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Title:

Contrastive Rhetorical Study of Deictic Expressions of English and Persian Novels

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To

The Memory of My Great Father

The Patience of My Tenacious Mother

&

The Kindness of My Lovely Sister

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Abstract

Writing is one of the important skills in the process of language learning and teaching both for learners and teachers. In the present study, the way of deploying one of the most important subtypes of references, deixis, and its major types and subtypes and also the effect of cultural differences between English and Persian languages on using them, was explored by employing the contrastive procedure. Three types of comparisons were made: (a) an original English novel written by a native speaker of English was compared with an original Persian novel written by an Iranian writer (as a non-native of English), (b) another original English novel written by a native speaker of English was compared with its translation into Persian and (c) finally both English texts under investigation were compared with both of the Persian texts under study regardless of being original or translation. For these comparisons, a corpus of 30 pages (approximately 10, 000 words each) from the beginning of each novel and the translated version were utilized. In order to understand the cultural differences between English and Persian writers, and to account for the type and amount of deictic expressions employed by these two groups, the study concentrated on the following deixis types and subtypes adapted from Levinson (1995): *time* (coding, receiving), *place* (proximal, distal, and neuter), *person* (pure, impure, and non-referential), *social* (honorifics, kinship terms), and *discourse* (demonstratives). Chi- square tests were carried out to clarify

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the probable differences. The analysis revealed that these groups of writers differ in their use of the rhetorical device under investigation. Different groups were found to use various types and sub-types of deictic expressions differently. However, some types and subtypes were used similarly by the writers of these two languages and some others were used differently. In addition, deictic expressions were used significantly more by English writers than Iranian ones.

Key words: deixis, cohesion, text, rhetoric.

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Chapter one

Introduction

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1.1. Overview

This study deals with a contrastive rhetorical study of the differences and similarities between deictic expressions in English and Persian non-academic texts. It also deals with the implications of this contrastive rhetoric for foreign language teaching, learning, and translating. These implications can help deictic expressions to be used correctly by teachers and students in their EFL skills especially in writing, speaking, and translating. Our focus in the present research is mostly on the manner of writing of different writers (native and non-native) and translators, more specifically how their respective cultures have affected their writings in this regard. That is, the present research tries to find out how these writers use deixis according to their cultures and whether these expressions are used in both languaeges or because of some cultural differences there are some differences in using them. Since deixis is considered as a cohesive device and it is analyzed within the texts, and actually it is related to the context of situation, consequently it is a part of semantic and also pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. Also it is worth mentioning that deictic expressions are very fascinating features of a language, for instance, everyone can refer to one thing by using different kinds of deixis. According to many linguists deictic expressions are divided into three groups consisting: *person*, *place*, and *time*. To these traditional categories, we should now add (following Lyons, 1968, and Fillmore, 1971b, 1975) *discourse* (or

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text) deixis and *social* deixis (Levinson, 1995, p. 62). Therefore, in this study five different types of deixis are examined.

1.2. Significance of and justification for the study

Deictic expressions as a semantic and pragmatic characteristic of a text seem to be one of the most difficult constructions for Iranian EFL learners to learn and EFL teachers to teach especially to lower level language learners. This category appears to be problematic in different areas like different skills of speaking, writing, and also translating among others.

Most EFL instructors would agree that Iranian learners in translating or sometimes in speaking and writing for instance seem to be very weak in the proper use of deixis. It seems that some of these problematic areas can be removed from learners' performance in those skills by examining the contrastive rhetoric of some texts, and emphasizing the differences in teaching practices. Perhaps one of the reasons for this problematic area is the lack of enough knowledge about the similarities and differences between these kinds of categories in the two languages which cause difficulty for learners and teachers. Therefore, the results of this contrastive research may provide us with an insight into these problems.

This study has three main aims: 1. How two groups of authors, i.e. native speakers of English and Iranian novelists wrote original novels in English and

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Persian regarding their use of deixis. 2. It also examines the similarities and differences between an original English novel and its Persian translation. 3. And finally, it considers these differences and similarities in all of the English and Persian corpus under investigation. In other words, a. the original English novel written by a native speaker of English and the Persian text written by an Iranian author (as a non-native speaker), b. English novel translated into Persian by an Iranian translator, and c. all four English and Persian texts under study collectively, will be compared and contrasted. So, this is a kind of textual and discourse study which deals with the texts from two different languages. It is hoped that the findings of this study will shed some significant light on the issue of whether the use and types of and also the existence of deictic expressions as cohesive devices in two different kinds of texts are affected by respective languages and cultures.

Additionally, it is the belief of the present researcher that the findings of this study will be beneficial for students writing in English and Persian. It should also be mentioned that the texts selected for every comparison would be about 10,000 words long each and they will be chosen from the beginning of each novel (i.e. a. 10,000 words from one original English novel to be compared with another 10,000 words from one original Persian novel, and b. 10, 000 words of another original English novel to be compared with its Persian translation and at the end all of the English and Persian corpus will be compared collectively).

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Finally, it should be mentioned that the major impetus to start this research was a project which I did in the contrastive analysis course. It was a limited work in scope on deixis. My profound interest in discourse analysis added to my curiosity and contributed to my commitment to do this research on this topic, which is a clear instance of language in use.

1.3. Operational definitions of Key terms

The following definitions of key concepts are adhered to throughout this research:

Deixis: According to Levinson (1995), "the single most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of languages themselves, is through the phenomenon of deixis" (p.54).

As mentioned above there are five types of deixis dealt with in this study:

Time deixis*:* "concerns the encoding of temporal points and spans relative to the time at which an utterance was spoken (or a written message inscribed) …Time deixis is commonly grammaticalized in deictic adverbs of time (like English *now* and *then*, *yesterday* and *this year*)" (Levinson, 1995, p. 62).

Place deixis: "concerns the encoding of spatial locations relative to the location of the participants in the speech event" (Levinson, 1995, p. 62).

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