
DEICTIC CATEGORIES IN IBIBIO

By

Aniedi Friday Etim

*College of Education, Afaha Nsit,
Akwa Ibom State.*

Abstract

This paper examines deixis as a grammatical category in Ibibio language. Deixis is a grammatical category that expresses the spatio-temporal relationship between a situation and the utterance that refers to that situation. The work employed both the primary and secondary sources in search for data while oral interview was used as the main instrument for the collection of such data. The deictic categories of personal pronouns, demonstratives, locatives and tense were used for our analysis. Three types of deixis were distinguished in the work. The personal deixis, the spatial deixis and the temporal deixis, all of which were identified in Ibibio. The person pronouns constituted the personal deixis, the demonstratives and locatives constituted the spatial deixis while tense constituted the temporal deixis. Ibibio language, like many other languages has three persons in its grammar: the first person which refers to the speaker, the second person, which refers to the person or persons spoken to and the third person which refers to persons, objects or situation spoken about. The three persons occur in two forms, that is, the singular and plural variants. It has been revealed that Ibibio language does not mark gender in its third person singular pronouns and that the language operates a tripartite system regarding the demonstrative and the locative categories, showing different locations: proximity to speaker and distance from listener; proximity to listener and distance from speaker, and distance from both speaker and listener. Ibibio also has the past, the present and the future tenses. The past tense comes before the zero-point of an utterance, the present tense is simultaneous with the moment of speaking, while the future tense follows the zero-point of an utterance. It is observed that the notions of proximity and remoteness mostly operate within the future tense. On the whole, Ibibio language operates a tripartite system regarding all the deictic categories used for our analysis in this paper, the personal pronouns, demonstratives, locatives and tense.

Deixis is a term used in linguistics to include those features of language which refer directly to the personal, temporal or locational characteristics of the situation within which an utterance takes place, whose meaning is thus relative to that situation. A deictic expression is a word or phrase that points to the time, place or situation in which

a speaker is speaking. e.g. this, that; these, those; now, then. Also, the term deixis applies to the use of expression in which the meaning can be traced directly to features of the act of utterance – when and where it takes place, and who is involved as speaker and as addressee. The term is analogous to the philosophical notion of ‘indexical expression’. Indexical expression is used to refer to those features (deictic features) of language which refer directly to characteristics of the situation within which an utterance takes place. In English, words like now/then, here/there, I/you, this/that, etc, are deictics, (Huddleston & Pullum, 2006).

From these definitions, we can pick out the following meanings: for examples; now and here are used deictically to refer respectively to the time and place of the utterance. Similarly, “this school” is likely to be interpreted deictically as the school in which the utterance takes place. Several of the pronouns are predominantly used deictically, with ‘I’ and ‘we’ referring to the speaker and a group including the speaker, ‘you’ to the addressee(s) or a set of people including the addressee(s).

The term is also used for words which refer backwards and forwards in discourse, they are called ‘anaphora’ and ‘cataphora’ respectively e.g that, the following, the former. This is sometimes known as discourse or text deixis. The term anaphora or anaphoric is used in grammatical description for the process or result of a linguistic unit deriving its interpretation from some previously expressed unit or meaning (the antecedent). Anaphoric reference is one way of marking the identity between what is being expressed and what has already been expressed. For example, in such a sentence as “she did this there”, each word has an anaphoric reference, i.e. they are anaphoric substitutes, or anaphoric words. This means that there is a previous sentence which might have been: Mfon printed her book in her brother’s press. As it is observed here, each word in the response is anaphorically related to a corresponding unit in the preceding context. Anaphora is often contrasted with cataphora. While the words in anaphora refer backward, the words in cataphora refer forward. Sometimes it contrasts with deixis or ‘exophora’, where the words refer directly to the extra-linguistic situation (Lyons, 1977).

Discourse (or text) deixis is often distinguished from social deixis, which happens to be our area of concentration in this paper. Social deixis is the encoding of social distinctions that relate to ‘participant roles’ (speaker – addressee), as encountered in such matters as pronouns, honorifics, vocatives etc.

Statement of the Problem

Deixis is one of the areas of language study that has not been given sufficient attention in the Ibibio language. Essien (1990), which is the most outstanding grammar book in the language for now only mentioned the word ‘deictic’ in passing, referring to determiners as “deictic elements”, pp.136.

It has been observed that some of the users of the language especially the youths (students) are not very conversant with the use of deictic categories in the language. It constitutes a serious problem to the future of any language if its users and learners,

especially the youths who are supposed to be the carriers of the language to the next generation are not well versed in the dynamics of the language.

This paper therefore becomes necessary to study deictic categories in the language so as to serve as a pedagogical material for teachers and learners of the language.

Objectives of the Study

The work seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the different deictic categories in the Ibibio language.
2. To show the similarities of the different deictic categories to each other.
3. To show the relationship between the deictic categories and tone in Ibibio language.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is based on the principle and parameters of the Universal Grammar (UG). Universal Grammar was introduced by Chomsky who believes that everybody is born with an internalized set of rules and a rich system of sound structure, as well as a rich system of complete utterances with which we learn or acquire whatever language that is spoken in the environment that we find ourselves. In his opinion, no child is born blank, every child is born with an innate tool with which he acquires the language in his environment, and this innate tool is what Chomsky refers to as Universal Grammar.

Ndimele (2004) sees Universal Grammar as a theory that lays down basic principles, and each language is free to select the parameters along which those principles are realized. According to him, UG is a kind of grammar that contains the features of all languages. The principle and parameters (P & P) approach in the study of syntax is geared towards describing or determining the nature of the principle of UG, that is, principles that seem to be the same across languages and the differences (parameters) that these languages exhibit. So the study of deixis is in line with the principles and parameters of UG, since all languages have indicators or operators which mark the relationship between the time of situation and the time an utterance is made concerning the situation.

Types of Deictic Expressions

There are three types of deixis. These include: the pronouns, which make up a system of personal deixis. We also have spatial deixis. Words like 'this/that' and 'here/there' belong to a system of spatial deixis. The 'here/there' distinction is also found in pairs of verbs such as 'come/go' and 'bring/take'.

The third type is the temporal deixis found in words like now, then, yesterday and tomorrow. We also have it in phrases such as last month, next year, etc (Blake, 2008).

Adverbs as Deictic

Four common adverbs in conversation refer to time and place. They are: here, there, now and then. These adverbs are deictics. That is, they make reference to the time and place of speaking, example, now refers to the actual time of speaking.

In this presentation, we have chosen for our analysis, the deictic categories of personal pronouns, demonstratives, locatives and tense.

Methodology

The methodological issues employed in this work include the following:

- Source of data.
- Data collection technique.
- Data analysis.

Source of Data

The work employed both the primary and secondary sources in search for data. The native speakers (students and linguistic professionals) constituted the primary source. For the secondary source, library materials were used.

Data Collection Technique

Apart from the materials from the literature, oral interview was used as the main instrument in collecting data in the work. The researcher also drew from her native speaker's intuition.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed under their different categories.

Data Analysis

Personal Pronouns

Most languages of the world distinguish three personal pronouns. These are the first person, which refers to the speaker, the second person which refers to the person being spoken to, and the third person which refers to the person or object being talked about (Brown and Yule 1983, Burmeister 1988). The three personal pronouns have their singular and plural variants. Each of the pronouns varies to reflect the case assigned by the predicator in the syntactic string. This is summarized in the following examples:

Example 1: First Person

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative/Subjective	àmì : 'I'	̀̀nyìn : 'we'
Accusative/Objective	mî̀n : 'me'	̀̀nyìn : 'us'
Possessive (Adjective)	m̀mì : 'my'	̀̀nyìn : 'our'

It is observed in the above example that all the three cases relating to the plural, show identical strings. Both the nominative and the possessive cases also show

Deictic Categories in...

similarity both in sound segments and tone, while the accusative case show difference only in tone. That is, the forms corresponding to ‘we’ and ‘our’ are marked [L—L], whereas the form corresponding to ‘us’ is marked [H—L].

The forms related to the first person singular also show differences in terms of segmental sequence. The forms corresponding to ‘I’ and ‘my’ are both marked [L-L], while the form corresponding to ‘me’ is marked [HL], showing similarity with what we have in the plural cases.

Example 2: Second Person

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	àfò : ‘you’	ndùfò : ‘you’
Accusative	fìn : ‘you’	ndùfò : ‘you’
Possessive	m̃fò : ‘you’	ndùfò : ‘you’

The segmental sequences and the tonal patterns in the second personal pronouns are similar to what is observed in the first personal pronouns. Within the second personal pronouns, we observe a greater morphological variation than what obtains in English, in respect of both the singular and the plural forms.

Example 3: Third Person

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	ènyé : ‘he/she/it’	ǒmmô : ‘they’
Accusative	ènyé : ‘him/her/it’	ǒmmô : ‘them’
Possessive	ómò : ‘his/her/its’	ǒmmô : ‘theirs’

It is observed that Ibibio does not mark its third person singular (3sg) pronoun for gender. For the third person plural (3pl) Ibibio has identical forms, both segmentally and tonally, unlike what obtains in English. Instead of using single words, as English does, for true possessive pronouns (as distinct from possessive adjectives listed in (1), (2) and (3), Ibibio combines the form ákè - with the following:

Example 4:

- (a) ákè m̃mì : ‘mine’
- (b) ákè ñnyìn : ‘ours’
- (c) ákè (m̃fò / ndùfò) : ‘yours’
- (d) ákè m̃o : ‘his/hers/its’
- (e) ákè ǒmmô : ‘theirs’

Demonstratives

A demonstrative can either function as a modifier in the Noun Phrase or a pronominal. As a modifier, it is described as a demonstrative adjective, occupying the Determiner or specifier position. As a deictic category the demonstrative points the

subject of discourse to its location in relation to the speaker, showing locations such as: proximate to speaker and distant from listener; proximate to listener and distant from speaker; and distant from both speaker and listener (cf Ullmann 1977, Udofot 1998).

Example 5:

- (a) òfòṅ émì
clothe this → ‘this clothe’ (proximate to speaker, distant from listener)
- (b) ọfọṅ ódò
clothe that → ‘that clothe’ (proximate to listener, distant from speaker)
- (c) ọfọṅ ókò
clothe that → ‘that clothe’ (distant from both speaker and listener)

Ibibio language operates a three-way opposition, while a language like English has a bipartite opposition, without any cognate form corresponding to ókò in (5c) above. It is also observed that both possessive adjectives and demonstrative adjectives, which function as Det in the NP, occupy the post-head position in Ibibio, unlike the English counterparts which occupy a pre-head position.

Example 6:



- (a) òfòṅ m̀m̀ì
clothe my - my clothe
- (b) òfòṅ émì
clothe this - this clothe

There are no plural forms for the demonstrative adjectives, this feature is marked in English language as shown below:

Example 7:

- Sg Pl
- (a) this clothe these clothes
- (b) that clothe those clothes

In Ibibio, the form m̀m̀è is used to mark the plural for nouns as in (8) and (9) below:

Deictic Categories in...

Example 8:

	Sg		Pl	
(a)	òfòṅ	: ‘clothe’	ṁmè òfòṅ	: ‘clothes’
(b)	efó	: ‘tree’	ṁmè étó	: ‘trees’

Example 9:

	Sg		Pl	
(a)	òfòṅ émì		ṁmè òfòṅ émì	
	this clothe		these clothes	
(b)	étó émì		ṁmè étó émì	
	‘this person’		‘these persons’	

A few cases in Ibibio involves questions as in (10) below:

Example 10:

(a) ànìè ódó émì?
‘who is this?’ (near speaker, away from listener)

(b) ànìè ódó ódò?
‘who is that?’ (near listener, away from speaker)

(c) ànìè ódó ókò?
‘who is that?’ (away from both speaker and listener)

Demonstrative pronouns also function as complement to the copulative predicator as in (11).

Example 11:

(a) òfòṅ ṁmì ódó émì
clothe my is this → ‘this is my clothe’

(b) òfòṅ ṁfò ódó ódò
clothe your is that → ‘that is your clothe’

(c) Eno ódó ódò
clothe Eno is that → ‘that is Eno’s clothe’

Some expressions in Ibibio sound sarcastic and are meant to show the listener that he/she is on his/her own.

Example 12:

(a) òdùbèghé ṁfò ódó ódò
business your is that → ‘that is your business’

(b) ùwà ṁfò ódó ódò

(fate destiny) your is that → ‘that is your fate/destiny’

Locatives

Lyons (1995) refer to locatives as demonstrative adverbs. These kind of deitic categories locate a situation in relation to the utterance referring to that situation. Like the personal pronoun, the possessive adjective and the demonstrative, the locative is also egocentric. They all locate an object, an action, an event or situation in relation to the person whose utterance describes the object, the action, the event or the situation.

As in the case of the possessive adjective (also called the demonstrative pronoun), and the demonstrative adjective, the locative pronoun in Ibibio has a three-way opposition.

Example 13:

(a) Ben ñwed mí
‘take a book here’

(b) Ben ñwed dó
‘take a book there’ (away from speaker, close to listener)

(c) Ben ñwed kó
‘take a book there’ (away from both speaker and listener)

Tense

Tense indicates the location of an action in time. It is the form a verb takes in order to show the time of an action. This means that the idea of the time of a situation is gotten through tense.

Essien (1990) sees tense as a grammatical category that grammaticalises time reference by making use of indicators and operators (other than adverbs of time) which mark the relationship between the time of a situation and the time an utterance is made concerning the situation.

To Lyons (1997), tense is a grammatical category which relates the time of an action, event or situation to the time an utterance is made concerning the situation in question.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:40) sees tense as a universal and non-linguistic concept, having three divisions: past, present and future. By tense, one understands the correspondence between the form of the verb and our concept of time.

So tense can be said to refer to grammatical category which determines the form of the verb in a sentence with respect to discourse time. Ibibio has a tripartite system of past, present and future tense (Essien 1990).

Past Tense

The past tense locates a situation at a time before that of the utterance describing the situation. Essien (1990) draws a distinction between the “non-proximate” and the “proximate” past. He assigns the prefix /màá-/ to the former and /mé-/ to the latter.

Example 14:

Mfon á-màá- yet òfòṅ̀ m̀kpóṅ̀
'Mfon washed/did wash clothes yesterday'

The prefix / ke-/ is used both in negative constructions and in constructions which serve as answers to what corresponds to English Wh questions.

Example 15:

- a. àmì ñ-ké-diághá ñkpọ̀ m̀kpóṅ̀
'I did not eat yesterday'
- b. àfó ú-kú- diághá ñkpọ̀ m̀kpóṅ̀
'You (sg) did not go to school yesterday'
- c. Mfon í-kí- diághá ñkpọ̀ m̀kpóṅ̀
'Ime did not eat yesterday'

Example 16:

- a. (i) úké ké á-ké -ká
'where did you go?
(ii) àmì ñ-ké-kà Uyo
'I was going to Uyo'
- b.(i) òfòṅ̀ ifan ke Eno akedad?
'how many clothes did Eno take?
(ii) Eno a-ke-dàd ibà.
'Eno took two clothes'

Present Tense:

The present tense indicates that the time of a situation is concurrent with the moment of speaking about the situation.

It expresses the simultaneity or the contemporaneity between a situation and the utterance describing the situation (cf Lyons 1977, 1995, Essien 1990). The prefix /me-/ attached to the verb root performs a double function. On the one hand, it serves to mark the true present, that is, the location of the situation at the temporal zero point, the point at which the utterance is made describing that situation. On the other hand /mé-/ serves an aspectual function, indicating that the situation being described has just been completed (Essien 1990).

Example 17:

- a) à-mé-yaiya 'You are beautiful'.
b) m̀-mé-tọ̀ṅ̀ṅ̀ utom ndion. 'I have started going to work'

To express the true present tense, the /mé-/ morpheme usually combines with stative verbs: verbalised adjectives, and verbs that express knowledge and similar notion (Essien, 1990).

Example 18:

M-me-diono ufok mfo
'I know your house'

For non-stative verbs, we can use the prefix /sΛk-/ is used to express progression.

Example 19:

n-sΛk- ñ-dia
'I am eating (i.e. the act of eating is a progress)

Example 20:

ã-sΛk-à-daiya. 'You are sleeping'

Future Tense

A future tense indicates that a situation will hold after the moment of speaking about it. It is in futurity that the notions of proximity and remoteness are most relevant. That is, a distinction can be made between proximate or immediate and non-proximate or distant future. The future prefix /yaa-/ is differently tone-marked to indicate the distinction between the immediate and the distant (or indefinite) future.

Example 21:

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| a) | Mfon á-yáa-!dia (Mfon áyáa!dia) -
Tone – H H !! | - | Mfon is about to eat.
- Proximate or immediate
future |
| b) | Mfon á-ya!a-!dia (Mfon ayaadia) -
Tone – H ! !! | - | Mfon will eat.
- Non-Proximate or distant
future. |

Example 22:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---|--|
| a) | Eno á-yáa-!kâ
Tone – H H ! Λ | - | Eno is about to go.
- Immediate future. |
| b) | Eno á-ya!a-!kă
Tone – H ! !Y | - | Eno will go.
- Distant future. |

Example 23:

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---|---|
| a) | Okon á-yáa-!bô
Tone – H H ! Λ | - | Okon is about to receive it.
- Immediate future. |
|----|----------------------------------|---|---|

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|---|-----------------------|
| b) | Okon á-ya!a-!bò | - | Okon will receive it. |
| | Tone – H ! !L | - | Distant future. |

Conclusion

Summary

This work studied deixis which is a grammatical category that expresses the spatio-temporal relationship between a situation and the utterance that refers to that situation. Three types of deixis were distinguished in the work. The personal deixis, the spatial deixis and the temporal deixis, all of which are identified in Ibibio. It has been observed in the course of the work that Ibibio language operates a tripartite system regarding all the deictic categories used in this paper. This marks a point of similarity between the different deictic categories used in the work, the personal pronouns, demonstratives, locatives and tense. It is also observed that there is a remarkable relationship between deictic categories and tone in Ibibio.

Recommendation

This paper recommends a more detailed investigation into deictic categories in Ibibio, to see whether there are other deictic categories in the language apart from what had been used in this paper. Further studies, particularly should be taken on anaphoric elements, such as anaphoric determiners in Ibibio.

Reference

- Blake, B. J. (2008). *All about Language*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (CUP).
- Burmeister, J. (1988). "Personal Pronouns in Anyi and Related Languages". *The Journal of West African Languages (JWAL)*, XVIII, 2:83 - 104.
- Essien, O. E. (1990). *A Grammar of the Ibibio Language*. Ibadan, University Press Ltd.
- Huddleston, R. & Pullum, G. (2006). *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. (1971). *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics 2*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Academic Excellence

- Lyons, J. (1995). *Linguistic Semantics: An introduction*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Quirk, R., & Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A grammar of Contemporary English*. London, Longman Group Ltd.
- Udofot, I. M. (1998). *English Semantics*. Uyo, Scholars Press (Nig) Ltd.
- Ullmann, S. (1977). *Semantics: An Introduction to the Study of Meaning*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell and Moll Ltd.