DEIXIS IN KAMALA HARRIS REMARKS AT THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS' 88TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

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ABSTRACT

In our study, we analyzed the use of deixis in Kamala Harris' speech at the 88th National Convention of the American Federation of Teachers. We obtained the speech script from the US government website and supported the analysis with a video of Kamala Harris' speech to provide context. This was a descriptive qualitative study. We calculated the percentage of data on the types of deixis to identify the dominant use. We collected the data using the documentation method and note-taking technique. The data were analyzed descriptively using Levinson's theory and presented using formal and informal methods. The findings indicated that all types of deixis were present in Kamala Harris' speech, with Person deixis accounting for the highest percentage, with 282 instances (85.71%) and the deictic expression "You" being the most frequently used (62 times). This was followed by place deixis with 6 instances (1.83%), time deixis with 15 instances (4.56%), discourse deixis with 18 instances (5.47%), and social deixis with 8 instances (2.43%). In total, 329 instances of deixis were identified.

Keywords: Deixis, Pragmatics, Levinson, Kamala Harris

I. Introduction

Communication involves the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions between individuals. It is a complex process encompassing verbal and nonverbal elements, which is crucial for understanding and sharing meaning. According to Pearson and Nelson (2000), communication serves as a medium through which individuals convey their thoughts, perspectives, and feelings to one another, fostering mutual understanding and connection. Effective communication requires mutual understanding between the speaker and listener. Language facilitates information exchange, but if there's a comprehension gap, accurate understanding may be compromised, leading to potential misinformation. When someone is discussing a topic and uses terminology that the listener is unfamiliar with, effective communication breaks down. Therefore, ensuring that the right context is established is crucial for a proper understanding of the communicated information.

The context of a communication interaction includes the environment in which it takes place, the social dynamics at play, and the specific anticipated behaviors and attitudes of the

individuals engaged, as explained by McLean (2005). Speaking of context, pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between the external context of language and the intent of speech through the interpretation of the situation of its utterance. According to Levinson (1983, 2004), pragmatics involves analyzing the connection between language and its context to comprehend the meaning behind it. As such, pragmatics delves into the components of the language-context relationship pertinent to constructing grammar. The relationship of each word or phrase in a speech is significant in interpreting the context, and deixis plays a vital role within it. To communicate effectively, individuals must first comprehend the essential components to include in their verbal expressions. As noted by Cruse in 2001, deixis can have varying interpretations for different individuals. In our everyday conversations with friends, the subject matter is constantly evolving, and it is possible for different perspectives to emerge when discussing a topic. Deixis, also referred to as indexicality, serves the essential function of contributing to the determination of propositional meaning within an utterance (Lyons, 1995). Deixis encompasses several categories, including person, time, place, discourse, and social deixis, as classified by Levinson (1983).

Person deixis, a key concept in linguistics, involves the use of words and expressions that indicate the relationship between the speaker (first person), the listener (second person), and other people or things (third person). It plays a crucial role in communication by helping to establish clarity about who is speaking, who is being addressed, and who is being referred to. Person deixis is fundamental for effective communication, enabling participants to understand their roles and connections within a conversation. Time deixis in language refers to how temporal references are linguistically encoded in relation to the context of communication. It involves examining how temporal points and spans are expressed in a specific language concerning the time frame when a statement is made. An example of time deixis is the use of words like "yesterday," "today," and "tomorrow" to locate events in time relative to the moment of speaking. According to Levinson (1983:62), place deixis is divided into two forms: proximal forms (near the speaker) and distal forms (far from the speaker). Yule (1996) provides a few examples of proximal terms and distal terms. Proximal forms include "here" and "this", while distal forms include "there" and "that". In the case of place deixis, words or expressions are used to refer to a location or position related to the speaker or other objects. Levinson (1983:85) describes discourse deixis as the use of language within a conversation or written text to refer to a specific part of that conversation or text. Cummings (2005:28) further elaborates that linguistic expressions are utilized to point to a section of a broader conversation or written work in which these expressions are found. In essence, discourse deixis allows speakers or writers to reference something that is being talked about within the context of a conversation or in a written piece. Social deixis, as defined by Cruse (2006:166), refers to the use of language to indicate the social status and level of closeness of the person being referred to in relation to the speaker. According to Levinson (1983:63), social deixis involves the expression of social differences that are based on the roles of the participants, specifically the social relationship between the speaker and the listener or another person being referred to.

Numerous studies on deixis have been conducted, some of which gathered data from speeches and analyzed videos of the speaker to provide a more comprehensive and contextual

understanding of deixis. This is important because deixis is linked to the speaker's gestures, the participants, the speech's topic, the location, and the social relationships between the participants. Firstly, Retnowaty (2019) analyzed the deixis in Donald Trump's speech to UN General Assembly to identify the types of the deixis and their frequencies. The research is included the descriptive qualitative design that was collected from the text of Donald Trump's speech to UN General Assembly in 2018. The theory of Levinson and Yule (2006) were used to analyze the data and combined the types into person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. The result is the person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis found in 344 utterances; and the person deixis is mostly used with 279 total number of 344 (81.10%). Secondly, Ramadhani and Fitriati (2021) analyzed deixis in Imran Khan's Speech at the United Nations General Debate, aiming to identify the most dominant deixis used and the reason. It is qualitative research that observed a video recording and analyzed it by Levinson's theory (1983). The findings revealed that time deixis is used dominantly, with a total of 554 times appearing in Khan's speech (41.81%). The reason for using deixis is to show his feelings, persuade, and ideological bias. Thirdly, Raputri (2021) analyzed deixis in 3 narrative texts in the textbook of SMP Nasima Semarang. This study analyzed with Levinson's theory (1983) but used a different research object from the studies mentioned earlier. This study aims to identify deictic words used in narrative texts and the interpretation and contribution of dominant deictic words to the narrative text. The findings were that all types of deixis were found in the text but the dominant one was the use of "he" which is included in person deixis. This is stated because in narrative texts usually retell someone's story so that the deictic words appear dominantly.

The three studies share similarities with the current study as they all adopt Levinson's (1983) method and theory. Levinson classifies deixis into 5 categories: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis. Their distinction lies in the subject of analysis. Deictic research is gaining prominence, influenced by prior studies employing narrative narratives. However, this study focuses on Kamala Harris's address to the Vice President of the United States at the 88th National Convention of the American Federation of Teachers. The objective is to recognize instances of deixis, according to Levinson (1983), and to establish the percentage of deixis types in the speech to determine the most frequently employed type.

II. Methods

The study utilizes a descriptive qualitative design to examine deixis in the address given by Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the United States, at the 88th National Convention of the American Federation of Teachers. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive qualitative research aims to thoroughly explore and portray the intricacies of individuals, locations, or occurrences within a particular setting using a qualitative approach. Vice President Kamala Harris delivered a compelling address at the 88th National Convention of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in Houston, Texas. In her speech, she highlighted her deep commitment to public education and presented her vision for the future of the United States. Harris contrasted two visions for America, one focused on progress and equal opportunities for all, and another that she perceived as regressive. She expressed criticism towards Donald Trump and his supporters,

particularly regarding Project 2025, which she argued would negatively impact public education and reverse many of the achievements of the Biden administration. Harris pledged to champion initiatives for student loan forgiveness, affordable healthcare, and workers' rights, including the right to unionize, connecting these efforts to the broader pursuit of economic justice. Her speech was part of her larger campaign for the 2024 presidency, solidifying her image as a staunch advocate for public education and workers' rights.

The primary data source for this research is the verbatim transcript of Vice President Harris' speech, which took place on Thursday, July 25, 2024, in Houston, Texas. The speech transcript can be accessed at www.whitehouse.gov, while the video presentation is available on The White House's official YouTube channel. In this analysis, the data underwent the following procedures: 1. The research process commenced with the observation of Kamala Harris' address at the American Federation of Teachers' 88th National Convention. The speech was sourced from YouTube and scrutinized thoroughly. Following the video viewing and text examination, data highlighting the prevalence of various types of deixis in the majority of sentences or words was identified. 2. Post-data collection, the subsequent phase involves data presentation. This encompassed detailing the data and constructing a data card in the tools section. The subsequent measures were implemented in presenting the data: a) Categorization of data into five deixis types: personal deixis (first person, second person, third person), place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. b) Inclusion of the five deixis types in the data analysis. 3. The final phase entailed summarizing the data to discern the study's outcomes. Conclusions were drawn subsequent to the identification and analysis of deixis types, thereby determining the predominant deixis in Kamala Harris' speech at the American Federation of Teachers' 88th National Convention.

III. Findings and Discussion

The study aims to discern the various deixis types employed in Kamala Harris' address at the American Federation of Teachers' 88th National Convention and to explicate their contextual meanings. The study delineates five deixis types: personal deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Upon gathering utterances containing these deixis types, the researcher identified 329 utterances in Harris' speech. These findings are concisely presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1. The Frequency of Deixis in Kamala Harris's remarks at AFT

No.	Types of Deixis	Number of Data	Percentages (%)
1.	Person	282	85.71%
2.	Place	6	1.83%
3.	Time	15	4.56%
4.	Social	8	2.43%
5.	Discourse	18	5.47%
	Total	329	100%

In the study, the analysis revealed the following percentages of deixis types for each classification: 282 data of person deixis (85.71%), 6 data of place deixis (1.83%), 15 data of time deixis (4.56%), 18 data of discourse deixis (5.47%), and 8 data of social deixis (2.43%). Kamala Harris predominantly uses person deixis in her speeches, possibly to refer to individuals or things in the context or situation in which the expression is uttered. The following details the number of each example of person deixis: You (62 times), We (44 times), I (40 times), Our (35 times), It (22 times), Me (13 times), She (11 times), Her (9 times), He (8 times), His (7 times), My (6 times), Their (5 times), Your (5 times), Ours (2 times), Us (2 times), Yourself (1 times), Them (1 times), and Themselves (1 times).

Person Deixis

In the field of linguistics, persona deixis pertains to how language represents the roles of different participants in a conversation. This encompasses how the speaker refers to themselves (first person), how they address the listener or listeners (second person), and how they mention other individuals or objects not directly involved in the conversation (third person). This representation of participant roles is a crucial element of language and communication (Levinson, 1983).

(1) And **I** want to begin by saying a few words about **our** president, Joe Biden. **You** know, Right? Yeah. Yeah. So, last night, **our** president addressed the nation. And **he** showed, once again, what true leadership looks like. **He** really did. **His** words were poignant.

During her address at the 88th National Convention of the American Federation of Teachers, Kamala Harris articulated her perspective on Joe Biden's leadership as President of the United States, emphasizing his unwavering commitment to the nation's welfare. The first dataset identifies "I" as the first-person subject pronoun. Its role as a subject means "I" represents both the speaker and the source of the statement. This is also shown as (+S), indicating first-person and speaker inclusion. "I" refers to Kamala Harris, who wants to start her remarks by talking about the leadership of Joe Biden. The speaker uses the possessive adjective "our" in "our president" to demonstrate ownership involving the audience or, in other words, to inclusively address "we." In the speech above, "you" is used in the phrase "you know, right?" as a second-person plural subject pronoun. "You" refers to the teachers who are members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Based on the pronominal system, it is necessary to note that the use of the pronoun "you" in the text denotes the second person, specifically including the addressee (+A). In the context of this speech, it is important to recognize the key participants: Kamala Harris as the speaker, and the AFT member teachers as the addressees. The text also emphasizes the usage of the pronouns "He" and "His" in data 1. "He" is a third-person singular subject pronoun, and "His" is a possessive adjective pronoun indicating ownership by a man (He). The pronoun "He" refers to Joe Biden in the data. As previously stated, the pronoun "He" is a third person singular and does not refer to the speaker or the source of the statement, nor does it involve an addressee. It is represented by (-S, -A). In pragmatics, deixis is closely

associated with reference, and the pronoun "He" falls into the category of an anaphora reference because it refers back to something mentioned earlier. Similarly, the pronoun "His" denotes ownership by Joe Biden, particularly in the context of "his words".

> (2) Tonya was first in **her** family to go to college. And **she** had been, like many, paying off **her** student loans for 20 years.

During her speech, Kamala Harris shared the inspiring story of Tonya Cabeza, a teacher she met in Philadelphia. Tonya, who was the first in her family to attend college, relied on student loans to support herself for two decades. It found that the use "her" and "she" in utterances above. "She" is a third-person singular subject pronoun, and "Her" is a possessive adjective pronoun indicating ownership by a woman (She). The pronoun "She" refers to Tonya in the data. As previously stated, the pronoun "She" is a third person singular and does not refer to the speaker or the source of the statement, nor does it involve an addressee. It is represented by (-S, -A). In pragmatics, deixis is closely associated with reference, and the pronoun "She" falls into the category of an anaphora reference because it refers back to something mentioned earlier. Similarly, the pronoun "her" denotes ownership by Tonya, particularly in the context of "her student loans".

> (3) So, here's the thing: It pains **me** so to think 20 years later that there are some young teachers in their 20s who are afraid to put up a photograph of **themselves** and their partner for fear **they** could lose their job.

In her address, Kamala Harris voiced her unwavering support for all US citizens, including members of the LGBTQ+ community who face animosity and physical assaults from extremists. Drawing on her personal experiences, Harris recounted her involvement as an officiant in conducting same-sex marriages back in 2004. Harris expressed deep concern for the possibility that, even two decades later, young teachers in their twenties might refrain from publicly sharing photos of themselves with their partners for fear of jeopardizing their employment due to their sexual orientation. The pronoun "me" performs a grammatical role as an objective personal pronoun in the phrase "it hurts me." "me" refers to Kamala Harris herself. In this context, it exemplifies a shift from the subjective "I feel pain" to the objective "it hurts me," demonstrating a characteristic of deixis in pragmatics known as indexicality. Indexicality is a linguistic phenomenon wherein the reference of an expression can vary according to the context, as seen in the transition from "I feel pain" to "it hurts me" due to a change in the pronoun's function. In the utterances above also found "they" and "themselves" use. "They" refers to some young teachers and "themselves" refers to some young teachers and their partners. Those are anaphoric.

Time deixis

Time deixis is concerned with encoding temporal points and time spans relative to the time an utterance is uttered (or a written message is transmitted).

(4) And he intends to end the Affordable Care Act. **Now**, think about that — to take us back to a time when insurance companies had the power to deny people with preexisting conditions. Remember what that was like?

In her speech, Kamala Harris said she already knew about Presidential Candidate Trump's 2025 agenda. She said Project 2025 was returning America to its dark past. One of the agendas of Project 2025 is to stop The Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act is a comprehensive health insurance reform that includes tax provisions affecting individuals, families, businesses, insurers, tax-exempt organizations, and government entities. In the past, insurance companies had the authority to reject people with pre-existing conditions such as asthma, breast cancer, and diabetes, which were mentioned in her speech. She asked the audience to think again whether they were ready to experience that again. "Now" in the utterance above is included in time deixis. When the speaker utters the phrase (or Coding Time), "now" is being utilized. "now" refers to present moment. Analyzing the difference in tenses, the present tense is used alongside the adverbial of time "now", which is a deictic expression. In contrast, the past tense is incorporated in the phrase "when insurance companies had the power..."

(5) So, **last night**, our president addressed the nation. And he showed, once again, what true leadership looks like. He really did. His — his words were poignant.

During her address, Kamala Harris referenced President Joe Biden of the United States, praising his recent speech as a display of genuine leadership through words and actions. She highlighted Biden's ability to connect with the public, portraying him as a true leader. "Last night" in the utterance above is included in time deixis. Time deixis is concerned with encoding temporal points and time spans relative to the time an utterance is uttered (or a written message is transmitted). The term "last night" constitutes a noun phrase in grammatical terms, comprising a determiner and a noun. Based on the use of past tense and the inclusion of the deictic expression "last night," it can be inferred that the phrase "last night" denotes a time deixis indicating an activity that took place prior to the utterance. This use of past tense and specific time deixis establishes the timeframe of the referenced activity as preceding the current moment of speaking.

Place deixis

Place deixis refers to the linguistic encoding of spatial locations in relation to the participants involved in the speech event.

(6) You may not be in a union member, but you should thank unions — and I'm looking to the cameras in the **back** of the room. not them, but the people who might be watching.

In her speech, Kamala Harris emphasized that she and President Joe Biden are dedicated to enacting the PRO Act. They believe that when workers unite and advocate for fairness,

everyone stands to benefit. Harris underscored the importance of unions, pointing out that members of the union from the middle class can advocate for the rights of non-union members and contribute to strengthening America. Additionally, the expression "back" in "the back of the room" denotes the orientation of the place as being at the rear of the room.

(7) Thank you all. It's so wonderful to be back with everyone **here**

The opening of Kamala Harris' speech in front of educators and union members was warmly welcomed with enthusiastic cheers. From her statement "it's so wonderful to be back here," we can conclude that it was not the first time Kamala Harris gave a speech at the event. The word "here" functions as a deictic adverb that represents a pragmatically assigned space, including the speaker's location at encoding time during speech. Its usage in speech reflects the proximal dimension.

Social Deixis

Social deixis encompasses the encoding of social distinctions in relation to participant roles, particularly within the social dynamic between the speaker, addressee(s), or other referents.

(8) And I — I want to begin by saying a few words about our **president**, Joe Biden.

After receiving a warm welcome from educators and union members, Kamala Harris thanked the the President of AFT named Randi (or Randi Weingarten) for her work in assisting the President and herself as an advisor. The communication that was established was smooth, akin to a friendship. Following that, Kamala Harris opened her speech by speaking about US President Joe Biden, whom she described as a true leader, demonstrating tangible work and delivering impactful words.. Kamala Harris does not use honorifics in the utterances mentioned earlier, but she does use the title "President" when referring to Joe Biden.

(9) And as you may know, I am a proud product of public education. Many of you know that my first grade teacher, **Mrs.** Frances Wilson, God rest her soul, taught me and educated me and encouraged me and inspired me.

Kamala Harris expressed her gratitude to the AFT members for their dedicated work in educating children and fostering a healthy educational environment. She also thanked the AFT for being the first union to support her. Harris shared that she was proud as the product of public education and expressed her appreciation for the education and guidance she received from Mrs. Wilson, her first grade teacher. Social deixis denotes the linguistic features that convey social distinctions pertinent to the roles of interlocutors, particularly in relation to the social rapport between the speaker and the addressee or a specific individual being mentioned. For example, Kamala Harris employs the honorific "Mrs." when addressing her teacher, Frances Wilson.

Discourse Deixis

Discourse deixis involves the linguistic strategy used to refer to specific segments of the evolving conversation within the immediate context of the utterance, encompassing the text-referencing expression. This process contributes to the way speakers establish and maintain coherence and reference within the discourse.

(10) I'm sure, have seen their agenda: Project 2025. Randi, can you believe they put **that** thing in writing? Nine hundred pages in writing. So, Project 2025 is a plan to return America to a dark past. Donald Trump and his extreme allies want to take our nation back to failed trickle-down economic policies…

In her speech, Kamala Harris mentioned that the struggle of US citizens to get an education cannot be separated from the student loans they take. This is certainly difficult because the loan is taken for more than 10 years and certainly affects the borrower's life after graduating from education. With this union represents members who are also educators to convey their aspirations to the president so that the student loan for 20 years has been forgiven. According to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, who are the US president and vice president, they can help citizens live better lives in the future. After that, Kamala Harris said that her opponent in the presidential contest, Donald Trump, had the opposite plan that would make US development regress. Harris was sure because she had read Trump's 2025 project agenda; the plan is considered to return America to a dark past. The use of the deictic expression "that" in the utterance above refers to Trump's 2025 project agenda. The use of the phrase "that thing" implicitly means that there is something unnatural in the project. This is emphasized by the utterance after it, namely "a plan to return America to a dark past".

(11) Teachers like Tonya Cabeza, who I met recently in Philadelphia… And she told me — she was like, "Look, I — I at many times wondered: Would I have to leave **this** profession I love to just be able to pay my bills?

In her speech, Kamala Harris mentioned that the struggle of US citizens to get an education cannot be separated from the student loans they take. This is certainly difficult because the loan is taken for more than 10 years and certainly affects the borrower's life after graduating from education. Tonya Cabeza, whom Harris met in Philadelphia, was one of the individuals she encountered. Despite graduating from his education, Tonya still found himself burdened with student loans and had to work to pay them off. In their conversation, Tonya confided in Harris that she frequently pondered leaving her beloved job to manage her debts and living costs, as her income from his current job was not substantial. The term "this" in the expression "this profession" specifically pertains to Tonya Cabeza's role as a teacher. Its usage carries a positive connotation, portraying the profession as "a profession that I love."

IV. Conclusion

The analysis of Kamala Harris' speech at the 88th National Convention of the American Federation of Teachers revealed the presence of various types of deixis. Person deixis accounted for the highest percentage, with 282 instances (85.71%), followed by place deixis with 6 instances (1.83%), time deixis with 15 instances (4.56%), discourse deixis with 18 instances (5.47%), and social deixis with 8 instances (2.43%). In total, 329 instances of deixis were identified. The most frequently occurring type of deixis was person deixis, with the deictic expression "You" appearing 62 times

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