



Deictic Expressions in Femi Osofisan's *Another Raft*

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Abstract: This paper examines deictic expressions used by the characters in the play entitled *Another Raft* by Femi Osofisan. The study employed qualitative method of data analysis to analyse the deictic expressions used by the characters in the text. The result of the analysis reveals that characters in the text used person, place and time deixis while communicating with one another. Person deixis points to participants in speech events, place deixis points to the places where actions are taken while time deixis points to different times of actions.

Keywords: Deictic expressions, pragmatics, discourse, semantics, Femi Osofisan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the means of communication in every human society. It is the means through which information and services are exchanged. In communication enterprise, semantic imports of words and expressions differ to some extent depending on the context in which they are used. Meaning and context are both objects of study in semantics and pragmatics. Semantics meaning is conventional while pragmatic meaning is contextual. Linguistic context is the set of other words that occur in the same phrase or sentence with a particular word (Yule, 2004). This surrounding words help to interpret the meaning of the word. Apart from interpreting the meaning of words based on linguistic context, words can also be interpreted based on their physical context. The word bank on a building connotes that the building is a place where money services are rendered. In communication, there are words which can only be interpreted if their physical contexts are considered; these words are labeled deixis. Words used to point to a person such as me, you, him, them are instances of person deixis; word used to point to location such as here, there yonder are examples of place deixis, while those used to point to time such as now, then, tonight, last week are examples of time deixis (Yule

2004). This study is concerned with how characters in *Another Raft* employed deictic expressions to interact with one another.

Femi Osofisan is a Nigerian writer who is noted for his critique of social problems. His novels often explore the theme between good and evil. Osofisan has authored more than sixty (60) plays. He has also written four (4) prose work, namely, *Ma'ami*, *Abigail*, *Pirates of Hurts* and *Cordelia*. The prose work entitled *Ma'ami* was adapted into film in 2011. Most of Osofisan's plays are adapted from the works of other writers: *Women of Owu* adapted from Euripides' *The Trojan Women*; *Who is Afraid of Solarin?* adapted from Nikolai Gogol's *the Government inspector*; *No More the Wasted Breed* adapted from Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*; *Another Raft* adopted from J.P Clark's *The Raft*; *Tegonni: An African Antigone* adapted from Sophocles' *Antigone and others* (Samphina Academy, 2022). In *Another Raft*, Osofisan expresses social ills of greedy leaders who are only out to exploit the masses. He points out the problems in the society and also tries to find solutions for them by stressing the need for hardwork, cooperation, positive thinking and togetherness in the society (Para. 5).

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Many researchers and scholars have conducted study on Osofisan's pieces of work, particularly, *Another Raft* from Stylistics, discourse analysis and pragmatics perspectives, but none has ever given enough scholarly attention to deictic expressions used by the characters in the text. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the types of deictic expressions used by the characters in the text through the following objectives:

- i. To identify deictic expressions used in the text
- ii. To discuss the deictic expressions in consonance with the text preoccupation.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Yulistiani and Parmawati (2018) carried out research on deictic expressions in the articles selected from Detiknews. The aim of the study was to identify the deictic expressions contained in the selected article. The researchers employed descriptive qualitative and content analysis techniques of data analysis to analyse their data. The result of the analysis shows that three types of deictic expressions were found in the article selected from Detiknews. The deictic expressions found in the article are person deictic expressions, spatial deictic expressions and temporal deictic expressions. Based on the findings, the study concludes that three types of deictic expressions, namely, person, spatial and temporal deictic expressions were found in the articles selected from Detiknews.

Aksana *et al.*, (n.d) conducted research on deictic expressions used in Joko Widodo's Speech at annual meeting of Board of Governors of International Monetary Fund (henceforth IMF) and World Bank Group in Bali. The study aimed at analyzing the types of deictic expressions used in Joko Widodo's Speech at annual meeting of board of governor of IMF and World Bank Group in Bali. The researchers used descriptive qualitative method of data analysis to analyse their data. The result of the investigation shows that three types of deictic expressions were used in Joko Widodo's Speech at annual meetings of board of governor of IMF and World Bank Group in Bali. The deictic expressions used are person deictic expression, temporal deictic expression and spatial deictic expression. The research concludes that three types of deictic expressions, namely, person deictic expression, temporal deictic expression, and spatial deictic expression were used in Joko Widodo's Speech at annual meetings of board of governor of IMF and World Bank Group in Bali.

Al-khalidy (2017) explored spatial deixis in the discussions of general budget by the members of Jordanian Parliament for the financial year 2017.

The study aimed at investigating the use of spatial deixis in the speeches delivered by the members of Jordanian Parliament during the discussion of general budget. Ten different speeches were randomly selected from eighteen speeches delivered during the discussion. The spatial deixis was analysed in terms of frequency of occurrence. The study reveals that proximate term was the most frequent sub-spatial deixis used by the members of Jordanian Parliament, followed by distal term whereas medial term was the least sub-spatial deixis used. Based on the findings, the study concludes that sub-spatial deixis that were used in the speeches delivered by the members of Jordanian Parliament during the discussion of 2017 budget were proximal term, distal term and medial term. Proximal term was the most sub-spatial deixis used whereas medial term was the least sub-spatial deixis used.

Nurjana (2018) undertook study on deixis used in *Moana Movie* Script. The study aimed at finding out the types of deixis found in the script of the movie. The study employed descriptive method of data analysis to analyse its data. The result of the analysis indicates that three types of deixis called person deixis, spatial deixis and temporal deixis were used in *Moana Movie* Script. Person deixis used in the movie points to the people that acted the movie, spatial deixis points to the place where the movie was acted whereas temporal deixis points to timing of the speech event used in the movie. The deixis that was used most is person deixis, it manifested in 1, 041 utterances. Based on the findings, the study concluded that three types of deixis, namely, person deixis, spatial deixis and temporal deixis were used in *Moana Movie* Script. Person deixis points to the people that acted the movie; spatial deixis points to the place where the movie was acted whereas temporal deixis points to the timing of speech event used in the movie. The dominant deixis is person deixis, it occurred in 1, 041 utterances.

Chifor and Zhying (2019) carried out research on understanding the use of deixis in Paul Biya's message to the Cameroonian youth. The study aimed to identify the different types of deixis used by Paul Biya in his message to the Cameroonian youth and their frequencies. The research used qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis to analyse the data for this study. The data were obtained from the official website of the presidency of the republic of Cameroonian. They were analysed and the result revealed that Paul Biya used different types of deixis in his speech. Person deixis occurred in 103 utterances (52.2%), spatial deixis manifested in 17 utterances (9.4%), temporal deixis occurred in 21 utterances (4.7%), social deixis occurred in 30 utterances (16.79%), whereas

discourse deixis manifested in 8 expressions (10%). Person deixis was the most used deixis in Paul Biya's message to the Cameroonian youths. Based on the findings, the study concludes that Paul Biya used different types of deixis, namely, personal deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, social deixis and discourse deixis in his speech to commemorate the 33rd edition of the country's National Youth Day. Personal deixis was the dominant deixis used in President Paul Biya's message to the Cameroonian youth.

3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method of data analysis is employed to give in-depth explanations of deictic expressions used by the characters in the text to interact with one another. Dornyei (2007) explains that qualitative method of data analysis is concerned with data collection procedures that result in open-ended, non-numerical data which is analysed by non-statistical method. The dialogues extracted from the text are studied in order to identify and describe the deictic expressions embedded in them.

3.1 Data analysis and Interpretation

Deictic expressions in the text

The text *Another Raft* by Femi Osofisan is characterized by person deixis, place deixis and time deixis.

Data no. 1: person deixis

Yule (1996, in Purba *et al.*, n.d) points out that person deixis is exemplified by personal pronouns, and it involves the speaker and addressee. Examples: **Ekuroola**: "I remember of course, but Yemosa will forgive me" p.8 This utterance indicates that the speaker remember his guilt but hopes Yemosa the goddess will pardon him.

Ekuroola: "I suspected it would be hard" p.8. This statement suggests that the speaker foresaw hardship in the voyage.

Ekuroola: "I agreed to come on this journey" p.8 This statement shows that the speaker willingly embarked on the voyage, he was not forced.

Lanusen: "I still hope he locates the island of the shrine today" p.9 This remark suggests that the voyage is aimed at locating the island of shrine.

Lanusen: "You did not see the bodies floating in the insane water" p.14. This statement connotes that the addressee does not know the magnitude of the catastrophe in the land.

Ekuroola: "I believe you" p.14. This utterance indicates that the speaker does not doubt what the addressee tells him.

Oge: "We're adrift" p.15. This remark suggests that the speaker and his fellow voyagers are in a boat which is neither moored nor steered.

Waje: "I wish I knew" p.17. This utterance connotes that the speaker regrets embarking on the voyage. He did not know that the voyage will be rough.

Orousi: "... I can't see it any more" p.17 This utterance connotes that the speaker is on high sea since he cannot see land any longer.

Ekuroola: "I don't like to die yet you know" p.17. This statement suggests that there is something which is threatening the life of the speaker now.

Waje: "I confess, I can't explain this" p.20. This expression indicates that there is something which the addressee wants the speaker to explain to him although the speaker is reluctant to do so.

Lanusen: "... We 're talking of something more serious our lives are probably in danger," p.25. This utterance shows that the matter which is being discussed is a serious matter that can cost life.

Orousi: "You're leaders here and elders do not strip each other's masks naked in the open street. p.25. This assertion indicates that there are elders who attempt to reveal one another's secret in public.

Orousi: "We're all here to fulfil our destiny" This statement suggests that sometimes people travel to a particular place to fulfil their destiny. The voyagers sailed to the island of shrine to fulfil their destiny.

Ekuroola: "I said the waters were too rough for such a journey, in a fragile canoe ..." p.26. This expression connotes that the speaker foresaw danger in travelling on a rough water in a damaged canoe.

Ekuroola: "...I allowed myself to be persuaded" p.26. This remark suggests that the speaker wouldn't have embarked on the voyage if he was not persuaded.

Ekuroola: "...you and Lanusen simply lied to us" p.25. This expression suggests that what Orousi and Lanusen told the speaker and his fellow voyagers is not true.

Lanusen: "...You think too highly of yourself." p.27. This assertion shows that the addressee is self-centred.

Reore: "...We till the land. We make it bear fruit" p.28. This utterance suggests that the speaker is a farmer. The speaker and his fellow farmers cultivate land to produce crops.

Lanusen: "...You brought us here" p.29. This remark connotes that the speaker and his fellow voyagers wouldn't have come to the place where they are if the addressee did not take them there.

Orousi: "You can't abandon us like this, Baba" p.29. This statement indicates that the

addressee attempts to abandon the speaker and other voyagers where they are now.

Omitoogun: "...We're all going to go as goddess wishes it !..." p.51. This statement connotes that if goddess wants people to die, they will die, but if she does not want, people will not die. The voyagers will all die because the goddess wants them to die.

Gbebe: "You'll go first, father!" p.31. This statement shows that people die in turn. Gbebe wants Omitoogun to die first.

Ekuroola: "...You won't get away with this" p.32. This utterance indicates that people who do evil will not go scot free. Gbebe must be dealt with because he killed his father the priest of Yemosa.

Orousi: "You've put a curse on all of us!" p.32. This statement suggests that someone who kills the priest of Yemosa the goddess has put a course on himself and other members of his group. Gbebe has put a course on himself and other members of his group because he killed the priest of Yemosa the goddess.

Agunrin: "I took your side. I could have cut all your throats the first night." p.44. This utterance connotes that one who supports someone to do something will not harm the person. Agunrin backed Gbebe to kill the priest of Yemosa that was why he did not harm Gbebe.

Gbabe: "...He's been reunited at last with his goddess" p.44. This statement suggests that if a priest of Yemosa dies, he reunites with his goddess in the world beyond. Since Omitoogun the priest of Yemosa is dead, he has been reunited with his goddess in the world beyond.

Gbebe: "...we are all tainted, aren't we?" p.49. This statement suggests that all the people are corrupt although they claim to be honest. Agunrin who is a soldier is as corrupt as Lanusen who is a civilian.

Agunrin: "...You still have not answer me" p.49. This assertion connotes that the addressee has not given satisfactory answer to the addresser.

Agunrin: "...I am going to make you repeat the whole drama, ..." p.50. This utterance suggests that the speaker will do something that will make the addressee repeat what he said against Ekuroola in the public or openly.

Agunrin: "I will make you do it with pain" p.56. This remark suggests that Agunrin will inflict pains on Lanusen to force him repeat what he said against Ekuroola in public.

Agunrin: "You're all going to go prince" p.59. This expression suggests that all the voyagers will go to the world beyond.

Agunrin: "I'm not here to judge, Abore, only to punish ..." p.59. This assertion suggests that the speaker's mission to the island of shrine is to punish rather than to judge. **Ekuroola:** "... You

caused it all, didn't you? You brought him here to kill!" p.62. This statement shows that the addressee is the cause of the problem since he hired a soldier to kill Ekuroola.

The above dialogue consist of person deixis inform of personal pronouns.

Data no 2: Place deixis.

Cruse (2000, in Purba *et al.*, n.d) states that place deixis manifests itself mainly in form of locative adverbs such as 'here' 'there' and demonstratives or determiners such as "thus" and "that". Examples:

Orousi: "... don't say these things here!..." p.25. This statement shows that there are places where one supposed not to say certain things. Lanusen and Ekuroola expose each other's secret in the public- a place where they shouldn't have done what they did.

Orousi: "...We're all here to fulfill our destiny" p.26. This assertion connotes that some people travel to a certain place to fulfill their destiny. The voyagers embark on a voyage to an island of shrine to fulfill their destiny.

Lanusen: "...You brought us here" p.29. This utterance suggests that certain people are taken to a particular place by others. The voyagers were taken to the island of shrine by Omitoogun the priest of yemosa.

Omitoogun: "...Your sins brought you here not the priest of Yemosa" p.29. This statement indicates that a person's sin can take him/her to a particular place. The sins of the voyagers took them to the island of shrine, not the priest of Yemosa

Orousi: "How did you get here?" p.30. This interrogation indicates that it is difficult to get to some places. The difficulty in getting to the place where the interrogator is, made him to ask the respondent to tell him how he got to the place.

Agunrin: "...there is nowhere to run to" p.55. This statement connotes that one who has no place to run to, may not run away even if he is treated badly. The addressee may not run away because he has no place to run to even though he is being treated badly.

Reore: "...we stay trapped here..." p.77. This expression suggests that people maybe unrestrained or trapped in a particular place. The voyagers are not unrestrained in the island of shrine, they are trapped.

Reore: "...look! There!" p.79. The speaker draws the attention of the addressee to the part of the boat where a fish jumped in.

The above dialogues comprise of place deixis inform of adverbs such as "here" and "there".

Data no 3: Time deixis

According to Cruse (2000, in Purba *et al.*, n.d) time deixis functions to point to time. There are three divisions of time, namely, before the moment of utterance, at the time of utterance and after the time of utterance. The most basic time in English are “now” and “then” Examples:

Ekuroola: “...then no one said anything about sleeping on the ... raft” p.8. This utterance suggests that nobody can predict the future. Nobody could predict that the sailors would pass a night on the boat before the boat took off.

Orousi: “...It’ll soon be over” p.11. Some travelers take short time to reach their destinations while others take long time to reach theirs. The voyagers will take a short time to reach theirs.

Lanusen: “...Now you’re Abore. And the responsibility is yours.” p.11. This statement shows that Abore is someone who offers sacrifice to Yemosa. Now that Ekuroola is the Abore, he is responsible for the sacrifice.

Ekuroola; “...I’d like to pray now” p.14. This statement indicates that one can pray now or then. However, the speaker wishes to pray now.

Reore: “... those who ... have power use it now!”. P.30. This expression connotes that power can be used now or then. The speaker wants those who have power to rescue them now.

Waje: “...those confessions they made the day before” p.43. This utterance connotes that confessions were made the day before and the day after. However, the speaker is interested in those confessions that were made on the day before.

Lanusen: “... Agunrin! Shoot me now...” p.46. One could be annihilated now or then by any means. The speaker wishes the addressee to annihilate him by shooting him now.

Agunrin: “...I had thought of it last night but changed my mind...” p.50. A person can change his plan over night. Agunrin changed his plan to force Lanusen repeat the confession he made previous night.

Lanusen: “Do it now!” p.54. One can do what one is ordered to do now or then. The speaker wishes the addressee to do what he is ordered to do now.

Agunrin: “I see! I see now!...” p.63 someone can grasp something now or then. Agunrin now knows why soldiers are being hated by non-soldiers.

Gbebe: “... soon we shall all be there with you.” p.65 one can go to the world beyond soon or later. The speaker believes that he and the other voyagers will join Omitoogun the priest of Yemosa in the world beyond after a short time.

The above dialogues consist of time deixis in form of concepts such as “now”, “then”, “soon” and three divisions of times, namely, before the moment of utterance, at the time of utterance, and after the time of utterance.

4. FINDINGS

The study revealed that characters in the text used three different deictic expressions in their dialogues. The deictic expressions used are person deictic expressions, spatial deictic expressions, and temporal deictic expressions. Person deictic expressions point to the characters in the text; place deictic expressions point to the places where actions are taken whereas time deictic expressions point to different time of actions.

5. CONCLUSION

The study disclosed that deictic expressions in the text are on the greedy leaders who are out to exploit the masses, problem in the society and their solutions. The study concludes that three types of deictic expressions, namely, person deictic expression, place deictic expression and time deictic expression are used by the characters in the text. Person deictic expressions point to the characters in the text; place deictic expressions point to the places where actions are taken while time deictic expressions point to various times of actions.

5.1 Suggestion for further studies

The paper recommends that further studies be carried out on deictic expressions used in selected prose and poetry works of prominent African writers.

About the Author

Samaila Yakubu is a lecturer in the department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. His research interests include: Semantics, Pragmatics, Phonetics and Phonology.

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