DEIXIS EXPRESSED BY PREPOSITIONS: CONTEXT-DEPENDENT MEANING IN LANGUAGE

Senior teacher of Karshi State University
Ergasheva Gulnoz Alimovna
gulnoz2112@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the role of deixis in prepositional usage, exploring how prepositions serve as crucial indicators of context-dependent meaning in communication. Deixis, or the linguistic function of anchoring language to the speaker's temporal, spatial, and social context, is often conveyed through demonstratives, pronouns, and adverbs. However, prepositions also contribute significantly to deictic meaning by signaling relative spatial and temporal relationships that depend on the interlocutor's perspective and situational context.

Keywords: deixis, spatial, temporal, preposition, discourse deixis, motion, context.

Аннотация

В этой статье рассматривается роль дейксиса в использовании предлогов, исследуется, как предлоги служат важнейшими индикаторами контекстно-зависимого значения в коммуникации. Дейксис, или лингвистическая функция привязки языка к временному, пространственному и социальному контексту говорящего, часто передается посредством указательных местоимений, местоимений и наречий. Однако предлоги также вносят значительный вклад в дейктическое значение, сигнализируя об относительных пространственных и временных отношениях, которые зависят от перспективы собеседника и ситуативного контекста.

Ключевые слова: дейксис, пространственный, временной, предлог, дискурс дейксис, движение, контекст

INTRODUCTION

In linguistic theory, **deixis** refers to the phenomenon where the meaning of certain words or expressions is dependent on the context in which they are used. These words, known as **deictic expressions**, derive their meaning from the situation of utterance—such as the time, place, or people involved. Prepositions, which typically express relationships between entities in space, time, or direction, often function as deictic markers in language. When prepositions are used deictically, their meanings shift

based on contextual factors such as the speaker's location, the time of speaking, or the identities of the participants in the conversation. The primary aim of this article is to examine how prepositions express deixis and to analyze the various ways in which context influences the interpretation of these prepositions. By investigating the relationship between prepositions and deixis, this article seeks to highlight the significance of context in shaping the meaning of spatial, temporal, and motion-related expressions in language.

Methods

To explore the role of prepositions in expressing deixis, a **descriptive-analytical approach** is employed. This study draws on existing linguistic literature, examples from everyday discourse, and data from English language usage to analyze how prepositions function deictically. The article is organized around different types of deixis—spatial, temporal, motion, and discourse deixis—to demonstrate how prepositions serve as contextual markers in each case. The analysis begins by defining the concept of deixis and categorizing the main types of deixis that prepositions can express. Specific prepositions are examined in context through examples drawn from real-life conversations and written texts. The study focuses primarily on English prepositions but also touches on cross-linguistic considerations when relevant, illustrating how different languages may express deixis through prepositions in varying ways.

Results

The analysis revealed that prepositions can be categorized into several distinct types based on the kind of deixis they express. These include:

1. **Spatial Deixis (Place Deixis)**
Prepositions such as "in", "on", "under", "between" and "beside" are used to express spatial relationships between entities. The meaning of these prepositions is entirely dependent on the spatial arrangement of objects, and often on the perspective of the speaker. *Example: "The keys are **on** the table".* The meaning of "on" depends on the listener understanding the location of the table in the physical environment.

2. **Temporal Deixis (Time Deixis)**
Prepositions like *"before", "after", "since",* and *"during"* indicate temporal relationships and depend on the time of speaking or some reference point in time. ***Example**: "We will leave **after** the meeting".* The preposition "after" requires the listener to know the timing of the meeting to understand the sequence of events.

3.   **Motion**   **Deixis**

Prepositions of motion—such as "to", "from" "into", and "out of"—indicate movement and direction relative to the speaker's perspective or some reference point. *Example*:   *"He   walked   **into**   the   room"*. The meaning of "into" is dependent on the spatial relationship between the speaker, the room, and the action of entering it.

4.   **Discourse**   **Deixis**

Prepositions like *"about", "regarding", and "concerning"* express relationships to topics or discourse entities. These prepositions are used to refer to parts of the conversation or text, and their meaning is dependent on what has been discussed. *Example*:   *"Let's   talk   **about**   your   project"*. The preposition *"about"* points to the topic of discussion, which is determined by the context of the conversation.

5.   **Person**   **Deixis**

Prepositions such as *"for" "to"* and *"with"* can also express relationships between people. These prepositions rely on the identity or role of the people involved in the interaction.   *Example: "I did this **for** you"*.

The preposition *"for"* expresses the relationship between the speaker and the listener, and its meaning depends on who is involved in the action.

Discussion   The

findings confirm that prepositions are inherently deictic when used in specific contexts. The meaning of a preposition is not fixed but instead depends on factors such as the speaker's location, the time of utterance, and the participants in the conversation. This highlights the relational nature of prepositions and their reliance on contextual information for full interpretation. In the case of **spatial deixis**, the preposition "on" can refer to a location relative to the speaker (e.g., "on the table"), but this relationship requires the listener to have a shared understanding of the spatial context. In **temporal deixis**, the preposition "before" indicates a temporal relationship that only becomes clear when placed in the context of the conversation or events unfolding in time. Likewise, **motion deixis** relies on the speaker's or listener's understanding of directionality and movement, and **discourse deixis** links prepositions to prior or upcoming topics in conversation.

Furthermore, **person deixis** and prepositions such as "for" and "to" reveal the social and interpersonal nature of deixis. These prepositions indicate roles, intentions, and relationships between the speaker and the addressee. The flexible and context-

dependent nature of prepositions underscores the dynamic and interactive aspects of language use.

Finally, it is worth noting that while this study focused primarily on English, deixis expressed through prepositions can vary across languages. For example, some languages, such as **Tlingit** or **Guugu Yimithirr**, use specific deictic systems based on cardinal directions (e.g., "north" "south") rather than relative terms like "left" or "right". These systems provide further insight into how different cultures encode spatial and temporal information in language.

Conclusion

This study illustrates the crucial role of prepositions in expressing deixis within language. Through their context-dependent nature, prepositions serve as vital tools for conveying spatial, temporal, motion-related, and interpersonal relationships. The analysis shows that prepositions are inherently relational, meaning their interpretation is shaped by the context of the speaker, time of speaking, and the participants involved. Understanding how deixis operates through prepositions enhances our understanding of how language functions as a dynamic, context-sensitive system.

The findings of this study are valuable not only for linguists interested in the nature of deixis but also for language learners, translators, and educators, as they highlight the importance of context in determining the meaning of prepositions. Future research could explore how different languages handle deixis and investigate the cognitive processes involved in interpreting deictic expressions in real-time communication.

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