

Review Article

Analysis of Pragmatic Force of Deixis in the Dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*Hongping Chen¹, Yameng Zheng^{2*}¹ Professor in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China² Postgraduate Student in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the pragmatic force of deixis in the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, J. 2015). Deixis has received much attention from semantics and pragmatics. However, most previous researches on deixis center on the studies of person deixis, translation of deixis and psychological distance reflected by them. Studies on time and social deixis in literary works are far from sufficient. Meanwhile, few studies have studied deixis in *Pride and Prejudice*. Therefore, this paper chose the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice* as research object and analyzed the pragmatic force of four most used kinds of deixis in this novel: person deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis. The study found that the person deixis such as “our” in this novel expresses the addressor’s intimacy with the addressee while deixis like “my”, “your”, “well”, past tense and subjunctive mood shows the addressor’s alienation or discontentment. This study is to offer some insights into the comprehension and translation of the above deixis in the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Keywords: *Pride and Prejudice*, person deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, social deixis, pragmatic force.

INTRODUCTION

There are altogether five kinds of deixis (Fillmore, C. D. 1971). As one of the basic topics of pragmatic research, deixis has also received attention from semantics and psychological linguistics (Zeng, W. X. 2009). The choice of deixis depends on the speaker’s psychology and thus the comprehension of deixis, according to Ran Yongping (2012), needs to rely on fully understanding the context (Ran, Y. P. 2012).

Most previous researches on deixis stressed only person deixis in advertisements, academic and literary texts as well as the translation of deixis and psychological distance reflected by deixis. For instance, Zhu (2003) conducted a research on the explanation of psychological distance reflected by deixis (Zhu, L. F. 2003). Besides, Yang (2015) has analyzed the thematic meaning of *Cat in the Rain* from the perspective of person deixis (Yang, H. M. 2015). Nonetheless, few studies have analyzed other deixis such as time and social deixis in literary works. Meanwhile, most studies on *Pride and Prejudice* focused on its marriage philosophy, characters analysis and translation. Although Lin (2018) has analyzed person deixis switch in the conversations in *Pride and Prejudice* (Lin, S. Q.

2018), this study didn’t analyze other four kinds of deixis in this novel.

Thus this study aims to analyze four most used kinds of deixis in the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice* so as to explore the pragmatic force (Chen, L. 2001) of utilizing the above deixis. The analysis of deixis can help us better understand this literary work and provide some enlightenment for the comprehension and translation of deixis in the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice* and future studies on deixis in other literary works.

Theoretical Framework

Generally speaking, deixis can be divided into two types--proximal terms and distal terms (Zeng, W. X. 2009). Proximal terms are those such as this, we and our while distal terms refer to those such as that, your and their. More specifically, deixis can also be divided into five categories according to its referential nature. On this basis, this paper mainly focuses on four kinds of deixis in the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*.

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2.1 Person deixis

Person deixis consists of three categories: the first person deixis like I and our, the second person deixis such as you and your, and the third person deixis including he, she and it. In a given context, the specific choice of person deixis indicates the speaker's attitude and emotion as well as his/her relationship with other participants concerned. Generally speaking, the first person deixis shows much more intimacy than second person deixis. For instance, teachers tend to utilize "we" much more frequently than "you" in the class so as to shorten the psychological distance from the students.

2.2 Time deixis

Time deixis represents the position of the timeline of the reference point. The most common used time deixis is "now", "then" and "today". In addition, different tenses also belong to time deixis. Past tense, for example, indicates the alienation from the present. Similarly, subjunctive mood is also used as time deixis to express something that is not wished nor expected.

2.3 Discourse deixis

There is no agreed definition of discourse deixis. In the narrow sense, discourse deixis includes those such as "this", "that" which refer to other constituents in a sentence. In a broader sense, those that can link the passage such as "this", "therefore", "well" are discourse deixis (Chen, L. 2001). This paper treats discourse deixis in the broader sense as it is more inclusive and more practical.

2.4 Social deixis

Social deixis, simply speaking, reflects the social status and relationships of participants concerned. Compared with other types of deixis, social deixis is better at expressing the inward emotions of addressors. Social deixis consists of address terms and terms showing self-deprecation or respect for others. For example, addressing a girl as "Miss X", rather than call her name directly, shows the speaker's respect and affection for the addressee and vice versa.

Analysis of Pragmatic force of Deixis in the Dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*

This paper chooses the dialogues between characters in *Pride and Prejudice* to analyze the underlying reasons and pragmatic force of the four kinds of deixis.

3.1 Analysis of person deixis

The choice of person deixis expresses the speakers' attitude and emotion as well as their relationships with other participants in the conversations. For example,

① Mrs. Bennet: "A single man of large fortune;...What a fine thing for **our** girls!"

② Mrs. Bennet: "But consider **your** daughters."

③ Mr. Bennet: "...though I must throw in a good word for **my** little Lizzy."

④ Lydia: "**My** aunt Philips wants you so to get husbands, you can't think."

The conversations ① and ② occurs in the chapter one when Mr. Bingley becomes a new neighborhood of the Bennets and Mrs. Bennet fails to persuade her husband to pay visit to the wealthy man. The shift from "our" to "your" represents the psychological change of Mrs. Bennet. At the beginning, Mrs. Bennet uses the person deixis "our" to expresses her intimacy towards Mr. Bennet. In this way, Mrs. Bennet attempts to better persuade her husband to seize the chance to know the wealthy man. However, when Mrs. Bennet's attempt is in vain, Mrs. Bennet becomes angry with Mr. Bennet and thus she uses "your" to broaden her distance from Mr. Bennet and express her dissatisfaction. As for example ③ in the chapter one, Mr. Bennet uses "**my** little Lizzy", instead of "**our** little Lizzy" when talking with his wife. The abnormal use of "my" expresses his alienation from Mrs. Bennet and his special affection towards Elizabeth. Similarly, Lydia uses "my" in Chapter 39 to show her alienation from and contempt for her sisters.

Judging from the above examples, the pragmatic force of "our" in *Pride and Prejudice* is to shorten the distance and show intimacy while "my" and "your" is to express alienation and distance. The proper translation approach for such person deixis is literal translation.

3.2 Analysis of time deixis

As mentioned in the send part, in addition to normal time deixis such as "now" and "today", different tenses and subjunctive mood are also included in time deixis. Looking at the following example:

⑤ "that I **might have prevented** it!—I who **knew** what he was. **Had** I but explained some part of it only... **Had** his character been known, this **could not have happened**. But it is all, all too late **now**."

This short monologue of Elizabeth in the chapter 46 includes four types of time deixis: term "now", subjunctive mood, present and past tense. The time deixis "might have prevented" and "had" show the reality that Lydia has eloped with Wickham is barely expected nor wished by Elizabeth. In this way, these deixis show how regretful Elizabeth is when she knows the tragedy would be avoided if she had told her family what an indecent man Wickham is. Furthermore, time deixis "now" stresses that the reality is beyond redemption. That is to say, the pragmatic force of the time deixis above is to express Elizabeth's deep regret and self-accusation. When translating such dialogues, the translators are expected to pay attention to such time

deixis to fully understand the original text and better their translation.

3.3 Analysis of discourse deixis

Deixis such as “this”, “therefore”, “well” are called discourse deixis. In chapter 40, Mrs. Bennet recognizes that it is hopeless to marry Jane to Bingley since Bingley has left Netherfield without a message. In the dialogues in chapter 40, the discourse deixis “well” is used nine times, seven of which express Mrs. Bennet’s deep disappointment. The use of discourse deixis “well” vividly depicts a woman who is unsatisfied with everything around her and she can do nothing but constantly complain and talk meanly. The intended meaning of “well” here is to express Mrs. Bennet’s disappointment and her complains for her daughters.

3.4 Analysis of social deixis

Compared with other types of deixis, social deixis expresses more explicitly speaker’s emotion and attitude. Address terms and terms showing self-deprecation and respect are included in social deixis. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Miss Bingley, who despises Elizabeth, addresses Elizabeth in different forms in this novel, which can show her attitude towards Elizabeth.

⑥ “**Miss Eliza Bennet**,” said Miss Bingley, “despises cards.” (chapter 8)

⑦ “**Miss Eliza Bennet**, let me persuade you to follow my example...” (chapter 11)

⑧ “Pray, **Miss Eliza**, are not the—shire militia removed from Meryton? They must be great loss to your family.” (chapter 45)

⑨ “**Eliza Bennet**,” said Miss Bingley, when the door was closed on her, “is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves the other sex by undervaluing their own” (chapter 8)

⑩ “How very ill **Eliza Bennet** looks this morning, Mr. Darcy,” she said. (chapter 45)

As demonstrated in the above examples, beside using “she” to refer to Elizabeth, Miss Bingley mainly addresses Elizabeth in three forms: Miss Eliza Bennet, Miss Eliza and Eliza Bennet. When Elizabeth is present, Miss Bingley may address her as “Miss X”. Once Elizabeth is absent, Miss Bingley will call her “Eliza Bennet” directly, which demonstrates that Miss Bingley despises Elizabeth due to Elizabeth’s lower social status and her family members’ misbehaviors. Moreover, Miss Bingley dislikes Elizabeth because she regards Elizabeth as a rival for Darcy, and that’s why even when Miss Bingley calls Elizabeth “Miss X”, she also tries to say something that may humiliate her, which is shown in case ⑥ and ⑧.

As another example, Mrs. Bennet has once called Elizabeth “Miss Lizzy” in chapter 20:

⑪ “But I tell you what, **Miss Lizzy**...you will never get a husband at all.”

Normally, Mrs. Bennet will call Elizabeth as Lizzy, the childhood name of Elizabeth. However, when Elizabeth disobeys her willingness to accept the Mr. Collins’s proposal, Mrs. Bennet is angry with Elizabeth and thus uses the address form “Miss Lizzy” to satirize Elizabeth and warns Elizabeth that she has overvalued herself.

In this regard, these social deixis are essential to express the addressor’s attitude and emotion and the translators need paying attention to them when translating the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*.

CONCLUSION

This paper has analyzed the underlying reasons and pragmatic force of four most used kinds of deixis in the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*: person deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis. This study proves that speakers utilize these deixis to express his/her emotion and attitude towards listeners or the subject that he/she is talking about. The pragmatic force of first person deixis, present tense and social deixis such as “Miss X” is to express intimacy, affection and respect while the pragmatic force of second and third person deixis, past tense and subjunctive mood is to show addressors’ alienation and discontentment. Through fully understanding the pragmatic force four kinds of deixis in the dialogues of *Pride and Prejudice*, readers can better comprehend this novel and translators may take advantages of the analysis to improve their translation. Nonetheless, there are also some limitations in this study. This study only adopts qualitative approach and not includes all the deixis. Thus the further studies are supposed to utilize quantitative approach and conduct a more thorough analysis.

All in all, this research fill the gap that there is few researches on the pragmatic force of four deixis in the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*. This study may offer insights into the comprehension and translation of dialogues with four kinds of deixis in *Prides and Prejudice* as well as insights into further analysis of deixis in other literary works.

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