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## An Examination of Deictic Terms in Tehmina's *My Feudal Lord*

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### Abstract

By applying Levinson's theoretical framework to the complicated domain of deictic phrases, this study examined and interpreted Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*. The main linguistic component that serves as an anchor for conversation in specific spatiotemporal and social contexts is the deictic marker, which was the subject of this investigation. Knowing the different roles and effects of deictic markers in the novel's narrative setting was the goal of the study. The pragmatic principles governing the use of deictic phrases in communication were clarified by this study's close-textual analysis-based qualitative methodology, which drew on Levinson's pragmatic theory. The purpose of the study was to examine how character relationships, narrative viewpoint, and sociocultural nuances in the text are affected by deictic pronouns, demonstratives, temporal adverbs, and spatial expressions. The quantitative research looked at whether deictic phrases were used most and least frequently in the work. This investigation's fundamental idea was to apply Levinson's framework for interpretation to make sense of the practical implications of deictic utterances in "My Feudal Lord." This study thoroughly examined how deictic indicators interact with verbal acts, communicative implicatures, and beliefs to uncover the text's hidden meanings and its resonance in the socio-political context of modern-day Pakistan. Furthermore, the study underscored the significance of utilizing Levinson's theoretical framework as a lens through which to perceive the author's narrative strategies and situated the analysis within the broader context of text interpretation and literary discourse. In the end, this study offered a thorough examination of the deictic phrases in "My Feudal Lord," improving our understanding of the pragmatic elements of language usage in literary works.

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### Keywords:

*My Feudal Lord*,  
Tehmina Durrani,  
Deictic markers,  
Levinson,

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### Introduction

The primary means of communication in society is language, which enables us to share our thoughts and opinions with others. Communication is a vital mechanism that occurs all around us (Reputri, 2020). Asmarita and Haryudin (2019) assert that language is a distinctive characteristic of humans that they employ in nearly every aspect of their lives, including thinking, talking, and bargaining. The reference words used in deictic expressions indicate the identity of the speaker, the time and place of the remark, and the nature of the conversation (Yulistiani & Parmavati, 2020). Deixis is a pointing expression to locate anything in the context, according to this interpretation. Identifying words and phrases by placing them in their context allows one to comprehend their meaning (Abidin, 2019).

According to Levinson (1983), deixis is concerned with the contingent, intentional, subjective, and attentional aspects of language use. According to Dawood (2019), Deixis is a tool that uses contextual signals to help people relate words to reality. The meaning of a statement and our meaning when we employ it are connected by indexical references (Levinson, 1983). Deixis, which locates everything in the context, is a result of the encoding of speech (Yulistiani, Parmavati, 2020). Understanding deixis facilitates comprehension of various speaking styles,

personalities, and cultural backgrounds (Ningsih, Megawati, 2022). The study uses an original approach to gather data and emphasizes patriarchy and women's oppression. This study will examine the deictic expressions employed in the book to see how well they tell the compelling story of the author's life. Tehmina Durrani has discussed the difficulties she faced as a feudal lord's wife and her experiences as a lead character. Feudalism, tribalism, politics, and customs are some of the institutions in Pakistan that have granted men many rights, making them more powerful and dominant over women (Akbar, 2023). Tehmina Durrani accurately depicts the historical oppression of South Asian women by men in her book "My Feudal Lord" (Zubair, et al., 2018).

Numerous customs in our nation provide men the freedom to do as they like while also granting them sufficient rights, including the ability to speak for themselves (Akbar, 2023). Because it challenges patriarchy, this work continues to draw criticism from conventional men for its audacity (Hassan, et al., 2021). Although My Feudal Lord has been subjected to several analyses, there is still a vacuum in our understanding of the novel's deictic expressions. Deictic expressions provide a clear image of the writing's characterization and context; hence it is important to examine them.

In situations when it can be challenging for the audience or addressee to comprehend the speaker's intended audience, deictic statements supply the necessary context (Nurhikmah, 2012). For the addressee to comprehend references to who, whom, when, social, and discourse contexts, deixis is crucial (Khauliza, 2021). Deixis indicates things and, as a result, offers sources that prompt the addressee or reader to consider these pointing phrases (Naziroh, 2021). They make the conversation more conscious by revealing its underlying concepts (Naziroh, 2021). It is crucial to examine the many forms of deixis throughout the book in light of these considerations.

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. In Temina Durrani's book My Feudal Lord, which deixis is employed, and for what purpose?
2. Which deixis type appears most frequently in the narrative and how often does each one occur?

### **Literature Review**

The study of pragmatics examines how a language's semiotic properties, context, and semantic meaning relate to one another (Levinson, 1983). For the context of social contact to be understood, appropriately communicated deictic expressions are required. The speaker, the addressee, the location, and the time provide the contextual information (Levinson, 1983 as quoted by Stapleton, 2017). Fillmore (1966) asserts that these deictic phrases reveal details about the entities, their location, and their time with the speaker. These deictic expressions might be verbal or nonverbal actions. A deictic center is the location that participants are referring to, according to Fillmore (1971). Not only can it be an imagined location created by the author or narrator, but it can also be the speaker and addressee's actual home (Fillmore, 1971). To make communication easier, the deictic center is essential.

The second significant contribution to the field came from Lyons (1977) and Levinson (1983), who focused primarily on person, geographical, and temporal deixis. Lyons and Levinson have much to do with the deictic analysis in linguistics. They have emphasized the knowledge of many deixis kinds and how these kinds might be applied in various contexts. Three different sorts of deixis were listed by Lyons (1977) in his "Semantics. Volume 2": person, spatial, and temporal deixis. This marked progress in the subject of deixis and paved the way for more studies of similar kinds. He initiated the trend of researching father requirements, which is now a hot topic in deixis. However, Levinson emphasized the significance of context in connection to grammatical features and the function pragmatics plays in comprehending meanings that go beyond words and phrases in his 1983 book "Pragmatics" and his 1987 book "Pragmatics and Social Semiotics."

The deictic shift was discussed by Stephen C. Levinson in "Pragmatics and Social Semiotics" (1987) and by Cohn in "Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction" (2007). According to Levinson's perspective, deictic expressions are related to the social roles of those having the discourse. For instance, the first-person narrative frequently switches to the second person, which highlights the idea of the deictic shift. Cohn (2007) says that the deictic change allows the narration's characterisation to grow. Presenting the thoughts of each character is convenient.

Deictic phrases are used in these verbal and nonverbal conversations, in part because of Kendon (2004) and Enfield (2009). Kendon examined the importance of gestures used in communication in his paper "Gestures: Visible actions as utterances," which was published in *Language and Gestures* (2004). He asserts that gestures are a means of communication in and of themselves, not only as communication facilitators. As an essential component of multimodal communication, he links gestures to deictic expressions. The study "The anatomy of meaning: speech, gestures, and composite utterances" by Enfield, published in *Language in Society* (2009), makes the case that gestures and speech have a relationship and are almost equally useful in helping people understand utterances. He states that the primary method for gaining an understanding of the spoken language's context is through deictic gestures.

The application of deixis in the realm of pragmatics and its relationship to politeness and social changes have been investigated by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their work "Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage". They claim that deixis is a technique for controlling the social roles that attendees of a speech event play. Özyürek et al. (2010) made contributions to the field of deixis by explaining their importance in the context of shifting cultural norms and offering specific advice on how to utilize other words in conjunction with deixis to effectively transmit meaning. To communicate the meaning of words, he also researched the relationship between deixis and nonverbal cues.

In addition to deixis, Talmy (2000) gave an overview of language phenomena in his work "Towards a Cognitive Semantics". Through the prism of deictic phrases, he saw the cognitive processes. In their research on the processing of audiovisual speech in human minds, Hasson et al. (2012) observed how this cerebral mechanism functions to process deictic expressions. Gumperz's (1982) "Discourse Strategies" explores the intricacies of heterogeneous cultures and sociolinguistic disparities. He conducted a thorough examination of cross-cultural communication and differing cultural norms to better comprehend the social context and shifting cultures.

People deixis is the most prevalent sort of deixis in political speeches, according to Dawood's (2019) analysis of politician speeches. This indicates that people are the referents that politicians utilise most frequently in their talks. Primitive deixis, which comprises here, this, now, and so forth, is particularly prevalent in Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*. All deixis kinds are employed to allude to or hint towards items in the context, facilitating readers' comprehension of the play (Basima, n.d). Using *My Feudal Lord* as a case study, Akbar (2023) examined how women are utilised in society as a means of exploitation.

### Research Methodology

As per Levinson (1983, p. 54), the term "deixis" originates from a Greek word and is employed to indicate or emphasise specific grammatical elements of a speech in a particular context. Five categories of deixis were recognised by Levinson (1983), and these include: Language-wise, the term "person deixis" refers to the categories of people, and it contains pronouns that designate the speaker, hearer, and other relevant things in the discourse. It is divided into three parts: first person (I, me, etc.), second person (you, your, yours), and third person (she, they, etc.). (2) Time deixis, which can be utilised to characterise the points in time as well as the speech-generating event itself. For instance, today, yesterday, and so forth. (3) The naming of particular sites for speech event points is referred to as "place deixis". For instance, this location, the school, etc. (4) The components of speech occurrences that are influenced by a specific social status reality are described by social deixis. As an illustration: Sir, Professor, etc. The final idea is discourse deixis, which is the use of expressions to a section of the discourse within an utterance. The researchers conducted the investigation using this theoretical framework.

Tehmina Durrani's novel *"My Feudal Lord"* had the deictic expression, and the book was an invaluable source of information for conducting a thorough analysis of the material. Primary data are firsthand accounts of information that researchers originally collected for the study (Bailey, 1994). The initial stage in almost all substantial planning and evaluation processes is a literature study. This helps avoid mistakes being committed again and enables plans to build on previous accomplishments (Secondary Data Sources, Intrac, 2017). Simply expressed, secondary data refers to any dataset that was not gathered by the author or any analysis of data that was gathered by a different source (Boslaugh, 2007).

The analysis was enhanced by secondary data sources, which provided a more thorough contextual lens. To elucidate and scrutinise the elements of a recorded or visual message, scholars of communication utilise textual analysis. Characterising messages in texts in terms of their functions, substance, and structure is the goal of textual analysis. In textual analysis, selecting the types of texts to be studied, discovering pertinent texts, and determining the particular approach to utilise to analyse them are all critical steps (Kreps, et. al., 1999). The researcher found it simple to identify and categorise deictic expressions, such as demonstratives, pronouns, and other linguistic cues, by closely examining the novel's text. Through meticulous analysis of the text, the researcher extracted nuanced information on the power relationships among the individuals, their networks, and the social structures that pervaded the feudal environment.

### Data Analysis

Studying the deictic phrases in *My Feudal Lord* provides an engaging exploration of the intricate connections between identity, power, and social structures. Deictic expressions are crucial linguistic constructs that link language to the speaker's and the situation's context, aiding the reader in understanding the characters and their interactions. Through a close examination of their usage, this discussion chapter aims to reveal the many levels of meaning and relevance that these phrases contribute to the book's portrayal of the relationships between individuals, cultural norms,

and the socio-political context. By closely examining a few selected portions, this analysis seeks to reveal how deictic expressions work as a tool for negotiating power and expressing beliefs.

The research that has already been discussed in the literature review is further cited in this chapter. In "My Feudal Lord," Tehmina Durrani's book, deictic phrases play a critical role in understanding character perspectives and shaping the storyline. Deixis is a phenomenon in language that refers to words whose meaning changes depending on context, and it is used frequently throughout the book. Discussion and person, the two most prevalent forms of deixis, are the focus of this conversation's investigation of deictic expressions. Throughout the utterances, the researcher has identified all five categories of deictic phrases. Drawing the reader in and enhancing their comprehension of the subject matter, the novel's narrative deftly employs a variety of deictic terms. Throughout the novel, deictic terms like "I," "you," "he," "she," and "they" are utilised to dynamically alter character perspectives and interpersonal interactions, offering an insight into the characters' innermost feelings. Person deixis is the most prevalent type of deixis in "My Feudal Lord," along with pronouns and other language cues identifying discourse participants. Personal pronouns such as "I," "you," and "he/she" enable the plot to be intricately constructed around the relationships of power and connections among the characters. These pronouns not only identify specific individuals but also the social structures and hierarchical relationships shown in the novel. The protagonist, for instance, demonstrates how she has grown to comprehend both her own autonomy in the association and her husband's power by varying the pronouns she uses to refer to him. By skillfully manipulating the way pronouns are employed to show the complex dynamics of dominance and submission, Durrani illustrates the characters' struggle for autonomy in a patriarchal setting. The author's skilful use of person deixis also contributes to the suspense of the story and character development. Therefore, person deixis serves as a linguistic tool for character relationships and power dynamics, which improves the reader's understanding of the novel's concerns. Stapleton (2017) cited Levinson as saying that the person deixis is significant because the speaker, addressee, and situation all depend on one another.

Deictic terms are used in the narrative to connect concepts and thoughts to various characters. The method of data analysis used by Emad Khalili in the paper "Deixis Analysis in *A Tale of Two Cities* written by Charles Dickens" is the same one used by the researchers in this study. Using the same Levinson's methodology, the author of this article examined the text of *A Tale of Two Cities* and discovered that all five categories of deictic expressions were present. Words such as "now," "then," "today," "immediately," "tonight," and "later" are examples of temporal deictics. They serve as significant turning points in the narrative, anchoring events in the book's constantly shifting chronology. They acted as markers to guide readers through the temporal maze, giving them a sense of the movement and context of time.

Narrative points and character experiences gained depth with each application infused them with a sense of urgency or introspection. Their clever use of the past, present, and future to create a seamless, masterful narrative brought the scenario to life. In order to contrast two different time periods in his discourse, PNoY employed time expressions and temporal adverbs, which is another crucial deictic feature that explains the meaning and effect of the text (Edward Jay Mansarate Quinto, 2002). Spatial deictics, which serve as navigational cues within the tale landscape, facilitate readers' navigation of the intricate web of real places and circumstances. "Here" immerses the reader in the local environment while beckoning them to experience the story's present moment.

"There" calls towards distant regions with a hint of the allure of the unknown. The author produced an intricately detailed scenario that compelled readers to investigate every inch of the narrative world by integrating various spatial deictics. Spatial deixis shows the location in relation to the speaker in space. We found that the deictic term *Pas*, which appears in spatial deixis, refers to a situation in which Anak Krakatoa is not at risk of dying (Yulistiani, Parmavati, 2020). Fillmore (1966) defined the deictic centre as the location to which both the addressee and the speaker are referring.

Discourse deixis, or the language elements that provide a discourse coherence, appears to be less common in "My Feudal Lord." The book nevertheless follows a clear narrative framework, although it doesn't make frequent use of referencing terms or discourse markers. Unlike person deixis, which directly influences character interactions and narrative development, discourse deixis primarily affects discourse cohesion and organisation. The most popular nonverbal cues for communicating are these. Kendon (2004) asserts that nonverbal cues are crucial for referencing context.

One possible explanation for the novel's limited usage of discourse deixis could be the author's narrative style. In Durrani's work, character dialogue and descriptive passages take precedence over overt displays of discourse coherence. Instead, the narrative flow is maintained by the characters' interactions and the events taking place, which lessens the need for explicit conversation. Discourse deictics, such as "this," "that," "these," and "those," are crucial tools in the process of developing a book's discourse structure. They serve as linguistic markers in the narrative environment, guiding readers through the intricacies of many subjects, ideas, and dialogue passages. They devised a

coherent and coherent framework that facilitates reader comprehension by referencing particular sections of the discourse. By pointing out connections between ideas, characters, and plot points through subtle shifts in reference, these deictics enhance the reader's understanding and feeling of immersion in the narrative. They bind the fabric of storytelling, acting as, in essence, the invisible stitches that enhance its resonance and depth. Discourse deixis is discovered to be useful in aiding in the comprehension of the context in the Pragmatics Study on Deixis Analysis in Narrative Texts in A Textbook of SMP Nasima Semarang (Reputri, 2020). The clever use of these deictic phrases draws readers into the intricate network of characters, locations, and events, allowing them to actively engage with the plot.

### Qualitative Interpretations

*My Feudal Lord* teaches readers about the subtleties of gender roles, power dynamics, and Pakistani society through an intricate web of deictic expressions. Upon close examination of these deictic traits, numerous interpretations become clear. Particularly in light of the medieval culture, the novel's heavy usage of person deixis draws attention to the characters' hierarchical relationships. The contextual information that the deictic phrases give helps the listener understand the information being conveyed, according to Aikhenvald (2004).

The protagonist refers to her husband, the feudal lord, using pronouns that indicate her varying opinions about his authority. Initially, she might use deferential pronouns ("sir," "my lord") to convey his supremacy, but as the narrative progresses, she might start to question his authority by using more confrontational pronouns or even by avoiding direct address completely. This clever application of person deixis emphasises the protagonist's struggle for agency and autonomy in a patriarchal society. The maintenance of social norms and expectations is also greatly aided by gendered deictic statements. The novel may demonstrate how language perpetuates gender norms by assigning pronouns or styles of address to men and women based on perceived social status. For example, the protagonist may use honorifics or titles that imply both deference and subordination when speaking to male characters, but she may use friendlier or more intimate language when speaking to female characters.

The words "spatial deixis," which refer to words that denote geographical connections, might provide insight into the boundaries and social divisions that the book depicts. Physical space descriptions, like those of the feudal lord's expansive estate or the protagonist's humble cottage, can serve as markers of social status and power. When readers use spatial deixis to recognise the physical and social geography of the story, they may better understand how the characters move around and navigate their positions within this framework.

Temporal deixis, together with tension and temporal adverbs, informs the book's plot, organisation, and pacing. Tense or temporal marker changes might signal perspective switches, flashback scenes, or future events hinted at. Readers may unravel the temporal complexities of the narrative by studying temporal deixis, which shows how the characters' motivations and actions are shaped by past traumas or aspirations for the future. Through the use of cultural deixis, which comprises linguistic indicators specific to a given culture or community, one can better understand the growth of identity and attachment to culture. To show that a character belongs to a particular social group or set of beliefs, one can utilise dialects, honorifics, and religious allusions. Cultural deixis provides readers with additional information about the characters' cultural backgrounds and the social contexts that shape their identities.

### Quantitative Percentages

Person Deixis (77.7%)

Social Deixis (8.7%)

Time Deixis (4.7%)

Place Deixis (4.5%)

Discourse Deixis (4.2%)

### Conclusion

Primarily, the findings of this study emphasise the significance of person deixis in the narrative framework of *My Feudal Lord*. Person deixis is the most prevalent type of deictic expression, and it has an impact on the power dynamics, character interactions, and thematic development of the book. Furthermore, the analysis has shown how deixis—both spatial and temporal—is subtly applied to differentiate the narrative's temporal and physical elements. The descriptions of real locations and historical markers, which are essential elements in creating setting, atmosphere, and narrative pace, improve the text's overall coherence and richness. Interpersonal relationships are still essential to moving the plot ahead, even though person deixis is more important than geographical and temporal deixis in creating the narrative world.

On the other hand, the discourse deixis found in the book seems to be the least common type of deictic expression. While discourse markers and referring phrases are present in deixis, their frequency and significance are lower than in other forms of the language. Despite maintaining a coherent narrative structure, this research suggests that the novel's explicit use of discourse deixis may not be as obvious or prominent as other language features. The

author employed discourse deixis as a stylistic device to highlight specific narrative aspects, not to compromise the overall coherence or impact of the text.

Using Levinson's deictic expression model to analyse *My Feudal Lord* has helped readers gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language, power dynamics, and narrative structure in the work. This study has provided a nuanced understanding of the ways that language markers affect character interactions, theme progression, and narrative coherence through a thorough analysis of the usage of deictic characteristics. Further research may explore the implications of these findings for the larger area of language and literature studies, offering further understanding of the intricate ways in which language acts in literary works.

By following these recommendations, academics can advance their understanding of the purpose of deictic phrases in *My Feudal Lord* and contribute to the greater discussion on language, literature, and culture.

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