

## The Analysis of Social and Discourse Deixes in the 'Bird Box' Novel by Josh Malerman

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### Abstract

Many representations of human thoughts, ideas, opinions, and messages are portrayed in diverse situations of the character in literary works. Among the works are such as novels. Deixis is concerned with the encoding of many different aspects of the circumstances surrounding the utterances and within the utterances themselves. This study aims to find out the type of social deixis and discourse deixis used in the novel "Bird Box" written by Josh Malerman, published in 2014. The research design used is the qualitative approach with document analysis as the data collection technique. Cruse's theory (2000) is applied to analyze the data related to the types of social deixis and discourse deixis found in the novel. The results of this research show that there are 475 data containing social deixis and discourse deixis, with 317 data of social deixis (of these, 307 data are related to relational social deixis and 10 data are related to absolute social deixis), and 158 data of discourse deixis. Understanding deixis, especially while reading works like novels, is a means to understanding the plot as well as the characters portrayed and to reduce the amount of ambiguity. Moreover, using the proper deictic words will help foreign language learners, such as English non-native students, in their efforts to produce effective communication, whether in spoken or written forms.

Keywords: deixis; social deixis, discourse deixis; novel

### Introduction,

The comparison of certain words and phrases in all languages depends largely on the situational sense of the utterance, and can only be interpreted in the light of the circumstance. The aspect of investigating meaning in this context is usually referred to as deixis. Richards and Schmidt (2002) define deixis as a term for a word or phrase that enables language users to 'point', refer to, or relate their utterance to a particular time, place, or person. According to Hurford et al. (2007), deixis expressions are those which take some element of their meaning directly from the immediate situation of the utterance in which they are used (e.g., from the

speaker, the hearer, the time, and place of the utterance). It refers to a word in which its reference is always changing, depending on the speaker, place, and time of utterance. It also refers to the phenomenon wherein knowing the meaning of such words or phrases in an utterance involves the context of the situation. All sense is situated in the context of the case. Unless linguistic text-forming resources are interpreted against the background of contextual ones, the notion of text cannot be understood. Here, the context of the situation refers to the situation in which the utterance is produced, it guides readers to get more information from the text. To understand better what is conveyed, it is important to study deixis because false referencing can cause misunderstanding.

Cruse (2000) presents five types of deixis, namely: person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. The subject of person deixis is the speaker, it is the identity of the interlocutors in a communication situation (Ivanova, 2016). The first and second persons are the addressee and the speaker, respectively. In a speaking scenario, the third person refers to people who are neither the speaker nor the hearer. All of them are available in both solitary and plural forms, and some of them are case-sensitive. Spatial deixis represents a particular spatial position and is a sort of deixis. A speaker is required to establish a frame of reference using deictic techniques in a language, these include locative adverbs such as 'this' and 'that' as well as demonstratives and determiners (Colasanti & Wiltschko, 2019). Meanwhile, temporal deixis is a type of deixis in which the time of the events referred to in an utterance (reference time - mine) interacts with the time of the utterance itself (encoding time - mine) (Ivanova, 2016). The time axis is thus divided into three broad divisions: before the moment of utterance, at the moment of utterance, and after the moment of utterance. Discourse deixis refers to expressions of a specific area of the discourse (Cruse, 2004). Many words and phrases in English, such as 'but', 'therefore', 'inclusion', 'to the contrary', 'however', 'besides', 'after all', and so on, are used in discourse deixis to express the relationship between utterance and past discourse. The last type of deixis is social deixis, it refers to the use of forms that represent the speaker's social standing in connection to the addressee or someone else, such as familiar forms, polite forms, or honorific, is referred to as social deixis (Cruse, 2000).

The study of deixis terms of understanding language use and context comes in various means and subjects ranging from verbal utterances to textual expressions.

The novel as one of the literary works that describes something in the life of a character certainly contains deixis in its storyline. This study aims at providing an extended understanding of deixis in a novel as the object of analysis. Specifically, this study is to find out the types of social deixis and discourse deixis based on the theory of deixis proposed by Cruse (2000) in the 'Bird Box' novel written by Josh Malerman's and published in 2014 By Harper Voyager publisher. This novel is a post-apocalyptic novel and the debut novel by the American writer and singer, Josh Malerman. The novel is about a woman named Malorie who must find a way to guide herself and her children against malevolent supernatural creatures that make people who look at them go insane and commit suicide. The story is told in parts through flashbacks and takes place during three periods of time. First, when Malorie finds out that she is pregnant and the beginning of the appearance of an unknown creature. Second, when Malorie finds a home and tries to survive with all of her housemates. Last, when Malorie tries to cross the river to find a safe place from the threat of the unknown creature.

Several studies that examined deixis in literary works have been done. Among them is the study conducted by Siregar (2018), where types of deixis in the novel *The Last Star* by Rick Yance were investigated using Levinson's (1983) theory. A number of 407 data on person deixis, 36 data on place deixis, 21 data on time deixis, 13 data on social deixis, and 50 data on discourse deixis were identified in the novel. Jamiah (2018) also conducted a study on deixis analysis, specifically social deixis, in the novel *Rogue Lawyer* by John Grisham. This research focused on the classification and explanation of the referring expression of deixis based on the theory by Cruse (2000) and Levinson (1983). The results showed that there were 51 data of relational social deixis and 24 data of absolute social deixis. Kakiay and Maitimu (2021) conducted a study on the types of deixis found in Billie Eilish's songs by using Cruse's (2000) framework. They found five types of deixis in the songs namely personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. These studies have demonstrated how deixis facilitates readers to interpret the meaning of sentences based on the various contexts presented in the novels.

Seeing the unique storyline, characters, events, and situation in 'Bird Box', the researchers are intrigued to further investigate the types of deixis in this novel. The literature also notes that no previous related studies have been conducted on this novel, especially on its use of the social deixis and discourse deixis based on the

theory proposed by Cruse (2000). Accordingly, this research formulated the following research questions:

1. What are the types of social deixis used in Josh Malerman's 'Bird Box'?
2. What are the types of discourse deixis used in Josh Malerman's 'Bird Box'?

Understanding and employing proper deixis in language use is essential for the comprehension of words, phrases, and sentences in various contexts. For foreign language learners, such as English non-native students, using correct deictic words properly facilitate their efforts in producing effective communication, either in spoken or written forms. Hence, the results of this study are expected to contribute to this matter. Learners must recognize and have the contextual knowledge to interpret the meaning of specific words and phrases in utterances.

### **Research Methodology**

This study applied a qualitative research design to analyze the types of deixis found in the novel 'Bird Box' by Josh Malerman. Qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena and providing a rich verbal description of settings, situations, and participants (Ary et al., 2010). In collecting the data, documentation was used, in which the activities mostly include reading and note-taking of the data from the novel. The data include all the utterances which have representative values based on the types of social deixis and discourse deixis.

In analyzing the data, a framework developed by Miles et al. (2014) was applied. The first step is data condensation, here, the researchers focused on the utterances in 'Bird Box' which contained the social and discourse deixis. The second step was data display, here, the researchers organized the data as part of document analysis according to general thoughts, subjects, or ideas as the premise of attaining speculations (Ary et al, 2010). In this study, the framework by Cruse (2000) on the types of deixis was employed. The researchers then simplified the data in the form of sentences, narratives, or tables. By using tables in this study, it assisted in ensuring that the data are compelling to be described. The final step was to conclude the findings.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Findings**

The results of this study revealed that 475 utterances consist of social deixis and discourse deixis. From these 475 utterances, 317 data are of social deixis with 307 data of relational social deixis and 10 data of absolute social deixis. Meanwhile, for discourse deixis, there are 158 data. Thus, the dominant deixis type used is social deixis. These results are further elaborated in the next sub-sections.

### **Social Deixis**

Social deixis comprises two types, relational and absolute social deixis (Cruse, 2000). Table 1 reveals that the total number of relational social deixis used in 'Bird Box' (2014) is 367. It can be seen that the highest type of relational social deixis used in this novel is 'Malorie' with 56 data. While, the lowest number is 'dear', 'buddy', and 'father', with one data each. Table 1 further shows that there are 21 words of relational social deixis in the novel.

Table 1. The total number of relational social deixis used in the 'Bird Box' novel

No	Relational Social Deixis	Number of Words	Utterance Examples
1	Mommy/ Mom	52	'Get up. Now. <b>Mommy</b> needs you to move fast.' (page 7 line 1)
2	Boy	19	' <b>Boy</b> , what do you hear?' (p.130 line 15)
3	Girl	5	'There's a chill in the air, <b>Girl</b> . A dress won't do.' (page 8 line 16)
4	Dear	1	'Well, I'm more concerned with you right now, <b>dear</b> .' (page 32 line 12)
5	Guys	7	'You <b>guys</b> are going to get us killed one day.' (page 168 line 19)
6	Man	4	'Do not just open that door, <b>man</b> .' (page 87 line 26)
7	Malorie	56	' <b>Malorie!</b> There's another report on television! Something happened in Alaska.' (page 19 line 4)
8	Tom	40	' <b>Tom</b> , you're scaring me.' (page 114 line 22)
9	Jules	16	' <b>Jules</b> , I've marked our lawn. We may need the help finding our way back.' (page 175 line 3)
10	Felix	11	'Because, <b>Felix</b> , we're not talking about which bucket we drink from and which ones we piss in.' (page 138 line 13)
11	Olympia	17	'What do you think, <b>Olympia?</b> ' (page 139 line 17)
12	Cheryl	3	'We don't know that, <b>Cheryl</b> .' (page 153 line 15)

13	Don	27	' <b>Don</b> , did you search by the back door?' (p.114 line 3)
14	Gary	11	'Hey, <b>Gary</b> . Tell us a little more about yourself.' (page 214 line 8)
15	Shannon	5	' <b>Shannon</b> , are you all right?' (page 39 line 23)
16	Andrew	1	'Shut up <b>Andrew</b> , it's for our dog.' (page 30 line 2)
17	Rick	4	' <b>Rick</b> , Can you help me now?' (page 359 line 9)
18	Victor	24	' <b>Victor</b> , I'm gonna fucking kill you!' (page 153 line 22)
19	Kids/ Children	2	'Your mother is the mad one, <b>kids</b> . Take off those blindfolds.' (page 80 line 23)
20	Buddy	1	' <b>Buddy!</b> I'm back!' (page 168 line 5)
21	Father	1	'Have you let <b>the father</b> know?' (page 32 line 20)
<b>Total</b>		<b>307</b>	

Some data in relational social deixis extracted from the novel are illustrated in the following excerpts.

Data 1: 'Get up. Now. Mommy needs you to move fast' (Malerman, 2014, p. 7)

In Data 1, the utterance was spoken by Malorie to her children. The relational social deixis in this utterance is presented by the use of the word 'Mommy'. This word refers to Malorie herself. It happens when she tries to wake her children and plans to take them away from the house. The deictic expression of 'Mommy' illustrates the bond of family between Malorie and her children.

Data 2: 'You guys are going to get us killed one day.' (Malerman, 2014, p. 168)

The utterance in Data 2 is spoken by Don to his housemates. The relational social deixis in this utterance is presented by the use of the word 'guys' which refers to Don's housemates. It happens when Tom and Felix return home after searching for food supplies for all of their housemates. Don forbids Tom and Felix to enter the house for fear that they will be followed by an unknown creature, but all of his housemates insist on allowing Tom and Felix to enter. Finally, Don reluctantly gave up and let them in. The reference to 'guys' from Don to his housemates shows his gap in

relation with them. Their disagreement with him in allowing strangers to enter, confirms Don's discrete relationship with them.

Data 3: 'Jules, I've marked our lawn. We may need help finding our way back.'  
(Malerman, 2014, p. 175)

Data 3 display the utterance spoken by Tom to his friend, Jules. One of the existing relational social deixis is encoded by the use of the name of the person, in this context, 'Jules'. It includes the relational social deixis because it shows a relationship between Tom as a speaker and Jules as an addressee. The relationship between both of them in the novel is as housemates. And so, he calls the speaker's reference by mentioning her name.

Table 2 reveals that there are 10 data of absolute social deixis used in the novel. The dominant absolute social deixis is the word 'Miss' with a frequency of 8 data. The others are the words 'Sir' and 'The Captain', each with 1 data.

Table 2 Types of Absolute Social Deixis used in the 'Bird Box' novel

No	Absolute Social Deixis	Number of Words	Utterance
1	Miss	8	'There's nothing out here with us, miss. Take my word for it. We're all alone.' (page 76 line 21)
2	Sir	1	'I'm going outside, sir.' (page 350 line 14)
3	The Captain	1	'You are the captain in this ship.' (page 297 line 18)
<b>Total</b>			<b>10</b>

Some data in absolute social deixis extracted from the novel are illustrated in the following excerpts.

Data 4: 'There's nothing out here with us, miss. Take my word for it. We're all alone.'  
(Malerman, 2014, p. 76)

The utterance in Data 4 is spoken by a stranger to Malorie. The absolute social deixis in this utterance is represented by the use of the word 'Miss', which refers to Malorie. It happens when Malorie and her children are crossing the river in a boat. Suddenly, a male voice comes from the riverbank and forces them to remove their

blindfolds. The man uses the word 'Miss' because he does not have any relationship with Malorie and does not even know her at all.

Data 5: 'You're the captain in this ship.' (Malerman, 2014, p. 297)

Data 5 is an utterance spoken by Gary to Tom. The absolute social deixis in this utterance is represented by 'The captain', that refers to Tom. It happens when Malorie tells her housemates that she finds a suspicious notebook in Gary's briefcase. It turns out that the notebook belongs to Gary's dead friend. After knowing about that, they become suspicious of Gary and plan to throw him out of the house. The use of the word 'the captain' indicates that Gary does not dare to argue with Tom's words because he is the leader in that house.

Data 6: 'I'm going outside, Sir.' (Malerman, 2014, p. 350)

Data 6 shows the utterance spoken by Olympia to Gary. The absolute social deixis in this utterance is represented by 'Sir', that refers to Gary. It happens when Olympia gives birth to her baby girl. Gary, who is kicked out of the house, is still hiding in the cellar of the house. He has been possessed by the creature and tries to influence Olympia to commit suicide. Olympia calls Gary using the word 'Sir' because she has been influenced by Gary and thinks he is her master. Then, Olympia ends up her life by jumping out the window.

### **Discourse Deixis**

Table 3 shows the results of discourse deixis used in the novel. The total discourse deixis found in this novel is 143 data. The words are 'this' (46 data), 'that' (78 data), 'but' (21 data), 'well' (4 data), 'so' (3 data), 'somehow' (1 data), 'still' (2 data), 'instead' (2 data), and the phrase 'in the other words' (1 data).

Table 3. Types of Discourse Deixis used in the 'Bird Box' novel

No	Discourse deixis	Number of Words	Utterance Examples	Referent/ meaning
1	This	46	'I'm sorry to scare you like this, my husband is in the air force. I	Olympia's utterance about how she lost

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			haven't heard from him in weeks.' her husband. (page 90 line 14)	
2	That	78	'He was constantly presenting ideas. Maybe we could look out the windows through lenses? Refracted glass? Telescopes? Binoculars? That was his big idea. If it's a matter of sight, maybe what we'd need to do is alter our sight line.' (page 99 line 1)	Tom's utterance talks about George's ideas.
3	But	21	'I wouldn't ask you to. But I can ask myself.' (page 123 line 12)	Tom's utterance is used to contrast his statement.
4	Well	4	'But George was like a captain of a sinking ship, and he wasn't afraid to die. And if it worked? Well, that would mean he'd helped cure the planet of its most terrifying epidemic.' (page 100 line 23).	Tom's utterance: 'And if it worked?'
5	So	3	'George told us that he didn't need permission in his own house to do what he wanted to do. So, I told him I'd tie him to the chair.' (page 101 line 27).	Tom's utterance: 'George told us that he didn't need permission in his own house to do what he wanted to do'.
6	Still	2	'I got to see how much she'd grown. Her mind was getting so big. Still, she was too young to understand how scary the stories were on the news.' (page 70 line 20)	Tom's utterance is used to contrast his statement about his daughter.
7	Somehow	1	We agreed she wouldn't go outside without my permission. Somehow, I had to make her believe things were safe and horribly unsafe at the same time. (page 70 line 28)	Tom's utterance used to relate his statement before about his agreement with his daughter.
8	Instead	2	'Don't let the nerves get to you like they did last time. Instead, lean on the fact that we came back last time. We'll do it again. And this time, Malorie, acts as a leader. Help them when they get scared.' (p.249 line 13)	Tom's utterance: 'Don't let the nerves get to you like they did last time'
9	In the other words	1	'He believed that people's reaction to them was psychosomatic. In other words, all this insanity fuss isn't caused by the creatures at all, but rather by	Gary's previous statement: 'He believed that people's reaction to them was

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the dramatic people who see      psychosomatic.'  
them.' (page 222 line 18)

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Total	158
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Some data in discourse deixis extracted from the novel are illustrated in the following excerpts.

Data 7: ' I understand that you think you think you will, but I don't think you realize how much the house needs you.' (Malerman, 2014, p. 249)

The utterance in Data 7 is spoken by Malorie as a speaker to Tom as an addressee. The word 'but' is expressing a discourse deictic expression because it refers to a referent previously mentioned. It happens when Tom wants to leave the house to find food, medicine, and water for the needs of everyone in the house. However, Malorie rejects the idea because she is afraid that Tom would not come back. In this utterance, even though Malorie knows the importance of him leaving to search for sustenance, she tries to persuade Tom to not leave the house. She is aware that Tom may not come back due to the danger that is lurking outside the house, and then she uses the word 'but' to contrast her thought. She doubts that Tom realizes that his presence is much needed in the house.

Data 8: 'He believed that people's reaction to them was psychosomatic. In other words, all this insanity fuss isn't caused by the creatures at all, but rather by the dramatic people who see them.' (Malerman, 2014, p. 222)

In Data 8, the statement is said by Gary to his all housemates. The discourse deixis in this utterance is represented by the phrase, 'in other words'. It happens when Gary tells them about his old housemate who does not believe that everything that happens to them is caused by an unknown creature. The deictic phrase, 'in other words', is a discourse marker because it refers to the referent previously mentioned (i.e., Gary's statement about his friend who believes that people's reactions to the phenomenon that has occurred so far were psychosomatic), and he uses the phrase to clarify his previous statement.

Data 9: 'We agreed neither of us would look out the windows anymore. We agreed she wouldn't go outside without my permission. Somehow, I had to make

her believe things were safe and horribly unsafe at the same time.'  
(Malerman, 2014, p. 70)

The utterance in Data 9 is uttered by Tom as a speaker to Malorie as an addressee. The discourse deixis in this utterance is presented by the use of the word 'somehow'. It happens when Tom tells Malorie about how he is trying to keep her daughter safe. He forbids her to go out of the house and to look out the windows to avoid an unknown creature attacking them. The deictic word 'somehow' is a discourse marker because it refers to the referent previously mentioned, that is Tom's and his daughter's agreement to not go outside the house or even look out the windows without his permission.

Data 10: 'Don't let the nerves get to you like they did last time. Instead, lean on the fact that we came back last time. We'll do it again. And this time, Malorie, acts as a leader. Help them when they get scared.' (Malerman, 2014, p. 249)

Data 10 presents the utterance by Tom to Malorie. The discourse deixis in this utterance is presented by the use of 'instead'. It happens when Tom is trying to convince Malorie that everything would be all right and he will come back to the house like he always does. The deictic word 'instead' is a discourse marker because it refers to the referent previously mentioned, that is Tom's previous statement saying Malorie not to worry.

## **Discussion**

To answer the research questions, this study applied the types of deixis proposed by Cruse (2000). Asy'ari et al. (2017) stated that social deixis concerns the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participants' roles. This deixis consists of two parts, relational social deixis, and absolute social deixis. Relational social deixis indicates the social status and relationship between the speaker and addressee or referent in a particular linguistic context (Papapavlou & Sophocleous, 2009). While absolute social deixis is a deixis reference usually expressed in certain forms of address which will include no comparison of the ranking of the speaker and addressee. Based on data analysis, the relational social deixis is the most used type, while absolute social deixis is the least one. The social deixis in "'Bird Box'" reflects the relationship of the characters with their interlocutors. For example, the words

'Mommy', 'son', and 'my dear', among others, show kinship relationships among the characters. Other examples of social deixis in the novel describe the relationship of siblings, friendship, and housemates by referring to the other persons by their names. More distant referents used are 'Sir' and 'Miss'; they are used when the characters speak with stranger interlocutors.

The dominant use of social deixis in the novel may happen because the author of the novel intends to encode the intimacy or relationship of the speaker and the addressee. "Bird Box" is a horror-themed novel and is set only in one house where the characters do not meet anyone else except their housemates. The use of relational social deixis leads to the use of sentences to give a strong assessment of an event in a social situation where the situation takes place (Levinson, 2004).

The second type of most used deixis in the novel is discourse deixis, that is the use of this point to the future element of discourse (Cruise, 2000). In other words, this deixis is about how the words in a story or conversation related to what is happening now or what happened before. Sometimes, speakers talk about things that already happened or things that will happen later, and this helps the listeners understand the whole conversation. In "Bird Box", the discourse deixis used in the conversation are such as 'this', 'that', 'but', 'so', and 'in other words', among others. In linguistic analyses, these referents are accepted as devices through which the addressee orients the addressee's attention to create joint attention, and through which the addressee constructs and modifies the mental representation of unfolding discourse (Çokal et al, 2014).

Meanwhile, absolute social deixis was used the least by the author; absolute social deixis is sometimes associated with different social statuses (higher and lower). In the novel, there are no characters who have a higher or lower social position because all the characters are housemates. They are equal regardless of their professions, educational background, or other factors that affect social status. Levinson (2004) states that discourse 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). In other words, discourse deixis is an expression used to refer to certain discourse that contains the utterance or as a signal and its relation to surrounding text.

In contrast to some previous studies that have similar results such as a study conducted by Jamiah (2018) that discussed social deixis in the novel *Rogue*

Lawyer by John Grisham. As a result, there are 51 data of relational social deixis and 24 data of absolute social deixis. Utami (2017) also conducted a study on deixis analysis, this research is aimed to describe the deixis used in Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver* by using the deixis theory stated by Levinson (1983). The result of this research shows social deixis (43) data and discourse deixis (76) data. Saputri (2018) also conducted a study on deixis analysis, this research is aimed to describe the deixis used in first chapter of *The Rainbow Troops Novel: Ten New Students* by Andrea Hirata by using deixis theory stated by Levinson (1983). As a result, the researcher found 28 data of social deixis, and 9 data of discourse deixis.

Understanding the use of referents and the context of words in spoken and written language is essential to get the messages across. Particularly in reading texts such as novels, comprehending deixis is a way to understand the storyline as well as the characters depicted and to lessen the extent of ambiguity (Glover & Al-Tekreeti, 2018). The study of social and discourse deixis in "Bird Box" contribute to the portrayal of the personal and social themes that eventually helps the readers not only to see how the author describes the characters in the novel but also to understand the messages of the story.

### **Conclusion and Suggestion**

There are 475 occurrences of deixis in the "Bird Box" novel by John Malerman published in 2014. From the data, this research focuses on social deixis and discourse deixis based on the theory by Cruse (2000). From those data, the types of deictic expressions used in the novel include 317 data of social deixis (with 307 data of relational social deixis and 10 data of absolute social deixis) and 158 discourse deixis. Relational social deixis has 10 forms of expressions, they are 'mommy', 'father', 'girl', 'boy', 'guys', 'dear', 'man', 'kids/children', 'buddy', and 'name of the person'. Meanwhile, the absolute social deixis has 3 forms of expressions, they are 'miss', 'sir', and 'the captain'. The discourse deixis comprises nine forms of expressions, they are 'this', 'that', 'but', 'well', 'so', 'somehow', 'still', 'instead', and 'in other words'.

For words, phrases, and sentences to be understood in a variety of settings, accurate deixis must be understood and used while using language. The use of appropriate deictic words helps language learners, such as students who are not native English speakers, in their efforts to produce efficient communication in both spoken and written forms. Nevertheless, this study limits to two types of deixis; social

and discourse deixis, and investigated in only one novel. There is a possibility to miss out on certain meanings or issues in the novel regarding the use of the other three types of deixis proposed by Cruse (2000). Further related studies are suggested to employ more data and other frameworks of analysis in deixis the substantiate the findings of this study.

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