

An Analysis of Deixis in Poem *On the Pulse of Morning*  
by Maya Angelou

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Abstract

The research is about deixis as one of pragmatics field. The aim of this research is to analyze five types of deixis and describe the reference meaning of deixis are found in poem *On the Pulse of Morning* by Maya Angelou. In analysis, this research uses theory of Levinson about deixis in 1983. The research method used is qualitative method. The result shows the most dominant deixis used is person deixis which is the second person. There are 41 utterances of second person deixis (you, your, yours, yourself, yourselves) that used in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem. This research can be useful for the reader to understand about deixis and for the next researcher who are interested in studying pragmatics to make other pragmatics field such as in implicature, speech acts, entailments or presupposition.

Keywords : pragmatics, deixis, reference, poem

## A. INTRODUCTION

Every human expresses their personality and fulfill their social interaction with other people by using language. Language refers to the process of conveying meaning and referring idea. According to Kreidler (1998:19), language is used to communicate and interact with each other in our daily life, whether in society, environment, educational institutions, recreational places, family, etc. To use language properly and correctly, language users must pay attention to the rules contained in the rules of language, which includes who, with whom, where and when the user uses language (Scarcella, Andersen, and Krashen, 1990). Language rules covering these matters are included in science pragmatics.

Deals to pragmatics in a language, Leech (1983:14) explain in his opinion that “pragmatics deals with verbal acts and performances which take place in particular situation, in time”. As a part of language, pragmatics, which since 1938 had been acknowledged to be the new room of linguistics study, plays a fundamental role in studying the verbal acts in a particular performance and situation. Thus, pragmatics is a study of the ability of the language user in combining and adapting sentence correctly (Gazdar, 1979:1). Pragmatics itself has several studies. As explained by Gazdar (1979:2), pragmatics studies include, among others regarding deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech acts and aspects of discourse structure.

One of the pragmatics fields that is very interesting to study is deixis. In contrast to the word of book, dictionary or pencil whose reference is known whenever and wherever the words

are pronounced, a word that is deixis is known only if the reference is known if the who, where, and at what time the deixis was pronounced. The categories of deixis based Levinson (1983:69-94) is divided into five, they are person deixis (first person, second person, and third person), place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis (relational social and absolute social).

Talking about deixis, it cannot be separate with the use of words that refers to the people and thing. Sometimes in using the words in sentence is easy for to do rather than to explain how and what is the meaning of those words. In order to know what the writer or speaker mean in sentence or utterance, as the listener or reader should understand about the meaning of the sentence or utterance, at least understand about who is the reference. Matthew (1997:312) states that "reference is the relation between a part of an utterance and an individual or set of individuals that it identified." Reference is commonly constructed as an act in which a speaker, or writer uses linguistic forms to enable a listener, or reader, to identify something.

On this occasion the thesis writer wants to explain the use of deixis in written language because in written language the person deixis might be confusing while in spoken language is not. To teach more about what deixis the thesis writer uses a poem *On the Pulse of Morning* by Maya Angelou. The poem was read by Maya Angelou at the first inauguration of President Bill Clinton on January 20, 1993. With her public recitation, Angelou became the second poet at a presidential inauguration, and the first African American and woman. Angelou's audio recording of the poem won the 1993 Grammy Award in the "Best Spoken Word" category, resulting in more fame and recognition for her previous works, and broadening her appeal. The poem echoes key points in Clinton's inaugural speech, especially that of America's need to own up its violent history of genocide, slavery, colonialism, and environmental destruction in order to secure a more peaceful and equitable future. The poem aims to inspire in its audience a sense of unity and responsibility towards other people and the planet. The themes of the poem are change, inclusion, responsibility, and role of both the President and the citizenry in establishing economic security.

So the research question and objective related to the issue that is presented in the introduction, this paper tries to reveal what types of deixis and what are the reference of each deixis in the poem *On the Pulse of Morning* by using analysis of deixis theory by Stephen C. Levinson.

## **B. RESERACH METHOD**

The researchers conduct a qualitative research in which the research does not give priority to number and tables. The Source of data is the poem *On the Pulse of Morning* written by Maya Angelou.

## C. ANALYSIS

### Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 1

A Rock, A River, A Tree  
Hosts to species long since departed,  
Marked the mastodon,  
The dinosaur, who left dried tokens  
Of their sojourn here  
On our planet floor,  
Any broad alarm of their hastening doom  
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.

Person deixis that found in stanza 1 is “*their*”, it is interpreted as possessive pronoun of third person. “*Their*” refers to the animal which is the mastodon and the dinosaur. The occurring of word “*long since*” in this poem indicates time deixis, it refers the time in the past. The last type of deixis found in stanza 1 is place deixis, which is “*here and planet floor*”. The word “*here and planet floor*” refers to the same meaning which is the location in this earth.

### Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* Poem Stanza 2

But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,  
Come, you may stand upon my  
Back and face your distant destiny,  
But seek no haven in my shadow.  
I will give you no hiding place down here.

The existing words of personal deixis in this poem are “*Us, You, My, Your and I*”. “*Us, My and I*” are part of first person deixis, while “*You and Your*” is part of second person deixis. The word “*I and My*” is referring to the Nature, while the word “*Us*” referring to the human which is the addresser and addressee. “*You and Your*” is second person deixis that refers to the human or the addressee. The next type of deixis in this poem is place deixis “*come, upon, and here*”. The word “*come*” means to move to a certain place or something. It refers to an invitation of the first person (Nature) to the second person (human). The next word “*upon*” refers to the place of the first person. Then, the place deixis word “*here*” is refers to the haven. Time deixis that found in the second is “*today and will*”. The word “*today*” can be interpreted as the day or time when the speaker delivers utterance and “*will*” indicate that the timing is in the future.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 3**

You, created only a little lower than  
The angels, have crouched too long in  
The bruising darkness  
Have lain too long  
Face down in ignorance.  
Your mouths spilling words

The existing words of personal deixis in this poem is second person deixis “*You and Your*”. “*You and Your*” is the second person deixis that refers to the human or the addressee. The next is time deixis “*long*”. It indicates the duration of the human crouching and lain. The last is absolute social deixis “*the angels*”, it refers to a spiritual being believed to act as an attendant, agent, or messenger of God.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 4**

Armed for slaughter.  
The Rock cries out to us today, you may stand upon me,  
But do not hide your face.

The existing words of personal deixis in this poem are “*Us, You and Your*”. the word “*Us*” is first person deixis referring to the human which is the addresser and addressee. “*You and Your*” is the second person deixis that refers to the human or the addressee. The place deixis in the fourth stanza is “*upon*” which refers to the place of the first person.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 5**

Across the wall of the world,  
A River sings a beautiful song. It says,  
Come, rest here by my side.

Person deixis that found in stanza 5 is “*it and my*”. The word “*it*” is third person stanza which is referring to A River. “*My*” is the first person deixis that refers to Nature. The place deixis in the fifth stanza are “*across, come, and here*”. The word “*across*” indicates the position that is far from the place. The word “*come*” means to move to a certain place or something. It refers to an invitation of the first person (Nature) to the second person (human). Then, the place deixis word “*here*” is refers to A River.

**Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 6**

Each of you, a bordered country,  
Delicate and strangely made proud,  
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.  
Your armed struggles for profit  
Have left collars of waste upon  
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.  
Yet today I call you to my riverside,  
If you will study war no more. Come,  
Clad in peace, and I will sing the songs  
The Creator gave to me when I and the  
Tree and the rock were one.  
Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your  
Brow and when you yet knew you still  
Knew nothing.  
The River sang and sings on.

The use of word “*I, me, and my*” in this poem indicate first person deixis and can be refers to the Nature. The second person deixis “*you and your*” is refers to the human or the addressee. Place deixis in the sixth stanza of this poem are “*boarded country, under, upon, shore, riverside, and come*”. The word of “*Boarded country, upon, shore, and riverside*” are referring to location, while “*come*” means to move to a certain place or something. It refers to an invitation of the first person (Nature) to the second person (human). Next types of deixis occur in this poem is time deixis represented by use of word “*today, will, and before*”. The word “*today*” can be interpreted as the day or time when the speaker delivers utterance, and “*will*” indicate that the timing is in the future, while “*before*” refers to the time when everything was fine. The last types of deixis in this stanza is social absolute deixis, which is “*The Creator*” it refers to God who create this universe.

**Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 7**

There is a true yearning to respond to  
The singing River and the wise Rock.  
So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew  
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,  
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek  
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik,  
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,  
The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.  
They hear. They all hear  
The speaking of the Tree.

The type of personal deixis in the seventh stanza is third person deixis “*They*”. In here, the word “*They*” refers to the groups span different races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, occupations, and socioeconomic statuses, thereby implying that everyone is capable of hearing. The next types of deixis is absolute social deixis of the words “*the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew, The African, the Native American, the Sioux, The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek, The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik, The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher, The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher*”. The references of the absolute social deixis and third person deixis is the same. The words of “*the Asian, the African, and the Native American*” refers to races, “*the Hispanic, the Sioux, the French, the Greek and the Irish*” refers to ethnicities, “*the Jew, the Catholic, and the Muslim*” refers to religions, “*the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik, the Preacher, the Teacher*” refers to occupations, “*the privileged and the homeless*” refers to socioeconomic statuses.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou’s *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 8**

They hear the first and last of every Tree  
Speak to humankind today. Come to me, here beside the River.  
Plant yourself beside the River.

The word “*me*” as first person refers to the Tree, the word “*yourself*” as second person refers to the human or the addressee, while the word “*they*” as third person refers to the groups span different races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, occupations, and socioeconomic statuses. “*Come, here and beside*” are the words that found as place deixis in this stanza. The word “*come*” means to move to a certain place or something. “*Here and beside*” refers to specific location that near from the speaker.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou’s *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 9**

Each of you, descendant of some passed  
On traveler, has been paid for.  
You, who gave me my first name, you,  
Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, you  
Cherokee Nation, who rested with me, then  
Forced on bloody feet,  
Left me to the employment of  
Other seekers — desperate for gain,  
Starving for gold.  
You, the Turk, the Arab, the Swede, the German, the Eskimo, the Scot,  
You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru, bought,  
Sold, stolen, arriving on the nightmare

Praying for a dream.

Here, root yourselves beside me.

I am that Tree planted by the River,

Which will not be moved.

I, the Rock, I the River, I the Tree

I am yours — your passages have been paid.

Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need

For this bright morning dawning for you.

History, despite its wrenching pain

Cannot be un-lived, but if faced

With courage, need not be lived again.

The use of word “*me, my, I am* and *I*” in this poem indicate first person deixis and can be refers to the Nature. The second person deixis “*you, yourselves* and *your*” is refers to the human or the addressee. “*Here* and *beside*” are the words that found as place deixis in this stanza, referring to specific location that near from the speaker. Next types of deixis occur in this poem is time deixis represented by use of word “*will*, and *morning*”. The word “*morning*” can be interpreted as the day when the sun shine bright, and “*will*” indicate that the timing is in the future. The word “*this*” that found in the poem refers to the day and classified as the discourse deixis. The next types of deixis is absolute social deixis of the words “*traveler, Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, Cherokee Nation, the Turk, the Arab, the Swede, the German, the Eskimo, the Scot, the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru*”. The words of “*traveler*” has a meaning of a person who moves around from place to place instead of living in one place for a long time, it refers to certain forms of address which will include no comparison of the ranking of the speaker and addressee. “*Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, Cherokee Nation, the Eskimo*” refers to Indigenous tribes, “*the Turk, the Arab, the Swede, the German, the Eskimo, the Scot, the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru*” refers to ethnic group.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou’s *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 10**

Lift up your eyes upon

This day breaking for you.

Give birth again

To the dream.

The use of word “*you* and *your*” in this poem indicate second person deixis and can be refers to human or the addressee. The word “*this*” that found in the poem refers to the day and classified as the discourse deixis. The next is time deixis, the word “*day*” refers to the time when the speaker said to lift up he or she eyes.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 11**

Women, children, men,  
Take it into the palms of your hands,  
Mold it into the shape of your most  
Private need. Sculpt it into  
The image of your most public self.  
Lift up your hearts  
Each new hour holds new chances  
For a new beginning.  
Do not be wedded forever  
To fear, yoked eternally  
To brutishness.

The use of word “*you* and *your*” in this poem indicate second person deixis and can be refers to human or the addressee. Time deixis in this stanza is found in the word “*hour, forever, and eternally*”. The word “*hour*” refers to the time when new chances are holds for a new beginning, is categorized as a present time. “Forever and eternally” in this time deixis refers to the very long time. The last type of deixis found in this stanza is social deixis. “Women, children, men” is absolute social deixis that refers to certain forms of address which will include no comparison of the ranking of the speaker and addressee.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 12**

The horizon leans forward,  
Offering you space to place new steps of change.  
Here, on the pulse of this fine day  
You may have the courage  
To look up and out and upon me, the  
Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.  
No less to Midas than the mendicant.  
No less to you now than the mastodon then.

The use of word “*me*” in this poem indicate first person deixis and can be refers to the Nature. Then, for the second personal deixis is encoded by word “*You and your*”. The word “*You and your*” is interpreted as human or the addressee. Place deixis that found in this stanza is “*here* and *country*”. The word “*here*” refers to specific location where the speaker at, while the word “*country*” refers to as the land of an individual’s birth, residence, or citizenship. The word “*this*” that found in the poem refers to the day and classified as the discourse deixis. The next is time deixis, the word “*day*” refers to the time that it is a good day. The function of word “*day*” is to



explain the activity that done in this day. The word “*then*” can be categorized as time deixis. It refers to the time when mastodon still alive. Social deixis showed by the occurring of the word “*Midas*”. It can be categorized as absolute social deixis based on the context. It refers to some social characteristic between the speaker and addressee. “*Midas*” refers to the King Midas from the Greek mythology, he was a greedy, gold driven king.

### **Type of Deixis and Reference Meaning in Maya Angelou’s *On the Pulse of Morning* poem stanza 13**

Here, on the pulse of this new day  
You may have the grace to look up and out  
And into your sister’s eyes, and into  
Your brother’s face, your country  
And say simply  
Very simply  
With hope —  
Good morning.

The use of word “*you*” and “*your*” in this poem indicate second person deixis and can be refers to the human or the addressee. The word “*this*” that found in the poem refers to the day and classified as the discourse deixis. The next is time deixis, the word “*day*” refers to the time that it is a good day. The function of word “*day*” is to explain the activity that done in this day. Place deixis in this stanza is the word “*country*”, it refers to as the land of an individual’s birth, residence, or citizenship. Social deixis showed by the occurring of the word “*sister’s*” and “*brother’s*”. It can be categorized as relational social deixis based on the context. It refers to the sibling of the addressee.

### **D. CONCLUSION**

Considering the result which has been analyzed and obtained at the previous chapter, the writer is able to take conclusion that in *Maya Angelou’s On the Pulse of Morning* poem could be found the elements of deixis in which divided into several types; person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis that marked by deictic words. Considering the five of deixis types in *Maya Angelou’s On the Pulse of Morning* poem, the most dominant deixis used is second person deixis. The writer found 41 utterances of second person deixis (you, your, yours, yourself, yourselves) that used in *Maya Angelou’s On the Pulse of Morning* poem. Moreover, by having been well understand to the deixis, we can avoid the misunderstanding and misinterpreting, especially in poem.

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