THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF COMMUNICATION THROUGH DEIXIS

Iuliana-Valentina BOBOACĂ[*]

Abstract: *The objective of this study is to examine the role played by deixis in the contextualization of discourse, and to illustrate the different types of deictic structures in Old Romanian language - a case study on Mihail Moxa's "Cronica Universală" (1620).*

Keywords: *deixis, focus, indicator.*

1. The deixis is the process by which certain elements of the statement direct the attention toward the enunciation, as generating a message, in a certain situation of communication.

Other definitions for deictics were also given: "Unul dintre aspectele fundamentale ale organizării pragmatice a discursului, desemnând faptul că referinţa anumitor componente ale unui enunţ nu poate fi determinată decât prin raportare la datele concrete ale situaţiei de comunicare"[1] (*DSL*, 2001: 157); "prin deixis se înţelege capacitatea unor forme lingvistice (deicticele) de a se referi la contextul comunicării: la participanţii la comunicare (locutor, alocutor) şi la cadrul spaţio-temporal al acesteia."[2] (*GBLR*, 2010: 625)

Deictic elements relate primarily to the main elements of communication: the actors of communication (speaker and addressee); temporal verb marks as the core of communication; the focus of communicative interest on objects (pronouns and demonstrative pronominal adjectives); focusing on the action by objectifying it. The incidental structure operates as deictic element, at a phrastic level.

2. From a semantically point of view, two groups can be highlighted: deictic elements by their very nature, and indicators for deictic forms.

2.1. The deictics by their very nature are: personal pronouns (personal pronouns were only the first and the second person, in Latin), proper names (in the noun sphere, they are called actants), and deictic verbal tenses, referring to the time of speech (in the verb sphere).

Personal pronouns possess a special meaning, and a specific grammatical behaviour: they are not substitutes, and do not have a gender opposition, thus being the ideal semantic housing (deictic flexibility).

The fact that these pronouns are not substitutes, and that they directly include the person who speaks, and is spoken to, has led some grammarians to exclude them from the class of pronouns. In connection with that aspect, C. Dumitriu highlighted: "Dacă prin pronume se înţeleg cuvintele ce substituie nume, atunci *eu* şi *tu* şi toate cele similare lor nu sunt pronume, pentru că în nici un context nu admit comutarea cu un

[*] University of Pitești, iuliana_boboaca@yahoo.com

[1] "One of the fundamental aspects of pragmatic discourse organization, denoting the fact that the reference of a sentence's certain parts can be determined only in relation to the actual data of the situation of communication".

[2] "by deixis one understands the ability of some linguistic forms (deictics) to refer to the context of communication: to the communication's participants (speaker, addressee), and to the spatio-temporal frame of it."

BDD-A14489 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 07:10:37 UTC)

nume (…) Totuşi, păstrând tradiţia, care opune pe *eu, tu* şi toate cele similare lor unor pronume propriu-zise ca *el, ea* etc. menţinem pe *eu, tu* şi toate cele similare lor în rândul pronumelor personale." [1] (Dimitriu, 1999: 238)

Actually, these are mask-pronouns (*persona, -ae* = mask) representing the person speaking (speaker, mask, first person), and the one that it is spoken to (the addressee, mask, the second person). These pronouns occupy a special place in the pronominal system, having access to direct representation, and not substitution, as the transmitter, and receiver are the fundamental poles of the communication scheme. This can be determined by their pragma-semantical nature: "Care este prin urmare realitatea la care se referă *eu* sau *tu*? Destul de straniu, exclusiv o realitate de discurs (…) *Eu* înseamnă persoana care enunţă prezenta instanţă de discurs, conţinând *eu*. Instanţă unică prin definiţie, doar în unicitatea sa."[2] (Benveniste, I, 2000: 240)

(1) "[...] pre care vor obidi pre săraci cu strîmbul, **eu** să-l cert?" (71v: 154);
(2) "De am **eu** făcut ceva cu nedereptul, nu-mi veghea voe nemică [...]" (71v: 154);
(3) "[...] iară **tu,** suflet împărătesc, de pururea însetoşezi cu mentea [...]" (4v: 99);
(4) "[...] iară **tu** să aibi cu ce-l sprijoni!" (116v: 186).

In the category of inherent deictics, the personal pronoun for the third person has also entered, achieving practically the tripartite scheme of communication (speaker-adressee-delocutor). In Romanian, as in other Romance languages, the third personal pronoun evolved from the demonstrative *ille*, which was, anyway, a deictic indicator. In fact, this pronoun marks the transition between the inherent deictics, and the deictic indicators, summing features of both types. From the inherent deixis, it has the impossibility of attracting an adjectival determinant, and to become, like other demonstratives, itself a pronominal adjective. From the deictic indicators it has got: the nature of a substitute, and the gender opposition.

In addition, the deictic pronouns are constituted in the criterion for the verb sub classification: the statement verbs are only those which select them as subject, this requiring, as a manifestation form of law compatibility, the selective restriction of [+ human] (the third person pronoun does not require, as a substitute, this restriction, because the verbs have, regardless of the subclass they belong to, the form of the third person).

(5) "**Elu** se sculă şi mérse la besérecă, de văzu un om spărtigos [...]" (111r: 183);
(6) "[...] **el** purta rîndul şi cîrma Isachiie Comnin [...]" (134r: 199);
(7) "**Ia** boteză şi pre frate-său creştinéşte." (107v: 181).

The first and second person, plural forms (person V and VI, for the verb), represent what is called an inclusive plural, which is including the reality of other people: *noi = eu + tu + el…* (*we = I + you + he* ...), just as *voi = tu + el + ei* (*you = you + he + she*) ... (*cf. GALR*, II, 2008: 731).

(8) "**Ei** răspunseră: *Cînd vor veni turcii la **noi**, **noi** ne vom apăra*." (143r: 208);
(9) "De nu-m veți ajuta acmu, apoi **voi** vă veți | căi." (143r: 208).

---

[1] "If by pronouns one understands words that substitute names, then *eu* (*I*), and *tu* (*you*), and all of their matches are not pronouns, because in no context would they admit the replacement with a noun (...) However, obeying the tradition, who opposes *eu* (*I*), *tu* (*you*), and all their similar structures to some proper pronouns as *el* (*he*), *ea* (*she*), so on so forth, we keep *eu* (*I*), *tu* (*you*), and all of their similar structures, among the personal pronouns"

[2] "Therefore, what is the reality to which *I* or *you* refers to? Strangely enough, exclusively a reality of discourse (...) *I* = the person who states the present instance of discourse containing *I*. Unique instance by definition, only in its uniqueness."

BDD-A14489 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 07:10:37 UTC)

2.1.2. In what concerns the noun level, the most common deictic elements are the proper names, not described as such in the system of deictics by *GALR*. Even so, they were defined as deictics in *DSL*: "Pragmatic, se disting prin categoria deixis-ului, trimiţând la cunoştinţe comune locutorului şi interlocutorului"[1] (*DSL*, 2001: 415). In the chapter about the noun, *GALR* gives a semantic description that characterizes them as deictics: "Numele proprii sunt lipsite de sens în afara actului denominativ de individualizare a unui anumit obiect[2]" (*GALR*, I, 2008: 119) It is noted that they are closer to the pronoun, having the disadvantage of substitution (in)ability. They could, however, be close to the pronouns *eu, tu*, which, themselves, as proper names, signal each time, in speech, a singular existence. Moreover, some studies have reported that: "Se susţine uneori că există o strânsă relaţie între deictice şi numele proprii (fie că deicticele sunt un fel de nume proprii, fie că numele proprii sunt un fel de deictice."[3] (Gorăscu, 2005: 519). As a noun, the deictic supports the pronoun-substitution, and restricts to the maximum level the imperative determination (**Who Jesus?*).

2.2. The verbal deixis puts the communicative focus on the simultaneity of the act of enunciation, and on the production of the action (present tense), of the previous projection (past tense), and subsequent to the speech moment (future). The relative tenses, which are defined in connexion to absolute tenses, may acquire, in a special context, a deictic value. By their very nature, the absolute tenses are grammaticalized manifestations of deixis, while the relative tenses, referring to the first, are anaphoric. Their definition captures precisely these traits: "Un temps déictique est donc un temps qui exprime une relation directe par rapport au moment de l'énonciation – c'est-à-dire – un temps absolu. Un temps anaphorique serait alors un temps qui exprime une relation temporelle par rapport à un événement ou un moment de temps différent du moment de la parole." (Vetters, 1993: 90)

In studies of languages, where the sequence of tenses exists, a group of verbs called absolute-relative was added next to the two already existing groups (absolute and relative).

3. Deictic indicators. If inherent deictics express the referent by their nature, pointing out the overlap between the situation of communication and discourse, deictic indicators are indexical signs that establish such connexions – speech integrators. They are organized according to the two basic components of the statement: the nominal group, and the verbal group.

3.1. Typical for the nominal group are the intensive pronouns, politeness pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and the demonstrative value of the definite article.

3.1.1. The intensive pronoun should be called deictic pronoun, as in all contexts in which it appears as a pronominal adjective, it always identifies the name that determines it. It is the only pronominal adjective which, by its deictic nature, is selected by the personal pronouns (*eu însumi, tu însuţi, el însuşi*), and even proper names (*Moxa însuși*). In fact, it is an indicator that illustrates deictic persistence, a grammaticalized form of emphasis, being selected by nouns which are already determined: *băiatul însuși*, not **un băiat însuși.*

[1] "Pragmatically, they are distinguished by deixis category, appealing to the common knowledge of the speaker, and addressee."
[2] "Proper names are meaningless outside the denominative act of individualisation of a particular object."
[3] "It is sometimes said that there is a close relationship between deictics and proper names (whether deictics are a kind of proper names, or the names are a kind of deictics."

BDD-A14489 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 07:10:37 UTC)

(10) “[...] de-aciia se osebiia **însuș**i, de vrea vorovi de boiari și de mesereri.” (52v: 135);
(11) “Iară Irina tot bătea să fie **însăș**i cîrmitoare [...]” (94v: 171);
(12) “[...] că tocma **înșiș[i]** împărații nemică nu făcea fără sfatul acelora [...]” (90r: 168).

3.1.2. The politeness pronoun represents an insufficiently grammaticalized phase of degrees of deference. Because politeness is not reflexive, it does not occur in the first person, but only in second and third persons, being lexically organized into three degrees. Thus, for the second person (*tu*) we have the *level of usage* (unknown person or older): *dumneata*; the level of hierarchy (superior in the hierarchy) *dumneavoastră*; level of reverence (high distance in the hierarchy): *Domnia Ta*. Similarly, in the plural: *dumneavoastră*, *dumneavoastră*, *Domniile Voastre*. For the third person, Romanian language has the same degrees: *dumnealui*, *dânsul*, *Domnia Sa*.
(13) “Cîndu-ș déde sufletul cu nevoe, Nerue dup-**însul** dobîndi domniia.” (43v: 131);
(14) “[...] și-i purta cu **nunsul** în oaste și acase, și pre toate drumurile.” (45r: 132);
(15) “Elu-l priimi la **dinsul** cu cinste și-l ținea ca pre un fecior de domn.” (22r: 115);
(16) “Deci pre **densa** o băgară în temniță, iară pre coconii-i lepădară [...]” (29v: 119);
(17) “[...] pînă va veni domnul-său la **dinsă**.” (22v: 115);
(18) “[...] ce ducea grije **d-insa**, că era tinără și frumoasă.” (135r: 199);
(19) “[...] cinste să aib de la **domniia-ta**, iar de nu, pre derept să-m tai [...]” (70v: 153).

3.1.3. Demonstrative pronouns individualize the noun-objects by specifying the relationship they have with the parties involved in the communication. There are three types of demonstrative pronouns: proximity – proximal (*acesta, aceasta, cestălalt ceastălaltă*), distance – distal (*acela, aceea, celălalt, cealălaltă*), and of identity (*același, aceeași*).
(20) “**Acesta** Dechei domni doi ai și muri necat într-o tină la un războiu.” (53v: 136);
(21) “Constantine, cu **aceasta** veri birui!” (55v: 139);
(22) “**Aceștia** amîndoi, cînd era coconași, ei învăța carte la s[ve]ti [...]” (51r: 142);
(23) “**Acéstea** toate sînt aduse pentru treaba voastră!” (8r: 101);
(24) “Și nu e pre **ceastă lume** împărăției lu H[risto]s, unde-i i cînd va fi.” (43r: 130);
(25) “Iară den **cești** trei ce-au | venit cu tine – le zise – Leo va fi întîiu [...]” (97r: 173);
(26) “Iară ei să spereară de cuvînt și se feriia de **acel** pom ca de un vrăjmaș.” (8v: 101);
(27) “[...] de zmulse den rădăcină **acea** dobîndă împuțită și de ocară [...].” (66v: 150);
(28) “Pentru **acéea** toți tînjiia și pretutindenea era chiote [...]” (96v: 173);
(29) “[...] birui și pre **aceia** și scoase cetatea den mîinile lor.” (123r: 191);
(30) “Miră-se de-aciia împăratul, plăti și **acele** trei și le arătă vrăjitorilor.” (32r: 121).

Among the distant pronouns, especially among those with a cataphoric function, the semi-independent demonstratives (*cel, cea, cei, cele*) are used in Old Romanian language:
(31) “Ce avea frică | de Iustinian **cel** cu nasul tăiat [...]” (84v: 165);
(32) “Avea Nichifor, pre lângă bărbății | trupască, și **cea** sufletească [...]” (124v: 192);
(33) “pre care vor obidi pre **cei** săraci cu strîmbul [...]” (134r: 199);
(34) “[...] și trimise Dumnezeu de **céle** de pre pămînt [...]” (11v: 103);
(35) “De-aciia înălță apa corabia și ei se mîntuiră, iară **alalți** toți se necară.” (11v: 103);
(36) “[...] iară la **alalte**, la tot era bun și înțelept[...]” (132r: 197).

3.1.4. The definite article has a deictic value, in two different contexts: in a demonstrative knowledge context (*De unde ai luat ziarul?*); or in an implicit knowledge context (*Răsare soarele.*):
(37) “Ce ai luat hran**a** săracilor, de negoțetorești și precupești?” (104r: 179);
(38) “Începu a podobi ceriul cu stéle și cu lucéferi, cu soare**le** și cu lun**a** [...]” (6r: 100).

BDD-A14489 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 07:10:37 UTC)

3.1.5. The vocative, by its appellative function performs, as an incidental expression, in correspondence (most often) with an imperative, signals the addressee, focusing the message on a specific person from a group or drawing the attention by direct addressing to some highlights of the message:
(39) "**Constantine**, cu aceasta veri birui!" (55v: 139).

3.2. The circumstantial deictics are primarily characteristic for the verb group. The performative verbs and some interjections may also have a deictic value.

3.2.1. When the circumstantial deixis is described, the temporal and spatial circumstances are always highlighted. In reality, there are two semantic dominants: the existential one, belonging to the actors (*space* and *time*: everything that exists is placed in space and time), and the motivational one, belonging to the action (*cause* and *purpose*: every action has a cause that determines it, and a purpose toward which it tends). Circumstances, occurring in binary relations, are organized at the propositional and the phrastic level, have a correlative structure model (*acolo… , unde*). Thus, one can conclude that the first term of the correlation is, always, a deictic adverb: *acolo…, unde*; *atunci…, când; aşa…, cum; de aceea…, fiindcă; de aceea…, (ca) să…*
(40) "[...] **aorea** biruia grecii pe troiani, **aorea** troianii pre greci." (25r: 116);
(41) "**Atunce**-l dăruiră cu 300 de galbeni, ca să nu-i uite **cînd** va veni [...]" (61r: 146);
(42) "**Cînd** fu Moisi de 85 de ai, **atunce** scoase pre ruda ovreiască [...]" (15r, 106);
(43) "**Deacă-l** văzu, elu-ş prepuse cu gînd rău şi tremése **atunceş** [...]" (59v: 145);
(44) "De nu-m veți ajuta **acmu**, **apoi** voi vă veți | căi." (143r: 208);
(45) "Rămase domnia la Theod[o]ra, că Zoia, soru-sa, murise **mainte** [...]" (133r: 198);
(46) "Acesta obori domniia turcilor şi plecă **Indiia**, **Siiria**, **Finichiia** şi toți domnii pământului şi toți vitéjii lumiei, de la **răsărit** pînă la **apus**, şi s-au plecat lui. Şi împărăți de tot 38 de ai şi muri otrăvit în **Vavilon**." (19v: 111);
(47) "Atunce împărți apa, una o sui **sus**, alta **jos** [...]" (5r: 99).

3.2.2. The Performative verbs "sunt o subclasă a verbelor, desemnând acţiuni verbale care prezintă caracteristica de a realiza, atunci când sunt folosite la persoana I, indicativ prezent, prin însăşi rostirea lor, acţiunea pe care o descriu (desemnează)"[1] (*GALR, II*, 2008: 734). Such verbs (*a ruga, a spune, a zice, a declara, a porunci, a jura…)* are deictics only in the presence of the personal deictic.
(48) "Ce **ne rugăm**, iartă-l, că-ț iaste fiu!" (117r: 186);
(49) "Iată şi noi, de cît ne iaste puterea, **spunem** cu adevăr." (4v: 99);
(50) "[...] pus era să dea bir la anul un florint de argint, cum **se zice** [...]" (66r: 150);
(51) "Acestuia Iustinian **se grăieşte** că i-au dat Amatine [...]" (66v: 150).

Some other verbs can become performative, but only in special contexts (the speaker assumes the role of proclaiming the entrance in another situation of communication): *Observaţiile mele se încheie aici; Drept pentru care am încheiat prezentul proces-verbal; Declar deschise lucrările conferinţei…*

3.2.3. The interjections have a deictic value, especially the conversational additives or speech interjections: *iată, iacă, iacătă!...* Some interjections, parts of incidental constructions, are actually propositional substitutes: *Aha! (=S-o crezi tu!); Haida-de! (=Mai lasă-mă!); Sst! (= Vreau linişte!)*. The speech interjections (*bă!, bre!,fă!, mă!, măi!...*) are phatic elements of (re)establishing the contact between the parties:

[1] "are a subset of verbs designating verbal actions showing the characteristic to achieve, when used in the first person, present indicative, by their very utterance, the action they describe (designate)"

BDD-A14489 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 07:10:37 UTC)

(52) “**Iată** și noi, de cît ne iaste puterea, spunem cu adevăr.” (4_{v}: 99);
(53) “**Iată** se sfîrși | povéstea de troiani, ca în scurt deplin.” (27_{r}: 117);
(54) “**O**, [a]marnică neascultare! **O**, năprasnică cădere!” (9_{r}: 101).

3.3. The incidental constructions constitute, what has been called, the explanatory communication plan. One must distinguish between incidental words and incidental phrases (among them, vocatives and interjections have been described as deictics), and incidental sentences (phrases).

GALR does not describe the incidental constructions among the deictics, fact caused, apparently, by two issues: the non-exact definition of incidence as fact of language; and the great diversity of incidental constructions, where not all have a deictic role. A pragmatic definition of incidence, which allows its integration among deictics, was given recently: “Elementele incidente rezultă din proiectarea enunţării asupra enunţului.”[1] (Irimia, 2008: 588, *cf.* Ungureanu, 2002: 20). In *GBLR* it is stated: “Se disting câteva situaţii în care componente ale enunţului (cuvinte, grupuri de cuvinte, propoziţii) angajează relaţii pragmatice, discursive, cu celelalte componente.”[2] (*GBLR*, 2010: 354).

A sentence like *Țara se află în plină dezvoltare* has no deictic component, unlike this: *Țara, spune președintele nostru, se află în plină dezvoltare,* which identifies the country, through explanations. The dubbing: deictic incidental utterances – non-deictic incidental statements is very common, because the deixis, as part of reality, is connected with the practical needs of communication: *Omul – s-ar putea crede – e supus greșelii. / Omul, cred eu, e supus greșelii…*
(55) “[...] iară den cești trei ce-au | venit cu tine – le zise – Leo va fi întîiu împărat[...]” (97_{r}: 173).

The incidental deixis could be included in the textual deixis, which is not meta-linguistic, but directs the addressee's attention (communicative focus) toward certain elements of the message.

Many of the incidental constructions refer directly to the situation of communication, receiving deictic values, in the presence of other indicators of deixis: *O cunosc bine pe Ioana – am fost colege la facultate –şi nu pot să cred că ea a spus aşa ceva* (*cf. GALR, II*, 2008: 352); *Eu sper (şi ţi-o spun ca să reţii) că m-ai înţeles* (*cf.* Irimia, 2008: 591).

4. It can be noted, from the configuration of deictic elements, that for the communication to work, the deictics are found at all levels of the language, next to supra-segmental items, ostensive (intonation, body language). The situation is similar in Old Romanian language, where the deictics are very well represented, as shown.

Bibliography

Benveniste, É., *Probleme de lingvistică generală, I*, Editura Universitas, Bucureşti, 2000
Dimitriu, C., *Tratat de gramatică a limbii române, I, Morfologia*, Institutul European, Iaşi, 1999
DSL, Bidu-Vrânceanu, A. ş.a., *Dicţionar de ştiinţe ale limbii*, Editura Nemira, București, 2001
GALR, Guţu Romalo, V. (coordonator), *Gramatica limbii române, I, Cuvântul, II, Enunţul*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2008.
GBLR, Pană Dindelegan, G. (coordonator) *Gramatica de bază a limbii române*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, Bucureşti, 2010

[1] “Incidental elements result from the projection of enunciation upon the sentence/discourse.”
[2] “We distinguish several cases in which part of the components of statement (words, groups of words, sentences) employ discursive, pragmatic relations with the other components.”

BDD-A14489 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 07:10:37 UTC)

Gorăscu, A., *Deixis, o altă perspectivă*, în *Limba română. Structură şi funcţionare*, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, Bucureşti, 2005
Irimia, D., *Gramatica limbii române*, Iaşi Editura Polirom, Iaşi, 2008
MDA, Sala, M., Dănăilă, I. (coordonatori) *Micul dicţionar academic, I*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, 2001
Moxa, M., *Cronica universală*, Ediție critică, însoțită de izvoare, studiu introductiv, note și indici de G. Mihăilă, Editura Minerva, București, 1989
Vetters, C., *Temps et deixis*, în *Le temps, de la phrase au texte*, Lille, Presses Universitaires de Lille, Lille, 1993
Ungureanu, E., *Construcţia incidentă în limba română*, Editura Conphis, Rm. Vâlcea, 2002

NOTĂ:
Această cercetare a fost efectuată prin Proiectul POSDRU/159/1.5/S/138963– „Performanţă sustenabilă în cercetarea doctorală şi post doctorală - PERFORM” România 2014, cofinanţat de Fondul Social European.

BDD-A14489 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 07:10:37 UTC)