

THE SPECIFICITY OF DEICTIC UNITS IN ENGLISH IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SPEECHES

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Annotation: This article investigates the linguistic and pragmatic functions of deictic units in English as used in international political speeches. Deixis, as a core feature of language and communication, plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between political leaders and their audiences. The study explores how personal, spatial, and temporal deixis contribute to establishing authority, creating inclusivity, and reinforcing ideological positions within global political discourse. By analyzing the linguistic features and pragmatic intentions behind the use of deictic expressions such as “we,” “you,” “here,” and “now,” the research reveals how political figures strategically manipulate deixis to align with audiences, construct social reality, and legitimize power. The findings highlight that deictic units in political speeches go beyond reference; they are vital tools for constructing identity, perspective, and shared context in the international arena.

Keywords: Deixis, political discourse, international speeches, personal pronouns, pragmatics, linguistic reference, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, audience alignment, identity construction, political communication, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, context, discourse analysis.

Introduction. Language in political communication serves not only as a vehicle for conveying information but also as a dynamic tool for constructing relationships, identities, and power structures. In international political discourse, where leaders address both domestic and global audiences, the linguistic mechanisms employed carry significant pragmatic weight. Among these mechanisms, deictic units or deixis play a particularly vital role in anchoring speech within specific communicative contexts. Deixis refers to linguistic elements that depend on the context of utterance for interpretation, such as pronouns, demonstratives, temporal and spatial adverbs. In English, deictic expressions like *I, we, you, this, that, here, now* serve as linguistic pointers that situate the speaker and audience within a shared framework of meaning. International political speeches delivered in institutions such as the United Nations, the European Parliament, or global summits are unique sites of multilingual and multicultural interaction. In these contexts, English often functions as a lingua franca,

and its deictic system becomes a tool for positioning, persuasion, and identity management. Political leaders use deictic expressions strategically to create proximity with audiences, signal solidarity, or assert power and authority. The manipulation of deixis in such contexts reflects broader sociopolitical intentions, enabling leaders to present themselves as both representatives of national interests and members of the international community.

The significance of studying deixis in political speeches lies in its dual function: referential and rhetorical. Referentially, deictic units link language to the context of speech; rhetorically, they influence the audience's perception of inclusion, responsibility, and emotional engagement. Therefore, deixis operates as a bridge between linguistic structure and political strategy. This article aims to explore the specificity of English deictic units in international political speeches, focusing on how they contribute to discourse construction, power negotiation, and audience engagement in a global communicative setting.

Main Part. In linguistic theory, deixis is classified into several types: personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. Each category plays a distinct role in structuring communication. In political discourse, these categories overlap and interact in complex ways, reflecting the speaker's rhetorical goals and ideological positioning.

Personal deixis, which refers to pronouns and other expressions denoting participants in communication, is the most prominent in political speeches. The pronouns *I*, *we*, and *you* are central to constructing social relationships between leaders and audiences. The pronoun *I* serves as a marker of authority and accountability, enabling the speaker to assert personal responsibility or leadership. When a political leader says, "I believe," "I have decided," or "I promise," the utterance emphasizes agency and credibility, projecting the speaker as an active decision-maker. For example, in Barack Obama's speeches, frequent use of *I* was coupled with inclusive pronouns like *we* to balance authority with solidarity, as in "I stand before you today because we have chosen hope over fear."

The pronoun *we* holds special pragmatic significance. It is inherently ambiguous, allowing the speaker to shift inclusivity and exclusivity strategically. In international contexts, *we* may refer to the speaker's nation ("We Americans"), to a political alliance ("We, the European Union"), or to humanity as a whole ("We must act together to protect our planet"). This ambiguity allows leaders to navigate between national and global identities. The use of *we* thus functions as a rhetorical device for unity, consensus, and moral alignment. For example, in speeches addressing climate change or global security, leaders often employ the inclusive *we* to create a sense of shared responsibility: "We cannot afford to wait," or "We must stand united." Through this

usage, the deictic *we* transcend geographical and ideological boundaries, constructing an imagined global community.

Conversely, *you* function as a powerful deictic marker of engagement and appeal. It personalizes discourse, directly addressing the audience and inviting participation. However, in political contexts, *you* can also delineate distance or blame. For instance, a leader may use *you* to criticize other nations or political opponents: “You must take responsibility,” thereby shifting accountability away from the self or the speaker’s in-group. The oscillation between inclusive and exclusive uses of *you* and *we* highlight the strategic manipulation of personal deixis as a persuasive tool.

Spatial deixis, involving expressions like *here*, *there*, *this*, and *that*, establishes the physical or metaphorical location of the speaker and audience. In political speeches, spatial deixis often functions metaphorically to express belonging or distance. For example, when a leader says, “We stand here today united in purpose,” the word *here* does more than indicate physical presence it symbolizes unity and moral commitment. Conversely, *there* may denote political or ideological opposition: “We must prevent the chaos that threatens there.” The contrast between *here* and *there* structures political space by creating zones of safety and danger, inclusion and exclusion.

Spatial deixis also plays a symbolic role in framing international relations. Leaders may use *this nation*, *this continent*, or *this world* to evoke collective identity. For example, in global forums, a speaker might say, “This planet is our home,” merging spatial reference with ethical appeal. The demonstratives *this* and *that* further help emphasize emotional proximity or detachment. *This challenge* implies shared responsibility, while *that problem* signals otherness. Through such contrasts, deixis becomes an instrument of ideological positioning.

Temporal deixis, expressed through adverbs like *now*, *then*, *today*, and *tomorrow*, situates political action within time. In international speeches, temporal deixis serves to dramatize urgency or continuity. The frequent use of *now* and *today* underscores immediacy and calls for action: “We must act now to secure peace.” Such temporal markers transform abstract policies into moral imperatives. Similarly, *tomorrow* and *future* are often employed to evoke hope and long-term vision: “Tomorrow belongs to those who build bridges, not walls.” By aligning temporal deixis with moral and emotional appeals, political leaders mobilize collective sentiment toward shared goals. Temporal deixis also serves as a means of constructing political legacy. When leaders say, “We have come a long way,” or “Then, we faced great challenges,” they create a temporal narrative that connects past, present, and future. This continuity reinforces the legitimacy of leadership and frames political action as part of an ongoing historical

process. In this sense, temporal deixis functions as a linguistic tool for historical legitimation and ideological continuity.

Beyond these main types, **social deixis** and **discourse deixis** contribute to the hierarchical and structural dimensions of political speech. Social deixis, which encodes relationships of status and formality, appears in titles, honorifics, and address forms such as “Mr. President,” “Your Excellencies,” or “Distinguished Delegates.” These expressions maintain decorum and reinforce institutional power relations. The adherence to diplomatic etiquette through social deixis reflects the hierarchical nature of international communication.

Discourse deixis, on the other hand, refers to references within the speech itself—such as “as I mentioned earlier,” or “this statement.” In political oratory, these deictic devices create coherence and cohesion, guiding the audience through complex arguments. They also allow the speaker to emphasize key ideas, thereby controlling the interpretive focus of the audience.

The pragmatic function of deixis in political speech lies in its ability to align speaker and listener perspectives. According to Levinson (1983) and Fillmore (1997), deixis establishes a shared deictic center the psychological vantage point from which communication unfolds. In political contexts, this center is often strategically constructed to include the audience as part of a moral or ideological “we.” By aligning linguistic reference with emotional and ideological proximity, political leaders manipulate deixis to transform listeners into participants.

Consider, for example, the speech of John F. Kennedy: “We choose to go to the moon in this decade.” The deictic expressions *we* and *this* create a sense of immediacy and collective agency, situating the audience within a temporal and spatial frame of action. Similarly, Martin Luther King Jr.’s iconic phrase, “I have a dream that one day...” employs temporal deixis (*one day*) to project an imagined moral future, connecting personal vision with collective aspiration.

In international political discourse, where audiences are heterogeneous and multilingual, the strategic use of deixis bridges cultural and ideological gaps. English, functioning as a global medium, allows leaders to project inclusivity and universality through flexible deictic referencing. Yet, this flexibility also enables subtle manipulation. Through deixis, speakers can simultaneously claim solidarity and authority, inclusion and control. This duality reflects the inherently political nature of linguistic deixis it is both a means of reference and a mechanism of power.

Moreover, the interpretation of deixis in international settings depends on shared cultural and contextual knowledge. A phrase like “our allies” presupposes geopolitical alignment, while “those who oppose us” evokes ideological division. Such expressions

exemplify how deictic units encode not only linguistic reference but also political identity and collective memory.

The emotional and symbolic power of deixis is particularly evident in moments of crisis. During global conflicts, pandemics, or climate emergencies, leaders employ deictic markers to strengthen unity and moral resolve. Phrases such as “We are all in this together” or “Now is the time to act” illustrate how deixis can transform abstract problems into shared experiences. The combination of personal, temporal, and spatial deixis produces a sense of collective urgency that transcends linguistic boundaries.

Ultimately, deixis in international political speeches functions as a linguistic mechanism that structures interaction, reinforces ideological positions, and shapes collective consciousness. It enables leaders to construct a shared communicative space that transcends geography and culture, while subtly maintaining hierarchical distinctions and political agendas.

Conclusion. The analysis of deictic units in English within international political speeches demonstrates that deixis is not merely a grammatical or referential category but a deeply pragmatic and ideological phenomenon. Through personal, spatial, and temporal deixis, political leaders construct relationships with their audiences, define positions, and frame global issues within accessible contexts. The strategic use of *we*, *you*, *here*, and *now* allows leaders to shape perception, create unity, and legitimize power in the international arena.

Deictic expressions serve to connect language, speaker, and audience in a shared communicative moment, transforming speech into a performative act of leadership. In global political discourse, deixis functions as a subtle yet powerful linguistic tool that reflects both inclusivity and authority. The study of deixis in this context thus reveals how language mediates the intersection between politics, identity, and social cognition. Understanding the specificity of deictic usage in English political communication provides deeper insight into how leaders craft persuasive messages that resonate across cultures and nations.

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