he* and *his* refer to President Bush who leads the United States of America before Obama lead. Both of them convince that the gender of referent is male. Therefore, the use of pronouns *he* and *his* show the existence of third person deixis and can be categorized as *distal deixis* which is away from both addressor and addressee. The categorization is influenced by the contextual information as well as the position of participant in the communication which is being outsider.

b) Time Deixis

Time deixis is a kind of deictic expression that concerns on the various times when the utterances are expressed (Levinson, 1983:73). Time deixis can

be shown commonly through the use of adverbs of time which can be found in two transcriptions of Barack Obama Inaugural Addresses, as follows:

1. We, the people, declare *today* that the most evident of truths (**speech 2, line 99**).

In the second speech of Barack Obama, there is adverb *today* used by him for pointing a day when he delivers his speech. The adverb *today* belongs to *time deixis* which shows that Obama expresses his second Inaugural Address on January 21st 2013. Therefore, the adverb *today* refers to twenty first of January, two thousand and thirteen. The adverb also represents that he becomes the President of the United States of America twice as well as he lead America for second period or ten years.

The adverb *today* in the data above is categorized into *proximal deixis* because it is leading to Obama. He is the only one participant in the speech event who delivers the speech and therefore, Barrack Obama is the main focus in the situation that could be proved from his expression that tries to convince the American people to come with him to make America much better. The categorization is influenced by the position of addressor as the only one participant in the speech event as well as the context of utterance when the speech is uttered by the addressor.

c) Place Deixis

According to Lyons (cited in Levinson, 1983 : 79) place deixis is also called as spatial deixis which is concerning on the specification of location when the utterances are expressed by the addressor of communication. The adverbs of place as well as demonstrative pronoun can show the existence of place deixis. In the two transcriptions of Barack Obama Inaugural Addresses, some expressions are found to be considered as *place deixis* and categorized into 'proximal' or 'distal' deixis, as follows:

1. I stand *here* today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors (**speech 1, line 1**).

According to the data above, the adverb of place *here* is found which is used to demonstrate such place relatively close to the addressor. In his first speech, Obama uses the adverb *here* in the beginning to emphasize the specific place where he expresses his speech. It can be assumed that, the symbolic use of *here* is including the location of the addressor when delivering the speech.

It can also be categorized into *proximal deixis* because it is close to the addressor or leading to Barack Obama. The adverb of place *here* shows that he is the main focus of the speech because of his success to be the new President of the United States of America. The categorization is influenced by the psychological factor which is related to the distance between addressor and things are being indicated, relative location as well as the context of utterance.

2. We do not believe that in *this country* freedom is reserved for the lucky, or happiness for the few (**speech 2, line 63**).

In the second Obama's inaugural address, the use of demonstrative pronoun *this* is found. According to the data above, demonstrative pronoun *this* followed by *country* that show the United States of America. Obama as the addressor of the communication tries to use another form to represent the United States of America. The use of demonstrative pronoun *this* in the data above can represent the location based on the contextual information.

The existence of *proximal deixis* can be seen through the demonstrative pronoun *this* in the data above. Obama in the speech event is the only one participant who delivers the speech and the information that tries to be conveyed by him is about himself and the United States of America. The demonstrative pronoun *this* is leading to the addressor of

communication, Barack Obama. It is influenced by the context of utterance, the relative location and the position of interlocutors in the speech event.

6. Conclusion

From all of the analysis above, it can be concluded that three types of deictic expressions are found to be categorized into ‘proximal’ or ‘distal’ deixis such as person deixis, time deixis and place deixis. The three types of deixis can be determined the meaning or which part the terms refer to as well as the factors influencing the categorization. In the person deixis, pronoun **I** belong to first person deixis and considered as ‘proximal deixis’, pronoun **you** for second person deixis which can be categorized as ‘distal deixis’, and pronouns **he** and **his** that represent the existence of third person deixis and both of them belong to ‘distal deixis’. Meanwhile, to show the existence of time deixis, the adverb of time **today** is expressed to be considered as ‘proximal deixis’. Place deixis is found through the use of adverb of place **here** and categorized as ‘proximal deixis’ and demonstrative pronoun **this** that is categorized as ‘distal deixis’.

The general factors influencing the categorization are the context of utterances, the location from the interlocutor’s perspective, the position of interlocutors in the speech event (insider or outsider), the position of interlocutors in the past and future temporal events and relative location

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