

# The Use of Person Deixis as Shifts in Authority in Academic Writing: The Case of Students' Acknowledgements in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Maroua

Ngonjo Victor Fuh

University of Maroua, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature (Cameroon)

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjel.2013/vol12n22441>

Published March 23, 2024

---

**Citation:** Fuh N.V. (2024) The Use of Person Deixis as Shifts in Authority in Academic Writing: The Case of Students' Acknowledgements in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Maroua, *British Journal of English Linguistics*, Vol.12, Issue 2, pp.24-41

---

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines person deixis as shifts of authority in academic writing with focus on students' acknowledgements in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Maroua. It also looks at the role it plays in academic writing. This work stems from the fact that indexical expression of person plays an important role in the dissemination of information. It extends and gives further explanation where nonverbal communication is limited; thus becomes more effective. This work is of great value in language use in the sense that it shows how students use person deixis as shifts in authority in academic writing in their acknowledgements to show that they are the authors of these projects. This research uses a qualitative research design. This is because the researcher culled some messages from the acknowledgements of students of the Department of English Language and Literature from 2021-2023 academic year. Insight was drawn from Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis. The findings indicated that one type of indexical expression; person was used for these reasons. First, to demonstrate that they are the authors of their dissertations. Second, to show gratitude to those who helped them in any way to complete their school projects.*

**KEYWORDS:** person deixis, students, shifts in authority, academic writing, acknowledgements, department of English language and Literature

---

## INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in the lives of human beings. This is because it is through language that people express themselves to others how they feel or make their wishes known. In fact, language shapes our thoughts and through it people get to know who we are. People use language for different purposes depending on the context too. In the marketing domain, marketers

use language because they want to win the hearts of their customers to buy what they are selling. Teachers on their part use language to transmit knowledge to their students. Lawyers and magistrates use language in law courts to either sentence someone for a crime committed or to acquit the accused person. In the same vein, the clergy also use language to instruct their congregations about the word of God so that people can be saved from their sinful lives. It is worth noting that researchers, scholars and students are not left out when it comes to the use of language. This category of people also use language in academic writing. Academic writing is writing which communicates ideas, information and research to the wider academic community. It can be divided into two types: student academic writing, which is used as a form of assessment at university, as well as at schools as preparation for university study; and expert academic, which is writing that is intended for publication in an academic journal or book. It is worth noting that academic writing has norms which makes it different from other forms of writings such as structure of the work, objective, precision and evidence to name but these. In relation to this paper, one of the rules students in the Department of English Language and Literature are expected to use in their dissertations or thesis is the use of hedges. However, it has been noted that this is not always the case especially when these young researchers craft their acknowledgements. Instead of using hedges in this part of their works, they change the rule. This is done through the use of person deixis. It is worth mentioning here that so many scholarly articles have been written on the use of deixis as a whole and person deixis in particular (see Arywan, Budasi & Ramendra, 2022; Herdiyanti, 2020; Rokmah & Santoso, 2022; Rachman, 2021; Simbolon, Sihombing & Marpaung, 2020; Aprilia, Wahyudi, Markhamah & Sabardila, 2021; Zulyanputri, Indrayani, & Seomantri, 2020; Sinaga, Herman & Marpaung, 2020; Astria, Mujiyanto & Rukmini, 2019). However, no author has examined the use of person deixis as shifts of authority in academic writing which is the focus of this paper.

The aim of this paper is to examine the use of person deixis as shifts in authority in students' acknowledgements in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Maroua from 2021-2023 academic year. The study also explores the role played by this linguistic category. This work would be useful to scholars since it could enlarge and widen their knowledge of the relevant use of indexical expressions (person deixis) in an academic milieu. The objectives of this study are:

- To explore person deixis as shifts in authority in the acknowledgements of students in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Maroua from 2021-2023 academic year.
- To investigate the role person deixis plays in the acknowledgements of these students.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What type of person deixis is used as shifts in authority in the acknowledgements of students' dissertations in the Department of English Language and Literature?
- What role does it play in students' acknowledgements?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of this study is based on Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis. The term deixis is borrowed from the Greek word for pointing or indicating. Yule (1996:9) describes deixis as a way of "pointing through language." In addition, Lyons (1977a: 377) defines deixis as "the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatio-temporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee." Kress, Ogborn, and Martin (1998) also define deixis as a 'locational/navigational system' which functions to show or refer to a certain event of the interaction occurring. This researcher adopts the above definitions in this paper.

## TYPES OF DEIXIS

The traditional categories of deixis are person, place and time. It is worth noting that there is also discourse and social deixis (following Lyons, 1968, 1977a, & Fillmore, 1971b, 1975).

### Person deixis

Person deixis concerns the encoding of participants in the speech event in which the utterance in question is delivered: the category first person is the grammaticalisation of the speaker's reference to himself, second person the encoding of the speaker's reference to one or more addressees, and third person the encoding of reference to persons and entities which are neither speakers nor addressees of the utterance in question. Familiar ways in which such participants-roles are encoded in language are of course pronouns and their associated predicate agreements. For example:

1. *We* need pens not guns.
2. This is not where *they* are supposed to be.
3. *We* are "Ambazonians". Nothing can take that from *us*.

### Place deixis

Place deixis concerns the encoding of spatial locations relative to the location of the participants in the speech event. Probably most languages grammaticalise at least a distinction between proximal or close to speaker and distal or non-proximal, sometimes close to addressee. Such distinctions are commonly encoded in demonstratives as in English *this* versus *that*, and in deictic adverbs of place like English *here* and *there*. For example:

1. Whatever brought them *here* should be resolved.
2. *This* is not *where* they are supposed to be.
3. We will fight these terrorist occupiers *block-by-block*.

### **Time deixis**

Time deixis concerns the encoding of temporal points and spans relative to the time at which an utterance was spoken or a written message inscribed. Time deixis is commonly grammaticalised in deictic adverbs of time like English *now* and *then*, *yesterday* and *this year*, but above all in tense. For example:

1. Restore federation *now* or face revolution *later*.
2. I said it *Yesterday*. I say it *today*. And I will say it *tomorrow*. There is no Anglophone problem.
3. I couldn't receive a medal *when* my people are dying.

Now, later, yesterday, today, tomorrow and when are examples of deictic expressions of time. They show the opinions of the three speakers in the three sentences.

### **Discourse deixis**

Discourse or text, deixis concerns the use of expressions within some utterance to refer to some portion of the discourse that contains that utterance (including the utterance itself). There are many words and phrases in English that indicate the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse. Examples are utterance-initial usages of *this*, *that*, *but*, *therefore*, *in conclusion*, *to the contrary*, *still*, *however*, *anyway*, *well*, *besides*, *actually*, *all in all*, *so*, *after all*, *because*, *until*, *yet* and *till* to name but these. It is generally conceded that such words have at least a component of meaning that resists truth-conditional treatment (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1979b). Discourse deixis has to do with the encoding of reference to portions of the unfolding discourse in which the utterance which includes the text referring expression is located as demonstrated in these examples below.

1. You love *this* woman.
2. *That* is true.
3. Now is a period full of activity at every level, *and* we hope that after the Christmas holidays, we can resume the process of meeting and dialogue.

In the first two sentences above, *that* in sentence 2 refers to or points back to the woman. In the third sentence, *and* as a discourse marker is used to show the time in which the speaker is and what will be done after that.

### **Social deixis**

Social deixis concerns the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participant-roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee or speaker and some referent. Social deixis concerns “that aspect of sentences which reflect or are determined by certain realities of the social situation in which the speech act occurs” (Fillmore, 1975:76). Here we shall restrict the term to those aspects of language structure that encode the social identities of participants (properly, incumbents of participant-roles), or the social relationship between them, or between one of them and persons and entities referred to. There are two basic kinds of socially deictic information that seem to be encoded in languages around the world: relational and absolute.

The relational variety is the most important, and the relations that typically get expressed are those between:

- i. Speaker and referent (e.g. referent honorifics)
- ii. Speaker and addressee (e.g. addressee honorifics)
- iii. Speaker and bystander (e.g. bystander or audience honorifics)
- iv. Speaker and setting (e.g. formality levels)

Examples of social deixis include:

- i. Morning *Sir*.
- ii. Afternoon *Professor*.
- iii. Evening *Doctor*.

The words *Sir*, *Professor* and *Dr* show that the three people are socially different in terms of social class. *Professor* is higher to *Sir* and *Dr*. This deictic category distinguishes the three people in terms of their social status.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Different researchers and scholars have conducted research on the use of indexical expressions and from different perspectives. They also used different methods of data collection and analysis and also obtained varying results. For example, some erudite investigated indexical studies on social media such as WhatsApp (Sugianto & Muslim, 2022; Fuh, 2022) and platforms such as YouTube (Makarim, 2021) and Twitter (Squires, 2014). While the study of Sugianto and Muslim (2022) revealed that personal deixis was the most frequently used followed by social, discourse, place and time, Makarim's (2021) study showed that the deictic expressions of person, temporal, and spatial were applied in the advertisement of public transportation's YouTube video. Fuh, (2022) posits that there were three types of indexical expressions used on social media during the Anglophone crisis namely person, time and place. Person deixis was used to show that some ministers implicated in the Anglophone crisis are liars because they do not tell the truth concerning the situation in the Southern Cameroons and that Paul Biya is a dictator, killer, and a destroyer. For example, he burns homes, kills people, rapes and subjugates. (*Twitter 195, Dec. 2019*). Time deixis was also used to established that Paul Biya is a dictator because he has been in power for 42 years. More so, to question when the world will speak up for the oppressed people of Southern Cameroons concerning ongoing genocide there. Place deixis was used to show a number of things. First, that Paul Biya is committing heinous crimes in Southern Cameroons. Second, the military burnt houses, raped women, abducted and killed men just to install a command and control center. Third, how the tribal militias (BIR) of dictator Paul Biya picked up people right in their houses without arms and summarily executed them. Squire (2014) demonstrated in his study that the phrase "lady pond," a euphemism for women as objects of desire is used with the same form and meaning as on Bravo, and it is semantically and stylistically integrated into users' repertoires. However, it loses its indexical links to Bravo through "indexical bleaching," which he argues is an outcome of the phrase's decontextualised circulation and a facilitator of its further diffusion. Some researchers were also interested in the analysis of social deixis and deixis in novels (Jamiah, 2018; Wibowo &

Nailufar, 2018; Ayuningtyas, 2019; Sari & Zakrimal, 2020). These researchers used different methods of data collection and analysis and came out with divergent views. Jamiah's (2018) study found that Sebastian Rudd the main character used all types of social deixis with relational social deixis having 51 occurrences and absolute social deixis with 24 appearances. Ayuningtyas (2019) found that there were many social deictic words in the novel *Great Expectations* with the dominant social deixis being relational with 75.85%, and absolute social deixis with 24.15%. Wibowo and Nailufar (2018) found that person deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis were used in the novel. Person deixis consisted of first person to identify the speaker, second person to appoint the addressee, and third person deixis referred to a person who is neither the speaker nor the addressee. Furthermore, while spatial deixis was used to explain the location of a certain utterance, temporary deixis had as function to describe the exact time of an utterance.

Some critics have also examined the use of social deixis in movies (Saputri, 2016; Sasmita, Hardiah & Elfrida, 2018; Siregar, 2020; Wiguna, Nuramalia & Irma, 2018; Ainiyah, Sili, & Ariani, 2019; Noerrofia & Bahri, 2019; Fitria, 2020; Dwipayani, Subagia, & Gede, Suarjaya, 2020; Putra, Sofyan & Sembiring, 2020) while obtaining different results. Saputri's (2016) analysis exposed four types of deixis used in this study namely personal, spatial, temporal and discourse deixis with discourse deixis being the dominant used in Black Swan Movie Script. The work of Siregar (2020) revealed that there were three types of personal deixis such as first, second and third person personal deixis. There were also three varieties of reference which refer to first person, second person and third person. Fitria (2020) illustrated that three types of deixis were found in the subtitle movie of "First Kiss." They are person, time, and place. Noerrofia and Bahri (2019) identified 68 styles of social deixis in this study with 34 styles of social deixis categorised as the aim of social deixis. Also, two kinds of deixis were found, 18 styles of social deixis in relational social deixis and 16 styles of social deixis in absolute social deixis. Three aims of social deixis were also identified. For example, 9 styles of social deixis were categorised as to express politeness, and respect, 18 styles of social deixis were categorised as to express intimacy and 7 styles to identify authority. Putra, Sofyan and Sembiring (2020) found that the dominant social deixis in the Madness of King George movie, whether relational or absolute or social deixis, referred to the male characters than the female characters. This is because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the man holds more power to lead the society and dominant in public relations, especially in Kingdom territory.

Other researchers have examined the use of deixis in drama and came out with different results (Kusumaningrum, 2016; Larasati, 2020; Khidhir & Majeed, 2019). Kusumaningrum's (2016) study showed that person, place, time, discourse and social deixis were used. The study also demonstrated that person deixis was the most used in the play. This is because the comic strip is done in spoken discourse although the text is in written form. Larasati (2020) validated that there were two types of deixis used in this study with relational social deixis having 62% and absolute deixis 32%. The study also shows four social relationships between the characters in the play. For example, 41% of title, 31% of friendship, 18% of intimate and 10% of clan. Khidhir and Majeed's (2019) investigation proved that social deixis (relational and absolute) is related to the social identity,

relative power and social relation between the characters. The analysis also indicated that the dominant type of deixis used by the writer in this play is relational social deixis.

Deixis has also been investigated from the view point of newspapers (Pranta & Rahmat, 2020; Halawa, 2018; Miftah, 2016; Febriza, 2020). They used different methods to conduct their studies and also got different results. Halawa (2018) sought to know types of deixis used in the Jarkata Post and found that five types of deixis were used. For example, person deixis had 42 (26.41%), place deixis 9(5.66%), time deixis 15(9.43%), discourse deixis 32(2012) and social deixis 61(38.36%). Miftah's (2016) study indicated that person, spatial and temporal deixis were found in the Jarkata Post. Examples of person deixis are it (third person singular personal pronoun), I, me, (first person singular personal pronoun), your (possessive form of the pronoun you) and his (possessive form of the pronoun he). Spatial deixis was shown in that (demonstrative pronoun) and here (adverb of place). Temporal deixis was also illustrated in the words this year and now. Febriza (2020) piloted a study to identify deixis used in online Newspaper; Jkarta Post and revealed that of the 928 words used, 70% are person deixis, 12% are temporal deixis, 10% are discourse deixis, 5% are social deixis, and 3% spatial deixis.

Critics have also studied deixis from a diplomatic and political perspective while obtaining different results (Minkhatunnakhriyah, Hidayat & Alek, 2021; Adetunji, 2006; Bouk, 2016; Nuryusticia & Nurrachman; 2021). Minkhatunnakhriyah, Hidayat and Alek, (2021) in their study found thirty-five deixis from comment speech of Indonesian diplomat. More so, there were twenty-three personal deixis consisting of a first, second, and third person, seven spatial deixis, and five temporal deixis. Person deixis is generally delivered by person grammatical type, which replaces personal pronoun encode like community and appropriate names. Spatial deixis shows the speaker's speech location. Temporal deixis is used to point the time of the speech event. Spencer, Jayantini and Suastini (2021) analysed different usages of deixis by Donald Trump in his speech on 1 June 2020 at Rose Garden, White House. The study found three ways of deixis usage in Donald Trump's speech, namely gestural, symbolic and non-deictic usage. Chefor and Zhiying (2019) also conducted a study to determine the different types of deictic resources used by Paul Biya in his message to the Cameroonian youth, and the frequencies of his usage of these deictic resources in this political speech. They found that he employed different types of deictic resources including 103 personal deixis (52.2 %), 17 spatial deixis (9.4%), 21 temporal deixis (11.7%), 30 social deixis (16.7%), and 8 discourse deixis (10%). Furthermore, Nuryusticia and Nurrachman (2021) identified two types of deixis in their study which are relational manifested by the speaker and referent and the speaker and addressee, absolute social deixis manifested by the authorised speaker and the authorised recipient.

Deixis has also been studied from a spatial perspective by some researchers while achieving different results. Hussein (2013) found that there were 658 deictic expressions used in Joyce's *Araby*, out of which 185 were spatial deixis, 176 are temporal deixis, 162 personal deixis, 131

discourse deixis, and 14 are social deixis. Al-Khalidy's, (2018) study concluded that proximal terms are the most frequent used by MPs followed by distal terms whereas medial terms were the least occurred ones. Saputri (2016) demonstrated that there were 4 types of maxims found in the movie script that consisted of personal deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis and social deixis. Ekowati and Sofwan (2014) showed in their research that person deixis was the most dominant with 234 appearances, discourse deixis with 47 occurrences, place deixis was 16, time deixis with 15, and social deixis with 12 rates. Putri and Budiarsa (2018) proved that there were three types of deixis found in their study namely person, spatial and temporal deixis.

Studies have also been conducted on deixis in academic writing by different critics while obtaining different results (Triyanti, Irawati & Kuniawani, 2022; Patmo, 2017; Sengul & Eve 1978; Ahmed, 2011). Ahmed (2011) concluded that it would be possible for English Language syllabus designers in general to predict, and for SPINE designers in particular to have predicted proximate guides of what the EFL students will learn if the number of paragraphs in each syllabus, error and mistakes, the structuring of deictic categories and the mechanism of sentence functional perspective are seriously considered. Triyanti, Irawati and Kuniawani, (2022) revealed in their study that, five types of deixis were used. It also indicated that there were 1.036 deictic words in the writing. The dormant type of deixis was person with 49%, temporal with 35%, social with 7%, spatial with 6% and discourse deixis with 3%. Patmo (2017) found that the teacher of English and students used deixis in their daily activity in the classroom. The most frequent type of deixis used by them is person deixis. Furthermore, the most type of speech acts on English teaching and learning at this class is directive utterance. The teacher and the students used deixis and speech acts almost at every moment. Also, because the class used teacher center method, the students used deixis and speech acts only when they responded to the teacher's questions. Sengul and Eve's study (1978) exhibited that children go through at least three stages in acquiring the deictic contrast. They start with no contrast, work out a partial contrast used only in certain contexts, and finally master a full contrast equivalent to the adults. Botne (2005) also indicated that deixis is not inherent to all come and go expressions, but is, in the case of go lexemes, often a pragmatic attribute of contextual use. Pointing had the job of picking out overt concrete objects (McNeill, Cassell & Levy, 2009).

It could be said from the above literature review that although a lot has been written on the use of deixis (see Kusumanigtyas & Halimah, 2020; Amin & Jukil, 2019; Indawa & Utami, 2022; Herdiyanti, 2020; Fani, 2020; Aryawan, Budasi & Ramendra, 2022; Nisa, Asi & Sari, 2020; Nurfadilla, 2023), no work has investigated on person deixis as shifts in authority in academic writing which is the focus of this paper. This review therefore gives this researcher a starting point and a way forward.



## METHOD AND ANALYSIS

This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method. Documentation technique and random sampling were used to collect the sample of data from the acknowledgements of students of the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Maroua. Documentary technique means that data were obtained by reading the acknowledgements of students' dissertations. This method helped the researcher to identify, study and collect the required information related to the study. A total of five acknowledgements (2021-2023) academic year were obtained from the dissertations of students irrespective of their gender. After reading these acknowledgements, the researcher identified deictic expressions of person used as shifts of authority in academic writing by students of the Department of English Language and Literature use and why they use it when they have finished writing their research projects.

## RESULTS

This section discusses the findings of the research. As a reminder, this work set out to explore the use of person deixis as shifts in authority in academic writing with focus on students' acknowledgements in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Maroua. It also looks at the significance of this deictic category used by these students in their write ups. It is worth mentioning here that errors in the corpus are not from this researcher. They are from the students. The analysis of the facts reveals the use of deictic category of person as illustrated in the table below.

*Table 1*

*Person deixis in students' acknowledgements*

Dexis	Words	Frequencies	Total
Person deixis			
<b>First person</b>	I	36	<b>Total=36</b>

There is one type of deixis from the analysed data above as discussed below.

### Person Deixis

The only deictic expression found in students' acknowledgements in the Department of English Language and Literature is person deixis. There are different types of person deixis such as: *I, me, he, his, them, their, my, you, yours, him*. In the context of this study, the researcher will limit himself to the first person pronoun I. In academic writing students normally use hedges. Hedging is the use

of linguistic devices to express hesitation or uncertainty as well as to demonstrate politeness and indirectness. It holds significance in academic writing because it is prudent to be cautious in one's statements so as to distinguish between facts and opinions. People use hedged language for several reasons, but perhaps the most fundamental are the following:

1. To minimise the possibility of another academic the claims that are being made.
2. To conform to the currently accepted style of academic writing.
3. To enable the authors to device a politeness strategy where they are able to acknowledge that there may be flaws in their claims.

The following are some hedging words and phrases that can be used to achieve this.

- Introductory verbs: seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest.
- Certain lexical verbs: believe, assume, suggest.
- Modal adverbs: possibly, perhaps, conceivably.
- That clauses: it could be the case that, it might be suggested that, there is every hope that.

As stated above, academic writing requires the use of hedging. However, when it comes to writing acknowledgements, students and scholars make use of person deixis *I* to show shifts in authority. Person deixis through the use of the personal pronoun *I* refers to the students, authors of the written dissertations. Person deixis is used for these reasons. Firstly, to demonstrate that these students are the authors of these write-ups. Secondly, to show how appreciative these students are concerning the help they got when they were writing their dissertations. Thirdly, to show the help they got from friends, classmates, parents, family members, lecturers and supervisors to name but these either materially, spiritually, morally and otherwise. Lastly, person deixis is used to indicate that research is a collective effort because students get assistance from people who have better ideas than theirs which go a long way to give their work the texture it deserves, though at the end of the day a certificate or diploma is awarded to a single person. It is worth mentioning here that deictic expressions are used in the form of the speaker to addresses. These words are categorised into first person deixis as illustrated in the examples below:

### **First Person Deixis**

This deictic category of person is applied when students use it in the singular to talk about themselves to show that they are the ones who wrote their dissertations and to appreciate those people who helped them in their research work. We have these examples from the collected information:

1. *I will first of all thank God for giving me good health and protection, inspiration and strength from the beginning to the end despite some challenges faced in the course of this work.*

2. *I am indebted to Dr Djungo and Dr Faissam for their useful corrections and suggestions and for their encouragements.*
3. *I thank them for their moral and financial assistance.*
4. *I am grateful to Mr Talba Baissana, Mr. Abo Garou and Mr. Taiwe Awe who sacrificed their precious time in reading and correcting this work.*
5. *I am very grateful to God for providing me with good health, strength and financial means to carry out this research.*
6. *I am also grateful to the members of my family here in Maroua especially David Baidiguime, Arvoudou Angele, Bonoudi joice, and Yani Marie louange who provided me with a room to sleep, food and peaceful environment to proceed with my studies.*
7. *I am also grateful to the Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, Prof. Arundie Camilla Tabe, and to Prof. Rostand Nguo, Prof. Lozzy Martial Meutem, Dr Nzotom Bankop Willy, Dr Menang Ophelia and all the lecturers of the Department of English Language and Literature for haven impacted me with knowledge that shaped my ideas while writing this dissertation.*
8. *I praise the Lord, the Almighty who provided me courage and health to be active during the research. Without him I could not be able to write this thesis.*
9. *I render my immense thanks to my brothers and sisters:MBALIDAM, MBOULDYE[...]*
10. *I would like to acknowledge the help of all people who have directly or indirectly contributed to the completion of this work. To all of them, I express my gratitude.*
11. *I would like to thank my classmates Dama Francois Francois, Issoufou Oumarou Kita, Euhnoba Elodie, and Djessou Yakoubou for their assistance in collecting data for this work.*
12. *I am acknowledgeable towards students who accepted to fill in the Discourse Completion Test.*
13. *I equally remain indebted to Professor Kouninki Habiba and Mr Taibo Madi David for their inspirational words which keep me optimistic throughout the period of this research.*
14. *I remain grateful to all the lecturers in the Department of English of the University of Maroua for their wonderful lectures and provision of adequate material for consultation about this study.*
15. *I thank all class-delegates of level one, level two, level three and masters one of English law's department in the University of Maroua for their collaboration, understanding and help.*

First person deixis through the use of the personal pronoun *I* in the sentences above culled from the collected data is used for two main reasons. First, it has been used as shifts in authority when it comes to writing acknowledgements by students in academic writing to exemplify that they are the ones who actually did the writing exercise. Second, through first person deixis *I*, the reader is made to understand that these students are grateful for the help they got from people when they were carrying out their research activities and the only way they can best demonstrate their gratitude is to express it through person deixis *I*.

---

## DISCUSSION

This paper set out to explore the use of person deixis as shifts of authority in academic writing used in the acknowledgements of students of the Department of English Language and Literature and the role they play. The analysis revealed that person deixis as shifts of authority in academic writing was used for two reasons. The first reason is that this deictic category through the use of the personal pronoun *I* shows that the students are the sole proprietors of these dissertations. We see here that there is a shift of authority when it comes to writing acknowledgements by students, researchers and scholars. This is different when it comes to carrying out the same academic exercise in other parts of the study where scholars, researchers and students are expected to use hedges. The second motive is that, students as authors of these projects are very grateful and appreciative. For this reason, they also use the personal pronoun *I* to thank those who helped them like their parents, friends, classmates, lecturers, God and their spiritual leaders to name but these when they were conducting their studies given that one good turn deserves another. That is, if someone does you a favour, you should take the chance to repay it, kindness should be rewarded with kindness. Yes, and the only way this can be done is by personalising it through the use of the personal pronoun *I* as discussed earlier. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that there were 36 occurrences of the first person pronoun *I*. The repetition of this pronoun is to show authorship and appreciation as already mentioned before, thus a detachment from the norms of academic writing when it comes to crafting an acknowledgement in academia.

The findings of this study are different from those of (Ulfa, 2021; Astria, Mujiyanto & Rukmini, 2019; Cokal, 2019; Hidayati, Sulisyaningsih & Syakur, 2022; Abaker, 2018) in that, this study examined the use of person deixis as shifts in authority in academic writing which is not the focus of the above authors. Furthermore, though the works of the above writers are similar to the present study in that they both dwell on the use deictic categories in academic writing, they also have divergences. For example, Ulfa (2021) showed that there were three types of deixis in this study which helped the students to easily understand the contents of the English Language textbook while Astria, Mujiyanto and Rukmini (2019) found that the realisation of person deixis was more dominant since the students as the writers position themselves as the main characters of their own stories. Place deixis was realised through demonstrative pronouns, English adverb, and English preposition. The use of the proximal form of place deixis was more dominant rather than the distal form of place deixis. Time deixis was realised through past tense, present time, future time and adverbial of time. Social deixis was also realised through relational social deixis (used in informal situation) and absolute social deixis (used in formal situation). The students used discourse deixis in the form of demonstrative *this/that* and discourse marker. Furthermore, there were difficulties faced by students in using deixis and the methods used by the teacher to overcome the students' difficulties. Furthermore, Cokal's (2019) results showed that (1) *it* was used as a discourse deictic at lower levels of proficiency; (2) *this* was the default demonstrative for reference establishment and maintenance; (3) learners tend to use demonstratives in rhetorical relations that are typical of

written academic discourse; (4) learners demonstrate non-optional processing of pointing acts. Hidayati, Sulisyaningsih and Syakur, (2022) also indicated in their study that there was person deixis, which is the name of the person in the story, spatial deixis which is the location of the story, temporal deixis which is the time the events in the story took place, social deixis, which is the surrounding environment and discourse deixis which is the next chapter in the story. The study also demonstrated that there was error analysis such as omission, addition, misinformation and disordering. Abaker (2018) exposed that there were statistically significant differences between the means of two groups in favour of the experimental group which was ( $P=.002$  is less than  $.05$ ) at T test equals 3.54. This researcher recommended that teachers should train students on deictic expressions through authentic communicative situations because the meaning of each conversation depends on these deictic expressions to make effective communication. Since deixis functions as a cohesive device in spoken discourse, teachers have to use it effectively in English classroom to promote students' listening and speaking abilities.

### **Implication to Research and Practice**

We use language on a daily basis in different areas of life for one reason or the other. It is worth noting that one of the linguistic features found in this language is indexical expressions. This study is therefore of great value to students, scholars, linguists and the public in that it offers them the opportunity to know the type of indexical expression such as person used by students in their acknowledgements as shifts in authority in academic writing and the role it plays in the dissemination of information. Furthermore, the study through indexical expression of person also makes the audience to know that research is a collective effort in that researchers get help in different forms from people when they are undertaking a study, (though a certificate or diploma is always given to the writer of the project) and therefore need to appreciate these people for their generosity towards them. It is believed that this study will make the public to know the type or types of indexical expressions to use when they want to appreciate someone for something good done to them. In the same vein, the study also reveals to the reader the vocabulary used by students through indexical expression of person and their importance in academic writing.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper explored the use of person deixis as shifts in authority in academic writing by students of the Department of English Language and Literature from 2021 to 2023 academic year. The findings indicated that person deixis was used for two main reasons. The first reason is that it demonstrates the students are the authors of their dissertations. Second, it also shows that the students are appreciative to those who helped them when they were writing their projects. The researcher concludes that students in particular and Cameroonians as a whole should make use of first person deixis in their works to demonstrate that they are the authors of their works and are indebted to those who granted them favours when they were writing their school projects for that is the only way they can immortalise such people in their hearts as well as in history.

### Suggestions for Further Research

As stated before, we use indexical expressions in our discourse for different purposes depending on the context too. This study has examined the use of person deixis as shifts in academic writing in students' acknowledgements in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Maroua. It has also shown why they use this linguistic category in their write ups. This study limited itself to deictic categories used by students. However, researchers can still conduct research on the use of indexical expressions by preachers, medical doctors, and marketers. Furthermore, scholars can also explore the use of deictic expressions on social media, in poetry, films and in the speeches of celebrities.

### REFERENCES

- Abaker, H. S. O. (2018). Impact of pragmatic deixis on improving oral communication among university English majors: A case study of Faculties of Arts & Education -Al-Fashir University (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis). Al-Fashir University.
- Adetunji, A. (2006). Inclusion and exclusion in political discourse: Deixis in Olusegun Obasanjo's speeches. Nigeria, *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 5 (2), 177-191.
- Ahmed, M. S. M. (2011). Deixis category as favourable syllabus materials: A critical study in Sudan's practical integrated national English. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1, (7), 811-820.
- Ainiyah, K., Sili, S. and Ariani, S. (2019). Analysis of deixis in Pitch Perfect 2 movie. *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya*, 3(3), 288-302.
- Al-Khalidy, H. O. (2018). A pragmatic analysis of spatial deixis in the discussions of the general budget by the Jordanian MPs for the financial year 2017. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 8(1), 134-138.
- Amin, M. I. M. and Jukiil, A. M. (2019). A pragmatic study of person deixis in A.S.A. Harrison's *The Silent Wife*. *Journal of University of Raparin*, 6(1), 91-113.
- Aprilia, A. Wahyudi, A. B. Markhamah and Sabardila, A. (2021). Social deixis in a Wattpad story Menjadi Selir and its use as teaching material for Sociolinguistics Courses. Proceedings of the International Conference of Learning on Advance Education (ICOLAE 2021). *Advance in Social Sciences, Education and Humanities Research*, 662: 439-445.
- Aryawan, L. P. K. F. Budasi, I. G. and Ramendra, D. P. (2022). The deixis used in the song lyrics performed by the most popular boy group BTS. *JPBII*, 10(1).
- Asmarita, A. and Haryudin, A. (2019). An analysis of deixis in Ridwan Kamil's speech at the Asia Africa Conference (KAA). *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 2(5), 622-627.
- Astria, A. Mujiyanto, J. and Rukmini, D. (2019). The realisation of deixis in students' writing at Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung. *EEJ* 9, (4), 517-526.
- Ayuningtyas, N. C. (2019). An analysis of social deixis in *Great Expectations short story*. (2001). Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.
- Botne, R. (2005). Cognitive schemas and motion verbs: Coming and going in Chindali (Eastern Bantu). *Walter de Gruyter*, 16 (1), 43-80.
- Bouk, E. (2016). Pragmatic analysis of deixis in the speeches of Xanana Gusmao-former Prime Minister of Timor Leste. *Jurnal Tutor*, 2(2), 41- 49.
- Chefor, M. and Zhiying, X. (2019). Understanding the use of deixis in Paul Biya's 2019 message to Cameroonian Youth. *International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research*, 8(1), 1-18.
- Cokal, D. (2019). Discourse deixis and anaphora in L2 writing. *Dilbilim Arastirmalari Dergisi*, 2: 241-271.
- Dwipayani, N. M., Subagia, I. K. and Gede Suarjaya, A. A. (2020). Deixis found in movie script 'Sing.' *KULTURISTIK*:

*Jurnal Bahasa Dan Budaya*, 4(1), 44-55.

- Ekowati, A. and Sofwan, A. (2014). The use of pragmatic deixis in conversation texts in *Pathway to English. Journal of Educational Research*, 43(2),71–77.
- Fani, M. M. (2020). An Analysis of deixis used in education news articles on antara news online newspaper on the edition of November 2019-May 2020 (A study documentation). (Unpublished Thesis): University of Surakarta.
- Febriza, M. R. (2020). A deixis analysis of online newspaper in Jakarta Post. *Professional Journal of English Education*, 3(6), 689-696.
- Fillmore, C.J. (1971b). Towards a theory of deixis. The PCCLLU Papers (Department of Linguistics, University of Hawaii), 3.4, 219-41.
- Fillmore, C.J. (1975). *Santa Cruz Lectures on Deixis*, 1971. Mimeo, Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Fitria, T., N. (2020). Analysis of deixis in the movie subtitle of 'First Kiss.' *LET: Linguistics, Literature and English Teaching Journal*,10(1), 112-132.
- Fuh, N.V. (2022, November 11). An analysis of indexical expressions on Twitter during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Stigmatisation, Identity (De/Re) construction and Representations in Global Spaces: Cross-cultural, Linguistic and Literary Perspectives Conference, Department of Bilingual Letters, University of Maroua.
- Green, G. M. (2008). *Pragmatics and natural language understanding*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In Cole and Morgan (1975: 41-58) (Part of Grice (1967).)
- Halawa, M. (2018). An analysis of deixis in the article of the Jakarta Post (Unpublished Master's Dissertation). University of Muhammadiyah Sumatra Utara Medan.
- Herdiyanti, T. (2020). Deixis analysis in the song lyrics, "Someone Like You" by Adele. *Professional Journal of Education*, 3(6), 777-780.
- Hidayati, I. Sulisyaningsih and Syakur, A. (2022). The use of deixis in students' writing narrative texts. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal(BIRCI-Journal)*, 5(1), 2615-1715.
- Hussein, N. J. (2013). Spatial deixis in James Joyce's *Araby*: A Pragmatic study. *The Arab Gulf Journal*, 41(1-2), 1-43.
- Indawa, M. and Utami, B. R. (2022). Deixis analysis in the 'Heart Attack' song lyrics by Demi Lovato. *Komunikata*, 2(5).
- Jamiah, F. (2018). Social deixis in *The Rogue Lawyer* grisham's novel: Pragmatic analysis (Unpublished Master's Dissertation). Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar Samata- Gowa.
- Khidhir, D. I. and Majeed, S. H. (2019). The analysis of social deixis in a night in Khanzad's Life. *Journal of Raparin University*, 6(2), 35-56.
- Kress, G., Ogborn, J. and Martins, I. (1998). A satellite view of language: Some lessons from science classrooms. *Language Awareness*, 7(2–3), 69–89.
- Kusumaningrum, W. R. (2016). Deixis analysis on Indonesian Shakespeare's comics strip of *Julius Caesar*. *Transformatika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 12(2), 73-82 .
- Larasati, W. T. (2020). Social deixis in sharazat drama script: Discourse analysis approach (Unpublished Bachelor Dissertation). Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983) *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S., C. (1984). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (1979b). Pragmatics and social deixis. *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistic Society*, pp. 206-23.
- Lyons, J. (1968). *An Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. (1977a). *Semantics*, Vols. 1 & 2. Cambridge University Press.
- Makarim, L. (2021). The deictic expressions used in the advertisement of public transportation (Unpublished Master's Dissertation). UIN Sun Ampel Surabaya University.
- McNeill, D., Cassell, J. and Levy, E. (1993). Abstract deixis. *De Gruyter Mouton* ,95(1-2), 5-20.

- Miftah, M.Z. (2016). Analysis of deixis in the article selected from the Jakarta Post. Proceedings of International Conference: Role of International Languages Toward Global Education System. Islamic Institute (IAIN) of Palangka Raya Indonesia, 1.
- Minkhatunnakhriyah, Hidayat, D. N. and Alek. (2021). An analysis of deixis on comment speech by Indonesian Diplomat in United Nation (PBB) 75<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Meeting 2020. *Voices of English Language Education Society*, 5(1), 46-53.
- Nisa, B, Asi, A. G. and Sari, S. W. (2020). The context meaning of deixis in soundtracks lyric of the Greatest Showman movie. *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 4(1), 41–55.
- Noerrofi, I. and Bahri, S. (2019). The analysis of social deixis in the movie ‘Beauty and the Beast.’ *PIONEER*, 11(1), 12-20.
- Nurfadilla (2023). Deixis used in selected business news article of CNN International News: A pragmatic analysis (Unpublished Thesis). English Department, Faculty of Cultural Science, Hasanuddin University.
- Nuryusticia, E. and Nurrachman, D. (2021). Social deixis analysis in the final interview with the Obamas. *CALL*, 3(1),71-80.
- Patmo, Y. (2017). An analysis of deixis and speech act used in English teaching and learning process. *Linguistic English Education and Art Journal*, 1(1), 82-90.
- Pranata, M. S. A. and Rahmat, M. B. I. (2020). Deixis in Jakarta Post article. *IJoEEL*, 02(01), 36-42.
- Putra, Z. D. Sofyan, D. and Sembiring, B. (2020). An analysis of social deixis in ‘The Madness’ of King George Movie. *Journal of Development and Innovation in Language and Literature Education*, 1(1), 17-32.
- Putri, A. and Budiarsa, M. (2018). The Analysis of deixis in the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. *Jurnal Humanis*, 22(3), 697-710.
- Rachman, L. A. (2021). A deixis analysis of song lyrics in Lewis Capaldi “Divinely Unspired To Hellish extent (extended edition)” album (Unpublished Thesis). Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung.
- Rokhmah, D. E. L. and Santoso, D. E. P. M. (2022). A deixis analysis of song lyrics in Jeremy Zucker’s “You Were Good to Me” and “Comethru.” *ELS-JISH*, 5(3).
- Saputri, K. (2016). An analysis of deixis in ‘Black Swan’ movie script. *Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 5(1), 13–18.
- Sari, D. P. and Zakrimal (2020). An analysis of deixis in ‘Avenger infinity’ war movie. *Linguistics, English Education and Art(LEEA) Journal*, 4(1), 13-24.
- Sasmitha, R., Hardiah, M. and Elfrida. (2018). An analysis of deixis and its reference used by main character in “A Thousand Words” movie script by Steve Koren. *Journal of English Education and Teaching*, 2(1), 68-75.
- Sengul, C., J. and Eve, V., C. (1978). Strategies in the acquisition of deixis. *Journal of child language*, 5(3), 457-475.
- Simbolon, C. Sihombing, P. S. R. and Marpaung, T. I. (2020). An analysis of deixis of the song lyrics of ‘Ed-Sheeran-Divide-Album-Turnitin. *Global Scientific Journals*, 8(9), 1363-1382.
- Sinaga, D. Herman and Marpaung, T. I. (2020). Deixis in the song lyrics of Lewis Capaldi’s “Breach” Album. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 8(4), 450-457.
- Siregar, A. M. P. (2020). Person deixis in ‘Frozen movie’ script by Sorrow. *SALEE: Study of Applied Linguistics and English Education*, 1(2), 28-44.
- Spencer, W. R. Jayantini, I. G. A. S. R. and Suastini, N. W. (2021). Donald Trump and his speech: A study of different usages of deixis. *Apollo Project*, 10(1), 15-24.
- Squires, L. (2014). From TV personality to fans and beyond: Indexical bleaching and the diffusion of a media innovation. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 24 (1), 42–62.
- Sugianto, A. and Muslim, A. B. (2022). Gazing at ‘the-you-know-who/what’ in WhatsApp: Deixis used in online learning amid covid-19 pandemic. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Learning*, 25(1), 45-62.
- Triyanti, R. Irawati, L and Kuniawani, A. (2022). A Deixis analysis of students’ writing by the Tenth Grade AKL 1 in SMK Negeri 2 Madiun. *Seminar on English Education, Literature, and Linguistics*, 1: 63-68.
- Ulfa, A. (2021). An analysis of deixis in English textbook for grade 12th students in senior high school 1 Kota Jambi (unpublished undergraduate thesis). Batanghari University Jambi.



- Wibowo, A. I. and Nailufar, N. (2018). Deixis and its context used in the novel *Girl in Pieces* by Kathleen Glasglow. *Wanastra: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 10(2), 73–84.
- Wiguna, A., Anggraeni, H., Nuramalia, R. and Irma, S. S. (2018). Deixis in ‘Maleficent movie’ script. *Professional Journal of English Education*, 1(2), 133–138.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zulyanputri, A. Indrayani, L. M. and Seomantri, Y. S. (2020). The correlation between social deixis and social class in a Speech by Nobel Prize Winners: A Sociopragmatic study. *LET: Linguistics, Literature and English Teaching Journal*, 10(1), 24-39.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I will first of all thank God for giving me good health and protection, inspiration and strength from the beginning to the end despite some challenges faced in the course of this work.*

*My gratitude goes to my supervisor, Prof. Tasah James Ngoing, for his guidance, suggestions that shaped my ideas to complete this work. He handled me diligently and with great care; I am very thankful for his patience and understanding.*

*I am also grateful to the Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, Prof. Arundie Camilla Tabe and to Prof. Rostand Nguo, Prof. Lozzy Martial Meutem, Dr Nzotom Bankop Willy, Dr Menang Ophelia and all the lecturers of the Departement of English Language and Literature for haven impacted me with knowledge that shaped my ideas while writing this dissertation. I convey my deepest gratitude to my father Hounbe Marcel and to my mother Maiwabe Madeleine. My immense gratitude also goes to my brothers and sisters namely Maikao Marceline, Taïne Hounbé Ellen, Ndouwe Raymond, Wiwa Angeline and Woingbané Hounbe Emmilienne who have been very helpful in my academic career. I thank them for their moral and financial assistance.*

*I am indebted to Dr Djungo and Dr Faissam for their useful corrections and suggestions and for their encouragements.*

*My gratitude also goes to my spiritual father, Maliki Dieudonné, for his prayers and encouragements.*

*I would like to thank my academic seniors Binwe Emmanuel and Babe Blaise for their encouragements and suggestions and to my classmates Zra Raphael and Noyomndi Marc François for their assistance and help.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I praise the Lord, the Almighty who provided me courage and health to be active during the research. Without him I could not be able to write this thesis.*

*I would like to give my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Prof. James TASAH NGOIN, for his guidance, support, suggestions, as well as valuable understanding in the completion of this thesis. I thank the head of department of English Language and Literature, Prof. Camilla ARUNDIE TUBE, for her immense support and hard working.*

*I am grateful towards Dr. FAISSAM WARDA and Dr. NGONJO Victor for their guidance and support to complete writing my thesis.*

*I am acknowledgeable to my father, MOUTSINA, for everything he did for me: his financial and everlasting love so that I can finish this thesis.*

*I render my immense thanks to my brothers and sisters: MBALIDAM, MBOULDYE, MBADAGUI, MBOULDAMA and TCHAMAYE; my brothers, in-laws; my uncles and aunts for their encouragement, support and advice.*

*I salute the efforts of my classmate NOYOMDI FRANCOIS and I am very proud of my friends and classmates for their motivation and memories.*

*I thank all class-delegates of level one, level two, level three and masters one of English law's department in the University of Maroua for their collaboration, understandings and helps.*

*I am acknowledgeable towards students who accepted to fill in the Discourse Completion Test.*

*Thank to everyone who always accompanies; supports and helps me to solve my problems during the process of writing this thesis.*