

# THE USE OF DEICTIC EXPRESSIONS IN STUDENTS'

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# 1 THE USE OF DEICTIC EXPRESSIONS IN STUDENTS' ORAL PRESENTATION

Endang Yuliani Rahayu

## Abstract

The current study explored the use of deictic expressions by the first semester students of English Letters, FBIB UNISBANK in their oral presentations of Performative Spoken English. Included in the deictic expressions are those of personal pronouns, time, place and discourse. Note taking was used to collect the data from the total population during oral presentation in PSE (performative Spoken English) classes. The data were purely analyzed qualitatively without any numeric calculation. Errors made by the students were then analyzed employing Richards' Error Classification Criteria (<https://www.professorjackrichards.com/>). The findings indicate that all types of deictic expressions were used except that at discourse level. At first it was assumed that the students failed to observe the rules of deictic expressions. But, after Focus Group Discussion (FGD), it also turned out that some students actually only made errors in the use of deictic expressions. The students managed to identify the errors and to correct them. It is therefore recommended that more practice be done on the part of the students.

**Key words:** deictic expressions, oral presentation, error analysis, focus group discussion

## 1. Background

Most Indonesian students have formally learned English since they were in Junior High School or even elementary school. However, English for Indonesian people remains a foreign language that often causes difficulties—such as it is hard for them to find English speaking community out of the school where they can practice using the target language in real discursive practices. This has also demotivated them after so many years of English instruction without being able to carry out even the simplest form of communication exchanges in the target language. Some of them may get motivated to learn English informally by joining English private courses to successfully acquire the target language. What is the missing link?

It is true that learning English is both frustrating and challenging. It is frustrating since only few students managed to get sufficient knowledge (of English) to perform in the four language skills. Others remain discouraged and therefore cannot utter even simple words of classroom objects, let alone performing or acting in a James Bond-like movie. English teachers, nevertheless, have been trying hard to motivate the students in order for them to learn seriously learn English for their future careers. English is still acknowledged to be the language for international communication. requires both the learners and teacher's creativity to maintain the students' learning motivation.

Nowadays, there are so many facilities widely provided in society even in the form of multi-media. E-books are available for download through Search Engine form unlimited internet

service providers. Qualified teachers of English are produced on a biannual basis by quality language education providers. The students will easily download from the internet to choose the material of learning English they prefer. Learning from media is different from learning formally at school or in certain institution in many ways. Learning from media will complete the learning process of the formal learning. This will enrich the formal learning process if the learners like to enrich themselves with many sources of learning materials.

Speaking English fluently is probably the final goal that someone has to be labeled as being competent in English. This competence will be achieved in a certain period of time by the learners. The ability to speak well can be found from the way they speak in English including how and what they usually talk about. This including speaking English within the appropriate context. Considering context in communication is really important for both speakers, without this, the words will mean nothing. Even, if they do not understand the context of communication, it may cause misunderstanding in communication. Thus, we need to know how to interpret words on the basis of physical context.

English Department of FBIB UNISBANK is one of the institutions that facilitates the fresh graduates of senior high school to learn English more seriously. The first semester students are often considered as the beginners. These beginners are still struggling to learn further English, departing from their High School English education. It is of course not a good thing to tell since we are being assumed to downgrade the efforts of the high school English teachers who have been struggling hard to provide good English instruction. Some high school students do have good command of English, but unfortunately they are not the students of FBIB UNISBANK, majoring in English literature. They simply study somewhere else of their choices and they are not wrong at all.

The-not-so-lucky students (those at our collage) try to improve their competence in English mastery by practicing and learning the materials given by the instructor or the teacher. When a learner speaks English fluently without making so many errors and the listeners can understand what she is saying about, so this learner is considered to be able to speak English fluently. To be able to make the beginners have willing to communicate in English with other peer group is a good step in early process of learning English. This must be maintained both in the class and outside the class.

Learning foreign language is not an easy thing to do in a short period of time. It needs certain seriousness, fun and strategy that someone will finally be able to speak and write in English well. It also must be completed with a lot of practice in any kind of situations. Radio English program, TV news, films, songs, etc also can be used as source of learning materials out of the class that will be able to enrich their vocabulary and also lead them to understand the use of language in context. Using English through communication with peer group will be beneficial in improving the students' competence and this is in line with this Widdowson (1983:118) states that communication only takes place when we make use of sentence to perform a variety of different acts of an essentially social nature and we use

sentence to make statements of different kinds, to describe, to record, to classify, and so on, or to ask questions, make requests, give orders.

<sup>3</sup> Another way of teaching a foreign language as a means of communication is what Allen and Widdowson suggest (1983:125) that they consider the language as a medium of teaching another subject. Language as communication no longer appears as a separate subject, but as an aspect of the other subjects. The target language should be presented in such a way as to reveal its character as communication.

Furthermore, the use of language in context is interesting to discuss. It needs more practices for the learners to be able to understand what is meant by here, there, this, that etc. in different contexts. Those simple words will have different meaning as they are applied in different contexts.

In learning English after certain period of time, the learners need to practice more even out of the class. They can do this in many various ways such as making conversation with their best friend, family at home, meeting and interacting with the native speakers etc. In this research the team would like to do a research by observing the new comers or the beginners to the English Department of the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies (FBIB), UNISBANK Semarang of 2017/2018 intake.

It was theorized that deictic expressions are used every day in our conversation and basically the term 'deictic expression' is used with special semantic entity to point or pick up something by means of or as a reference to.

Normally, human being making use of communication for various purposes such as greeting, informing, advising, may at one time or another pick up a word to refer to something. Such a phrase picked up as a reference to something is then called deictic expression.

In general the forms of deictic expressions such as I, you, we, he, she, it, they, that, here there etc. are simple phrases, we always find the above phrases in any situation. They seem very simple and easy to apply in conversation, but these set of expressions are often very complicated for the beginners. This is because the meaning of the above expressions can only be understood with reference to the speakers' intended meaning. (Parveen, 2014). This is supported by Lavinson (2004: 1) in which deictic expressions introduces subjective, attentional, intentional as well as course of context dependent properties into natural languages. In other words, any deictic expression can only be understood correctly by language users in terms of the contexts in which they appear. Meanwhile, in communicating their idea, there are so many goals they want to achieve one of them is to appoint something. In this case people prefer to use deictic expressions to point things (it, this, these,) and people (him, her, them, us) (Yule, 1998, 115), rather than repeating the same words

Some examples of deictic expressions in sentences :

- 1) It is 9 o'clock now, it is time for me to end my job.
- 2) I saw a man at the sea at the evening, he looked happy there.
- 3) Clair and Crosby sang their favorite song and they enjoyed that.
- 4) 'Linda, that is Teddy, I love him so much' Said Ann to Linda
- 5) "I like traditional dances, they are really amazing" Said Mario
- 6) "Who will be responsible for this?" Asked the girl, touching her stomach.

In Sentence 1, there are two words 'it' referring to nothing or as such is called 'formal it' or 'weather IT'. Clearly referred in Sentence 2 are that 'he' to a man, and 'there' to at the sea. In Sentence 3, 'their...' is the possessive pronoun of Clair and Crosby, and 'that' refers to 'favorite song'.

In Sentence 4, 'Linda' is a dative case, 'that' is referred to as pointing at someone (Teddy). Meanwhile 'I' refers to Ann, and 'him' to Teddy. In Sentence 5, 'I' refers to Mario and 'they' refers to traditional dances. In Sentence 6, 'this' refers to a multiple deictic expression, which can be 'hunger', or 'ace' or 'pregnancy'.

Based on the above uses of deictic expressions, we can classify the deictic expressions into the following types as suggested by Lavinson (1983) as stated below:

1. Person deictic expressions.  
We find these deictic expressions according person reference such as I You, We, he, she, it, they.
2. Time deictic expressions  
This category is based on the time reference, such as:  
Now, then, tomorrow, yesterday
3. Place deictic expressions is based on the place reference for example : here, there
4. Discourse level deictic expression refers to the use of deictic based on the genre.

It is not always easy to understand the concept of deictic point or centre as stated. The point of positioning of the speaker is called as deictic centre. This is as proved in the following statement "Put your bag **here**" in this situation the location is away from the addressee. Even in an extreme case, the deictic expression 'there' may refer to a sexual climax as in "Faster...faster, darling. I am almost there." Only a professional reader may not fail to understand such a use of deictic expression.

The other types of deictic expressions are discourse deictic expressions and social deictic expressions which can be identified through the genre of the text—that is the step by step composition (structure) of the paragraphs and the lexical items in use to refer to particular concepts.

Despite the two opposing arguments with respect to the types and causes of errors, the current study adopted the concept of developmental errors (interlingual errors) as described at length by Jack Richards in response to a question ‘**How does error analysis explain the foreign language learners’ errors?**’ in which it was argued that:

2  
The language learners produce when they are learning English reflects many different factors, such as their stage of grammatical development, the kind of communication they are engaged in, and the learner’s first language as well as the strategies the learner is making use of in communication. The result may be language that is sometimes inaccurate or inappropriate. Identifying the factors that contribute to the characteristics of learner discourse began in earnest with the field of *error analysis* in the 1970s, developing into what is referred to as *second language acquisition* today. The following processes are often referred to, although it is not always possible to assign a feature of learner English unambiguously to a specific cause (<https://www.professorjackrichards.com/error-analysis/>)

As an analytical framework, Richard exemplified that errors in a foreign language learning may be attributed to (1) language transfer, (2) overgeneralization, (3) simplification (4) underuse and (5) fossilization. Explanation and description for each of the five terms can be seen in <https://www.professorjackrichards.com/error-analysis/>

Based on the above background, the team are interested in observing the uses of deictic expressions— such a silly grammatical feature, yet that needs to be mastered for a better English users by the English students of FBIB during their speeches in one speaking class, focusing on two research questions, (1) Can the first semester students of FBIB UNISBANK refer correctly to the deictic expressions they are using in their speeches ?and (2) Which deictic expressions are problematic for most of **the first semester students of FBIB UNISBANK in their** speeches

The answer to the first problem will give a chance for further treatment of the students. If they are good enough in dealing with dietetic expressions, the teachers can provide more complex issues on referencing. Meanwhile, the second problem will open up the most difficult part of deictic expressions the students may have—on the basis of which strategies for treatment can be formulated.

## 2. Methods

This current research is classified as descriptive qualitative as it did not use any statistical analysis. Proportional frequency occurrence (%) was still used to identify the dominance of the occurrence of linguistic features—deictic expressions (the research objects) used by the subjects of the research (the first semester students). In other words, the unit of analysis is the type of deictic expression in which the focus was on the spoken forms of English in the students’ activity in daily exercise in the class of Performative Spoken English at the first

and the ninth meeting. The data were collected by means of a check list performed during the class of Performative Spoken English, jotting down samples of the use of deictic expressions. The deictic expressions in use were cross-checked with the students to validate the actual use prior to tabulation for further analysis.

The data were analyzed employing Richards' classifications of errors newly developed in <https://www.professorjackrichards.com/error-analysis/> in order to put the errors of the use of deictic expressions under certain categories for further interpretation and discussion. At this stage, the dominance errors were identified and highlighted as the focus of discussion leading to recommendations, reflecting both theoretical and practical implications of the current study. The errors that had been categorized were interpreted and discussed to come up with the possible causes of errors. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also held with the students committing the errors in order for them to comprehensively learn their own problems and for them not to commit the same errors in the future in the use of deictic expressions.

The errors that had been categorized were interpreted and discussed to come up with the possible causes of errors. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also held with the students committing the errors in order for them to comprehensively learn their own problems and for them not to commit the same errors in the future in the use of deictic expressions.

### 3. Findings

Tabulated in Table 4.1 below are the results of the students' performance in the use of deictic expressions during their oral presentation, identifying the occurrences of the expressions

**Table 1 Deictic Expressions in Use**

Position	Types			
	Personal	Time	Place	Discourse
Subject	7			
Object	4			
Self	1			
Possessive	2			
Independent Possessive	1			
After preposition	2			
Adverbial		4	3	
Multiple at sentence level				0

It should be noted that the figures presented in Table 1 above do not represent the frequency of occurrence. Rather, they represent the typical occurrences. This means that the researcher did not count for any recurrent deictic expression once it was used by a particular subject of the study. Take for example, 7 personal deictic expressions were used as **Subject of**

**Sentences**, consisting of I, you, he, she, it, we, they. From this point, it is clear that all personal pronouns positioned as Subject were used by the students without regards to which students used which such personal pronouns.

Furthermore, there were also 4 personal pronouns (**me, her, him, it**) positioned as **Objects of Sentences** that the students made use during their oral presentation. Thus, only few personal pronouns (as Object) were used. Meanwhile, they students used only 3 possessive pronouns, namely **my, his, her**. The other possessive personal pronouns, such as **our, their, its** were not used by the students. Unfortunately only **of mine** (independent possessive pronoun) was used to represent a phrase such as a friend of mine as a variation of saying one of my friends. One student used 'self' form despite being not quite correctly used.

With respect to the use of time deictic expressions, the students managed to use 4 forms, namely **yesterday, tomorrow, last week** and **last year**. Complex time deictic expressions, such as **...ago, ...before, ...later** were not used. Meanwhile, the use of place deictic expressions were identified as (3) **in my ..., in his..., in her....** in which the dots represent nouns, such as house, school, village, country.

Meanwhile, deictic expressions at discourse level were not found in any of the subjects' oral presentation. This is understandable since the subjects (students) were at their first semester. However, it may be suspected that there is a missing link between the high school curriculum which is sophisticatedly and comprehensively presented to train the students in the four language skills of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. No one is to blame. FBIB UNISBANK is ready to start all over again from the ABC of English through the core syllabus of Performative Spoken English in the first semester.

With respect to the source of errors, Table 4.2 displays the errors committed by the students.

**Table 2 Source of Errors in Deictic Expressions**

Source of Errors	Types			
	Personal	Time	Place	Discourse
Transfer	√			
Overgeneralization				
Simplification				
Underuse				
Fossilization	√			

Table 2 above indicates that all sources of errors (transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, underuse, and fossilization) occurred in the students' oral presentation. Described below are the physical errors that were heard and jotted down by the research team.

1) [**He is Rendra..\*her hobby is playing games**]

1



Such an error is attributed to a **negative transfer** from the student's native language (Indonesian) in which the subject deictic expression for both male and female is [Dia] and the possessive deictic expression is [\_\_nya] for both male and female. At the time of speaking, possibly due to being nervous, the student failed to notice that there is a rule with respect to male and female personal pronouns, including the possessive. The correct form is therefore **He is Rendra...his hobby is playing games.**

Similar errors made by the students are set below:

- a. [My mother is kind. \*He lives in town]
- b. [This is my brother in law. \*She works hard every day]
- c. [I have a sister, \*He works as a midwife]
- d. [My sister loves dancing. \*He is in the 11 th grade]

The four sentences are of similar errors in nature—namely the students failed to notice the rules in English personal pronouns which differentiate 'male' from 'female' gender. The students may at one time or another substitute one for the other. The said 'he' to refer to 'she' and on the other hand, they may say 'she' to refer to 'he'.

This is very common in interlingual process of language learning, especially when the native language of the students does not differentiate female from male in the personal pronoun system. Such an error, however, shall not be taken for granted that the students finally learn the form because it is possible that fossilization may be formed.

2) [She is my mother. \*she is name is suwarti]

**Another negative transfer** occurs in the sentence above. In the student's mind, it is possible that he or she want to express [Diabernama...] but due to one thing or another, he or she failed to notice the English grammar rule for [Diabernama...which should be She is called ...]. Such a complex construction is simply generated from his or her native language [She (Dia) is name (bernama)] resulting in an unacceptable English form. Similar errors include:

- a. She is my mother. \*She is name is Elisabeth,
- b. My sister is kind. \*He name is Christina
- c. He is my brother, \*he name is Zulfi Effendi.
- d. She is my little sister. \*She name is Claudia.
- e. She is my mom, \*She is name is Qosidah
- f. He is my brother, \*he is name is Muhammad.

If this is the case, remedial teaching is really required for him or her. Communicatively, such a form is acceptable but for sure, in the long run, he or she needs to use the correct form of English to qualify for a better employment position. According to the criteria for

TOEIC score, for one to be able to work in an English speaking office is that he or she must at least have the score of 500 points.

Such an error can be attributed to a possible score of 300, which is acceptable for entry-level jobs. Therefore, there are no other ways than to give such students, a special remedial teaching to avoid being trapped in a situation where errors are fossilized.

3) **[This is my mom. \*My her name is SitiRochayati]**

Such an error is attributed to a fossilized error. The student may have overlearned the [my\_] and therefore, when he or she is confronted with a different form of possessive pronoun, he or she maintains the form [my\_she\_]. Such a student needs to work hard in order to get rid of the fossilized form.

4) **This is my father. I love \*he so much**

This is another **negative transfer** for the object personal pronoun where in the student's native language, such a difference is not counted for. Therefore the student simply used 'he' instead of 'him.' There are possibly no other ways than giving him more remedial teaching despite the fact that the student should have learned such a form in his or her high school English classes. However, a philosophical idea that a student remains a student is still relevant at all time. This means that a student tends to make mistakes; and the teacher is forever responsible for correction of mistakes. Similar errors include:

a. **I do the best for \*she.**

b. **She is like my mom, when I have problem I come to \*she**

Thus, the frequency of such errors is very high and therefore again a special remedial teaching is really required.

5) **Betty is my sister, He age is 20 years.**

Still another negative transfer for the phrase [Diaberumur\_] in the student's native language, occurs. Since the student failed to construct the correct form, he or she created the wrong form [He age\_]. This is what several linguists call "created English. In this situation, the student is forced to produce linguistic form he or she has no knowledge about.

The problem is that it looks illogical if the students have passed high school and yet they still have such a low elementary English. The English syllabi at high school are well-constructed with clear instructional goals.

#### 4. Discussion

It turns out that the students have been able to use most types of deictic expressions, such as personal, time, and place deictic expressions. However, no students have used any deictic

expression at discourse level. This totally means that deictic expressions as one of the grammar features with particular semantic entities are really required by language users in order for them to better communicate with other language users of the same language.

1 However, the findings of the current study indicate that the students still commit mistakes or errors in the use of deictic expressions caused by the negative transfer from their native language. Fossilization is endangering in case the students are not fully trained in the target language. Most importantly, the students must have full exposure of English speaking environment.

#### 4.1 Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held, inviting the students who were assumed to have made errors as described in the current study.

First of all, the students were arranged in circular seats in which each student had an equal chance to express his or her ideas. The students did not know why they were supposed to attend the FGD. On being told the purpose of FGD, they realized that it was about their performances in the oral presentation held the other day.

A caption containing wrong sentences or phrases were displayed in front of the group and the students were asked to identify the wrongly worded sentences. It turned out that they managed to identify the mistakes. Thus it is true that the mistakes belong to errors—things that the students can identify and supply the correct forms. The errors that they committed were corrected as follows:

- 1) [He is Rendra...\*her hobby is playing games]  
He is Rendra. His hobby is playing games.
- 2) [My mother is kind. \*He lives in town]  
My mother is kind. She lives in town.
- 3) [This is my brother in law. \*She works hard every day]  
This is my brother in law. He works hard every day.
- 4) [I have a sister, \*He works as a midwife]  
I have a sister, she works as a midwife.
- 5) [My sister loves dancing. \*He is in the 11 th grade]  
My sister loves dancing. She is in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 6) [She is my mother. \*she is name is suwarti]
- 7) She is mymother. Her name is suwarti.
- 8) [She is my mother. \*She is name is Elisabeth,]  
She is my mother. Her name is Elizabeth.
- 9) [My sister is kind. \*He name is Christina]  
My sister is kind. Her name is Christina.

- 10) [He is my brother, \*he name is Zulfi Effendi.]  
He is my brother, his name is Zulfi Effendi
- 11) [She is my little sister. \*She name is Claudia.]  
She is my little sister. Her name is Claudia
- 12) [She is my mom, \*She is name is Qosidah]  
She is my mom, her name is Qosidah.
- 13) [He is my brother , \*he is name is Muhammad.]  
He is my brother, his name is Muhammad
- 14) [This is my mom. \*My her name is SitiRochayati]  
This is my mom. Her name is SitiRochayati.
- 15) [This is my father. I love \*he so much]  
This is my father. I love him so much.
- 16) [I do the best for \*she.]  
I do the best for her.
- 17) [She is like my mom, when I have problem I come to \*she]  
She is like my mom, when I have problem I come to her.
- 18) [Betty is my sister, He age is 20 years]  
Betty is my sister, she is 20 years old

Surprisingly, when asked why they made such silly mistakes as they have completed their high school, most of them answered that they were nervous on making oral presentation.

#### i. Interpretation

At first, the team of researchers felt frustrated to see the findings that the students still made silly mistakes even in the use of personal pronouns. Such mistakes should have never been made by college students even if they are only in their first semester. There is no reliable reason for them to make mistakes. More surprisingly, the mistakes (errors) were all categorized as negative transfers from their native language.

However, on completion of the FGD. It turned out that the students only made errors. They managed to identify the wrongly worded sentences, and the same time to correct the mistakes. Thus, the students are not that bad. Moreover, when asked why they made errors, they answered that they were nervous on making oral presentation

#### 4.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The current study surely has both theoretical and practical implications. In theoretical perspectives, it is still relevant that each language feature must be dealt with, seriously. This is to avoid the occurrence of silly mistakes on the part of the students that will in turn demotivate them to further learn the language. Secondly, errors are inevitable in the process of learning a language, let alone a foreign language, such as English.

When a mistake is made, the parts that the students have not known must be taught yet. On the other hand, when an error is made, actually the students need more practice in the four language skills.

In practical perspectives, on the other hand, the students were found to be nervous to make oral presentation in front of the class. This is psychological phenomenon, implying that the students need more practice speaking in public. This is not about their language skills. Even a person with well-acquired language skills will lose his or her competence when confronted with public speaking. Thus, it deals with public speaking skills.

In response to the findings of the current study, it is necessary for PSE classes to give the students more opportunities to practice speaking in public. This kind of skill is required later on when the students have to make presentations. It has come to be known that each student of FBIB UNISBANK must be able to make oral presentations on any subject he or she is enrolled in. In a competency-based curriculum, later on developed into higher learning curriculum, a student cannot pass a subject until he or she really shows off his or her skills. This has something to do with the teaching methodology used or employed by the lecturer(s).

In terms of learning activities, for example, the students must be given ample opportunities to really practice the four language skills. This implies that the use of lecturing, unless nothing can be done without, must be avoided as far as possible. The students may be assigned to find out information through internet browsing from which they can get updated and authentic materials, rather than those from textbooks.

The students shall be trained to be independent learners. The lecturer can function only as a facilitator in the sense that he or she is not a superman or woman. Everything is presented up there in the internet which can be downloaded and learned for the students' own development.

Text analysis is a good way to be practiced in class so that the students can have more grammatical awareness with respect to the use of deictic expressions of all types, possibly also other language features. Most importantly, since the students committed errors, they for sure need more practice in the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing to train every bit of the target language.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The data with respect to the use of deictic expressions that have been collected from several classroom settings and analyzed categorically according to the norms and rules of the use of deictic expressions lead to a general conclusion that the students found it trickily difficult to apply deictic expressions in both correct rules and forms. Therefore it is recommended that the students should be more careful in identifying the correct use of deictic expressions. Likewise,

the lecturer (semantics, and grammar) should give the students more contextual practice and exercises. The use of games, role plays, and normal grammar drills are also recommended.

With respect to the various forms or types of deictic expressions, it is important that practice and exercises be varied proportionally so that each type of deictic expression receives equilibrium of treatment, considering no difficulty is more difficult than the any other.

Text analysis may prove to be of some use to improve the students' grammatical accuracy. Most students retain their memories much longer when confronted with authentic data, such as taken from authentic texts (newspaper, magazines) or recorded speeches. In other words, language exercises (drills) should never be 'teacher made'. Instead, the use of authentic materials is very much encouraged with, of course, modification to suit the students' needs and demands.

Improving the students' mastery in the use of deictic expressions, it is necessary that they be exposed in a real contextual uses of deictic expressions, rather than applying root-learning which turns out to treat the students like parrots.

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