

**DEITIC SHIFTS: A SEMANTIC STUDY ON NARRATIVE TEXT BY STUDENTS  
THIRD SEMESTER IN UNIVERSITY HKBP NOMMENSEN PEMATANGSIANTAR**

**Raysha Zahra Harahap<sup>1</sup>, Bernieke Anggita Ristia Damanik<sup>2</sup>**

[rayshazahrahrp@gmail.com](mailto:rayshazahrahrp@gmail.com), [bernieke.damanik@uhn.ac.id](mailto:bernieke.damanik@uhn.ac.id)

English Department, University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Indonesia

**Abstract**

This study examines the phenomenon of deictic shifts in story narratives written by students at University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. Deixis is a linguistic element that refers to the situational context in communication, including time, place, and personal references. Deixis shifts often occur when speakers switch from one narrative perspective to another. The research method used is descriptive qualitative analysis with a semantic approach to 15 narrative texts from 3rd semester students in University of HKBP Nommensen. The results show that personal deictic elements are the most dominant type, accounting for 56.09% of the total, followed by spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deictic elements. However, most of the texts exhibit shifts in deictic elements, particularly in the personal, temporal, and spatial categories—without adequate transitions, thereby disrupting the cohesion and coherence of the narrative texts. These findings indicate that a deeper understanding of context in narrative writing is still needed.

Keyword: Semantic, deixis, shift, narrative

**INTRODUCTION**

Language is the main tool in communication that allows a person to convey thoughts, ideas, and feelings through symbols that have been socially agreed upon. In practice, words arranged systematically according to grammar rules will form sentences that have meaning in the context of a particular society or community. On the other hand, development can be understood as a gradual process towards a higher level of maturity or progress. In the context of learning, understanding language development is very important so that learners are able to communicate effectively and understand the intentions and feelings of both themselves and others. Good language skills cannot be separated from learners' cognitive development. This is because thinking and language are two interrelated aspects of the communication process. Communication itself involves the exchange of ideas and emotions, so to communicate effectively, a learner needs to use language that is not only appropriate to the context, but also

understandable to the other person. Conversely, they also need to have the ability to understand the language used by others. Therefore, the mastery of clear and communicative language becomes a very important aspect in the educational process. Alwasilah (1993: 89) explains that the characteristics of the nature of language are language is systematic, regular or patterned, language is arbitrary, language is vocal or language is a sound system language is a symbol. Language refers to itself, language is human, and language is communication. The science of language has many scopes, including phonology, syntax, and semantics.

Language functions as a medium to express meaning by connecting a sign or cue with the meaning it contains. The cue must be captured by the senses, such as through sound, image, or movement, which is then associated with a particular meaning based on social agreement. Since the relationship between form and meaning in language is largely determined by social convention, linguistic signs are arbitrary. That is, the relationship between the form of the sign and its meaning is not natural, but rather formed through social and historical processes. As a very important communication system in human life, language has a central role in conveying meaning in every utterance. Language is not just a series of words, but also full of meanings that must be understood by both speakers and listeners. Because of its dynamic nature, language continues to undergo changes and becomes the object of study of various scientific approaches. One of the approaches used in analyzing language is the meaning or semantic approach. This field specifically studies how meaning is formed, conveyed, and understood in a linguistic context.

The term semantics comes from the Greek "*sema*" which means sign or symbol (sign). In its development, semantics is used as a term in the field of linguistics that studies language signs and their relationship to the things referred to by these signs. Thus, semantics can be understood as the science that discusses meaning or meaning in language. In linguistic studies, semantics is one of the three main levels in language analysis, in addition to phonology and grammar (Chaer, 2009, p. 2). One of the topics included in the scope of semantic studies is deixis. This term comes from the Greek "*deikditos*" which means the act of pointing directly. In the linguistic context, deixis refers to functions in language such as personal pronouns, time markers, and various other grammatical and lexical features whose meaning depends on the context of the situation. A word is called deixis if its reference changes depending on who is speaking, when the conversation takes place, and where the speech is delivered.

In social life, language has an important role in facilitating the communication process between individuals. One form of convenience comes in the form of a referencing system. However, while this system of reference is useful, it can also lead to confusion, ambiguity and misunderstanding of meaning among language users. This usually happens due to the lack of clarity in understanding the relationship between the utterance and its referent. Therefore, in order to properly understand the meaning of an utterance, one needs to consider the context and situation in which the utterance is delivered. According to Sarwiji et al. (1996), deixis is a type of word whose reference can only be recognized when paying attention to the identity of the speaker, time, and place when the utterance is expressed. This is in line with the opinion of Wijana (1998, p. 6) who explains that deixis are words that have referents that change depending on the context conditions of their use. Cahyono (1995, p. 217) adds that deixis is a way of referring to something through language, whose meaning is highly dependent on the speaker's interpretation and the current communication situation. In general, deixis is divided into five types, namely persona deixis (reference to person), place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Each type of deixis is interrelated and plays a complementary role to each other in shaping the understanding of meaning in communication. The interpretation of deixis elements is highly dependent on context, which is the main field of study in pragmatics. In understanding an utterance or text, such as a narrative text, context plays an important role so that the intended meaning of the author or speaker can be conveyed correctly. When language is used in an unstructured or ineffective way, it can cause ambiguity and lead to different interpretations among speech partners or message recipients. As a result, a sentence becomes difficult to understand if it is not known who is speaking, talking about what, where, and when the event occurred. This is because the referents of deictic words can change depending on certain situations and conditions. This shift in referent is often a source of confusion, especially for children who are still in the language development stage. However, referent shifts in deictic words are also often found in students' narrative writing. This can happen because each student has a different level of vocabulary mastery, which in turn affects the use of deixis in their writing. Thus, narrative text writing becomes an interesting study to be researched, especially in relation to the use of deixis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Semantic

Language is the main means by which humans communicate. In everyday life, language plays a very important role because every utterance always contains certain meanings and meanings. Without the existence of language, interaction between humans would not be possible, considering that communication requires a reciprocal process between the parties involved. In the process of delivery, language is not just a sound, but also conveys certain messages and meanings. As a dynamic element, language continues to develop and become an object of study in various disciplines. The study of language can be done through various approaches, one of which is the meaning approach. In this case, semantics is one of the branches of linguistics that specifically discusses the meaning in language, both at the level of words, phrases, and sentences as a whole.

Charles Morris in his book *Sign, Language, and Behavior* (in Chaer & Agustina, 2010, p. 3) suggests that language is a symbol system. He distinguishes language studies into three types based on the focal point of attention in the analysis. First, if attention is focused on the relationship between the symbol and its meaning, then the study is included in the semantic domain. Second, if what is studied is the relationship between the symbols themselves, it is included in syntactic studies. Third, if the focus is the relationship between the symbol and the user or speaker, then it falls into the scope of pragmatics.

The term semantics comes from the Greek *sema*, which means 'sign' or 'symbol'. The word was first introduced by Michel Bréal, a French philologist, in 1883. As linguistics developed, the term semantics came to be widely used in the field of linguistics to refer to the study of the relationship between linguistic signs and the meanings they contain. Thus, semantics is understood as a branch of linguistics that studies meaning or meaning in language. Semantics is also one of the three main levels in language analysis, besides phonology and grammar (Chaer, 2009, p. 2). In linguistic studies, semantics is a field of science that specifically discusses the relationship between linguistic signs and the meanings they contain. In other words, semantics is a study that focuses on meaning or meaning in language. Therefore, semantics can be interpreted as a science that studies meaning or meaning (Chaer, 2009, p. 2). Similarly, Tarigan (2011, p. 147) states that semantics is the study of meaning. The study of semantics includes the analysis of symbols or signs that represent meaning, the relationship between meanings, and how these meanings affect individuals and society at large.

Meaning is an element that cannot be separated from speech, both in the form of words and sentences. In semantic studies, various types of meaning are known, such as lexical meaning, grammatical meaning, denotative meaning, and connotative meaning. In addition, there is also the concept of meaning relations, namely the semantic relationship between language units, for example between words and other words in a language structure. In general, semantics is understood as the study of meaning. With the assumption that meaning is an integral part of language, semantics is included in the realm of linguistics, parallel to the study of sound (phonology) and grammar (grammar). In the hierarchy of language structure, meaning occupies its own level. Usually, sound is considered to be at the most basic level, grammar at an intermediate level, and meaning is at the last or highest position in the language system. Aminuddin (2001, p. 15) explains that the three components are systematically interrelated:

- 1) Language initially consists of abstract sounds that refer to certain symbols,
- 2) These symbols are arranged in a system that has rules and relationships, and
- 3) The symbol system is then associated with certain meanings. Therefore, understanding the meaning in language must consider the overall relationship between sound, form, and semantic function.

(Djajasudarma, 2009: p.1) stated that semantics exists at all three levels of language (phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon). Morphology and syntax are included in grammar or grammar.

### **Deixis**

Deixis is one of the important aspects studied in the semantic branch. The term deixis comes from the Greek “*deiktikos*” which means ‘direct designation’. In the linguistic context, deixis refers to the use of words that show or refer to something, and its interpretation depends on the meaning intended by the speaker and is influenced by the context of the communication situation. The meaning of words in deixis is contextual, meaning that the reference can change depending on who is speaking, to whom, when, and where the speech is delivered. According to Nababan (1987, pp. 40-45), deixis can be classified into five types, namely:

- 1) Persona deixis, which refers to the speaker, interlocutor, or third party;
- 2) Spatial deixis, which shows the location of an event or object;
- 3) Temporal deixis, which relates to the time of the speech event;
- 4) Discourse deixis, which refers to the parts of the discourse itself; and

- 5) Social deixis, which refers to the social relationship between speakers in the interaction.

### **Person Deixis**

Persona deixis is a type of deixis that refers to the role of participants in communication, especially speakers. According to Djajasudarma (2009: p. 52), the speaker who is delivering the utterance is referred to as the first persona. When the speaker's role changes to a listener, he switches to the second persona. Meanwhile, individuals who are not directly involved in the conversation, but are the subject of the conversation, are categorized as third persona.

### **Spatial Deixis**

Place deixis, on the other hand, spatial deixis deals with the designation of location in a speech act. Nababan (1987: p. 41) explains that place deixis is related to the way a place is represented based on the speaker's position in the speech context. Djajasudarma (2009: p. 65) adds that place deixis is closely related to the way communication participants understand certain locations in the context of the conversation. In practice, speakers distinguish the use of words such as here, there, and there. "*Here*" refers to a location close to the speaker, "*there*" indicates a place that is not too close to the speaker, while there is used for a location that is far from both the speaker and the listener.

### **Temporal Deixis**

Time deixis is a type of deixis related to temporal aspects in language structure (Djajasudarma, 2009: p. 68). This deixis marks the point in time or time distance seen from the moment the utterance is spoken, such as the words now, at that time, yesterday, this month, and others. In other words, time deixis focuses on how listeners understand the point in time or time span when an utterance is delivered. In addition, Purwo (1984: p. 71) explains that terms such as day, morning, evening, and night are not included in deixis, because their meaning has been determined permanently based on the position of the earth against the sun. On the contrary, words that include time deixis are those whose meaning depends on the speaker's position. For example, the word "*now*" refers to the time when the speaker utters it, which is also referred to as the moment of speech.

### **Discourse Deixis**

Discourse deixis is a reference to certain parts of a text or conversation that have been mentioned before or are being discussed. In grammar, this phenomenon is known as anaphora

when referring to things that have already been mentioned, and cataphora when referring to things that will be mentioned. Words or phrases such as *this, that, the previous, the following, the first mentioned, and so on* are often used to indicate discourse deixis.

### **Social Deixis**

Social deixis is related to the selection of personal pronouns used according to the social situation in the conversation, which is related to the aspect of language politeness. Nababan (1987: p.43) calls this system honorifics, which are rules of language use that reflect good manners. Almost all languages have a complex system of honorifics, although they take different forms. This system includes the use of personal pronouns, greetings, and titles such as *You, Sir, Father, Mother, Madam, Mrs, Drs, and Prof.* The use of language that reflects respect or politeness is often referred to as euphemism, which is the use of more subtle words.

### **Narrative Text**

Narrative is one type of writing that is very important for students to master. Narrative writing aims to present a series of actions or deeds that are intertwined chronologically and form an event within a certain time span. In other words, narrative is a form of discourse that seeks to describe in detail to the reader about an event that has occurred (Keraf, 1997: 136). In addition, narrative can also be understood as writing that seeks to build and tell a series of human actions arranged in sequential time, thus forming an event that takes place in a certain time unit (Finoza in Sari, 2012: p. 36). Dalman (in Fatmasari, 2018: p. 17) argues that narrative is a form of story that is organized based on the sequence of events or series of events. In it there are characters - maybe one or more - who are involved in or face various conflicts or conflicts. Elements such as events, characters, and conflicts are an important part of the narrative, which together form a storyline or plot. Narratives can be true stories (facts) or fictions that come from the imagination of the writer.

According to Semi (in Fatmasari, 2018: p.20), there are several important characteristics that need to be considered in writing narrative texts. First, narratives generally contain stories that highlight experiences or events experienced by the author. Second, the events that are told can be sourced from real events, fully imagined, or a combination of both. Third, conflict is an important element because without conflict, the narrative tends to be less interesting. Fourth, the narrative contains beauty or aesthetic value in its presentation. And finally, the delivery of the story is done coherently based on the time sequence in order to create

a lively atmosphere and easy to understand. According to Keraf (1997: p.136) states that the characteristics of narration are:

- a) Accentuate the element of action or action.
- b) Assembled in time sequence.
- c) Trying to answer the question “what happened?”.
- d) There are conflicts.

Based on these two opinions, it can be concluded that the characteristics of narrative are that it contains a story that emphasizes a chronology from time to time and has conflicts.

### **Deixis Shift in Narrative**

Deixis shift in narrative is a phenomenon that occurs when the narrator changes the center of deixis orientation from one frame of reference to another. Duchan et al. (1995) identify that this shift can occur at various levels, ranging from simple shifts in temporal reference to complex shifts involving changes in overall narrative perspective. Zubin and Hewitt (1995) suggest that deixis shifts in narratives can be episodic or global. Episodic shifts occur within certain parts of the narrative, while global shifts involve changes in frames of reference that affect the entire narrative structure. An understanding of these types of shifts is important for analyzing the quality and coherence of narrative texts.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Djajasudarna (2009: p.9), descriptive research method is a method that aims to provide a systematic description of the data, properties, and relationships of the phenomena to be studied. Qualitative research is a research procedure that emphasizes the quality of research that refers to the theory and concept of the qualitative descriptive method used because the research data is in the form of words and images. The purpose of using qualitative descriptive methods in this study is to describe and analyze the phenomenon of deixis shift in narrative texts of 3rd semester students of HKBP Nommensen University Pematangsiantar deeply and comprehensively.

The data of this research is in the form of written narrative texts collected from 15 English education students in semester 3. Of these, 8 people (53.3%) were female students, while 7 people (46.7%) were male students. The age range of the participants was between 19

to 22 years old. Most of the participants used Indonesian as their second language, with local language (Batak) as their mother tongue. Specifically, 11 participants (73.3%) had a mother tongue in the form of a regional language, while the rest, namely 4 participants (26.7%), made Indonesian their primary language.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The results of the study indicate that third-semester students at HKBP Nommensen University tend to use various forms of deictic expressions in their narratives, with a strong dominance of personal deictic expressions. From the analysis of fifteen narrative texts, a total of 353 occurrences of deictic elements were found, with the following details: 198 (56.09%) instances of person deictic expressions, 64 (18.13%) instances of spatial deictic expressions, 60 (16.99%) instances of temporal deictic expressions, 30 (8.50%) instances of discourse deictic expressions, and only 1 (0.28%) instance of social deictic expressions. The results can be seen in the table below.

**Total Frequency of Deictic Use**

<b>Types of Deixis</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Person	198	56,09%
Temporal	60	16,99%
Spatial	64	18,13%
Discourse	30	8,50%
Social	1	0,28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100%</b>

In general, every text contains at least three types of deictic expressions, and most of them have deictic shifts, especially in the categories of persona, temporal, and spatial. These shifts occur in the form of changes in the reference point of time, place, and actor in a narrative text without adequate transition or markers.

### Discussion

In an analysis of 15 narrative texts written by third-semester students at HKBP Nommensen University in Pematangsiantar, it was found that deictic shifts occurred in almost all types of primary deictics. These shifts were not always intentional and many cases disrupted

the cohesion and coherence of the narrative text. The following is a discussion based on each type of deictic:

### **Person Deixis Shift**

Person deictics indicate the actors in the narrative, such as “I,” “you,” “she,” or “they.” A shift occurs when the narrator moves from one point of view to another without transition or narrative consistency.

a) Data 1 (Student 2)

“I cooked an omelet and had breakfast with my sister...”

At the beginning of the narrative, “I” is used consistently, but then sentences such as the following appear:

“My sisters had gone out to play with their friends”

The narrative remains in the “I” perspective, but additional characters are introduced without a clear contrast between the narrator and other subjects, causing the reader to lose focus on who is the centre of the story.

b) Data 2 (Student 6)

“I embarked on a spontaneous road trip...” then

“The car veered toward a cafe...”

Shift from the perspective of an active agent to an object that seems to act on its own without a clear agent.

c) Data 3 (Student 11)

“We roasted marshmallows and shared stories...”

“They laughed and felt connected”

The use of “they” creates distance from the narrator who was initially actively involved.

### **Temporal Deixis Shift**

Temporal deictics indicate time in a narrative. A shift occurs when the time reference changes abruptly without transition, disrupting the chronological flow.

a) Data 1 (Student 7)

“At the crack of dawn...” then “yesterday afternoon” and “before six o’clock”.

Three different time references appear in succession without a clear connection.

b) Data 2 (Student 2)

This weekend was the most boring weekend..." then "Later, I called my friend..." and "At five in the afternoon..."

The change in time is quite rapid and can cause readers to lose track of the sequence of events.

c) Data 3 (Student 4)

"After lunch..." then "Then we drove through winding mountain roads..."

There is no indication whether the events took place on the same day or on different days.

### **Spatial Deixis Shift**

Spatial deictics relate to places or locations. Displacement occurs when a location moves without an adequate spatial transition.

a) Data 1 (Student 2)

"In my room..." then "in the dining room..." and "back in my room..."

The location changes constantly within a single paragraph without a clear introduction.

b) Data 2 (Student 4)

"Through picturesque countryside..." then "at a charming little town..." and "near a serene lake"

The three different locations appear in sequence, causing confusion about the continuity of the journey.

c) Data 3 (Student 15)

"We explored the surroundings..." then "deep within the forest..." and "near a crystal-clear lake..."

The description of the location is scattered without a strong sense of direction.

### **Discourse Deixis Shift**

Discourse deictics refer to other parts of the text. Shifts occur when markers such as this, that, these, are used inconsistently in reference to previous or future content.

a) Data 1 (Student 6)

*"This adventure changed my life."*

It is unclear which part of the story this refers to

b) Data 2 (Student 11)

*“These memories will last forever”*

No explanation of which memories

c) Data 3 (Student 12)

*“That moment...”*

Used repeatedly to refer to different events.

### **Social Deixis Shift**

Social deixis is when the speaker and the hearer use their name or nickname to indicate respect, familiarity and social status from the participants. Social deictics hardly appear in the data. Only one case was found:

a) Data 1 (Student 5)

*“Majesty”* in the description of the Grand Canyon tour

Does not indicate a shift, but indicates a very low awareness of the use of social register in the narrative.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of fifteen student narrative texts, it can be concluded that shifts in deixis frequently occur in the narrative writing of third-semester students. The most commonly used type of deixis is personal deixis, followed by deixis of place, time, and discourse, while social deixis is almost never found. The data shows that many students change the reference point in their narratives, such as who is speaking, when the events occur, and where the actions take place, without using appropriate linguistic markers or transitions. These shifts often cause confusion and a loss of coherence in the text. This indicates that students still need more in-depth learning about the importance of context in shaping meaning, especially in narrative construction. Therefore, instructors need to emphasize the importance of understanding deictic expressions in narrative writing and provide guidance on maintaining consistency in perspective and time to ensure that the resulting text is clearer and easier to understand.

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