

A Pragmatic Analysis of Deictic Expressions in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar

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تحليل تداولي للتعبيرات الإشارية في رسالة الإمام علي بن أبي طالب

إلى مالك الأشتر

زينب كريم عبد الله الميالي

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Abstract:-

This study offers a pragmatic analysis of deictic expressions in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar, a foundational text in Islamic governance. Utilizing Levinson's framework, it classifies deixis into five categories: personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social. The research employs a descriptive-qualitative methodology to identify and analyze 727 deictic expressions within the Epistle. Among these, personal deixis is the most prevalent, accounting for over half (53.64%), with the second-person pronoun you appearing most frequently. Spatial deixis (16.78%) and social deixis (12.10%) also play significant roles, reflecting the speaker's effort to create a sense of immediacy and relational hierarchy. Temporal deixis (10.86%) emphasizes future governance and continuity, while discourse deixis (6.60%) supports textual cohesion. The findings underscore how Ali Ibn Abi Talib employed deictic strategies to personalize, contextualize, and strengthen his message, enhancing its persuasive and instructional dimensions. This analysis reveals deixis as a powerful linguistic tool in classical Arabic rhetoric and governance, where it reinforces the socio-political responsibilities embedded in leadership discourse.

Key words: Deictic expression; Pragmatics; Ali Ibn Abi Talib; Personal Pronouns; Contextual Meaning.

المخلص:-

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً تداولياً للتعبيرات الإشارية في رسالة الإمام علي بن أبي طالب إلى مالك الأشتر، وهي من النصوص الأساسية في فكر الحكم الإسلامي. وبالاستناد إلى إطار ليفينسون، تصنف هذه الدراسة التعبيرات الإشارية إلى خمس فئات: الشخصي، المكاني، الزمني، النصي (الخطابي)، والاجتماعي. تعتمد الدراسة منهجاً وصفيًا لتحديد وتحليل ٧٢٧ تعبيراً إشارياً في العهد، ومن بين هذه التعبيرات التعبير الشخصي الأثر شيوعاً، إذ يشكل ما يزيد على نصفها (٥٣.٦٤٪)، ويبرز ضمير المخاطب أنت / أنتم بوصفه الأكثر وروداً، كما يحتل التعبير المكاني (١٦.٧٨٪) والاجتماعي (١٢.١٠٪) دوراً مهماً، بما يعكس سعي المتكلم إلى خلق شعور بالأثنية وبناء علاقة هرمية. أما التعبير الزمني (١٠.٨٦٪) فيشير إلى تركيز الخطاب على إدارة شؤون الحكم في المستقبل وضمان استمراريتها، بينما يعزز التعبير الخطابي (٦.٦٠٪) تماسك النص وترابط بنيته الداخلية. وتؤكد النتائج كيف وظف الإمام علي بن أبي طالب الإشارات لتشخيص خطابه، وتأطيره ضمن سياقه، وتعزيز قوته الإقناعية والتوجيهية. وتظهر هذه الدراسة أن التعبيرات الإشارية يعد أداة لغوية فاعلة في البلاغة العربية الكلاسيكية وفي خطاب الحكم، إذ يسهم في ترسيخ المسؤوليات الاجتماعية- السياسية الكامنة في خطاب القيادة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعبيرات الإشارية، التداولية، الإمام علي بن أبي طالب، الضمائر الشخصية، المعنى السياقي.

1. Introduction

Pragmatics is a field of linguistics that investigates how language is used in communication. Yule (1996:3) describes pragmatics as “the study of meaning as connected by an utterer (or writer) and understood by a hearer (or reader).” Similarly, Levinson (1983:9) defines it as “the study of these relations between language and context that are grammaticalized or encoded in the structure of a language.” Thomas (2014:22) characterizes pragmatics as “meaning in interaction,” highlighting how people use words to denote something in particular contexts. Lyons (1981: 171) adds that pragmatics is “the study of immediate utterances; the study of use rather than meaning; the study of that part of meaning which is not virtuously truth-conditional.”

Levinson (1983:55) points out that deixis is a branch of pragmatics because it deals directly with how language structure connect to the context in which they are applied. In the same vein, LoCastro (2003:42) stresses that terms referring to people, places, or objects are intrinsically referential, meaning that the speaker or writer engages in an act of pointing so the intended person, location, or object within a given text.

Pragmatics also assumes that when people communicate with each other, they follow a cooperative principle; that is, they share an understanding of how communication should proceed. For example, the sentence “*The bus was late*” could have multiple interpretations: it may serve as a complaint about bus service, an explanation for someone’s tardiness, or something else entirely. Pragmatics helps us grasp the intended meaning by considering the social and textual context, along with the background knowledge that individuals possess about one another and the world. This understanding enables us to interpret what people usually express and how they behave when engaging in specific genres within certain social and cultural environments (Paltridge 2008: 53).

2. Deixis

Deixis is widely recognized as one of the most prominent features of language. The term itself originates from the Greek word for “pointing” or “indicating.” Levinson (1983:54) explains that deixis concerns how language encodes or grammaticalizes aspects of the context

surrounding an utterance or speech event. In essence, the core aspect of deixis lies in the context in which an utterance occurs and the circumstances of its delivery. Therefore, deixis is considered a crucial linguistic phenomenon that cannot be overlooked in the study of language.

As stated by Crystal (2011), deixis pertains to language elements that are directly linked to the personal, temporal, or spatial aspects of the context in which a statement is made, meaning their interpretation relies on that specific situation (for example, terms like now/ then/, I/you, and this/that). Similarly, Huang (2014) describes deixis as “the phenomenon whereby qualities of context, utterance, or speech event are determined by lexical and/or grammatical means in a language.”

Deictic expressions, commonly referred to as indexicals, generally encompass demonstratives, personal pronouns, tense indicators, adverbs related to time and place, as well as motion verbs (Yule, 1996:9). The importance of deictic information becomes evident when such context is missing. For example, Fillmore (1975:38–39) illustrates this with a note found on a door stating: *I will be back in half an hour*. Without knowing when the note was written, it is impossible to regulate the exact time of the author’s return, which demonstrates that the meaning of deictic expressions is always inherently tied to the context in which they occur.

2.1. Deixis and Grammar

As noted by Yule (1996:15), the distinctions in person, spatial, and temporal deixis resemble the differences found between direct and indirect speech. This means that expressions related to individuals, locations, and times are interpreted based on the perspectives of the speaker who uses them:

a. Are you planning to be here this evening?

b. I asked her if she was planning to be there that evening?

In reported speech, the original statements undergo deictic modification to suit the context of reporting. Proximal forms that appear in direct speech typically shift into their distal equivalents in indirect speech. While proximal deictic forms in direct speech signal closeness to the immediate context of the utterance, distal forms in indirect speech suggest a sense of separation or distance from the

initial speech event (Yule, 1996,p.16) Chapman (2011, p. 42) further emphasizes that deixis exemplifies a linguistic phenomenon that resists a single, clear-cut label, as it intertwines grammatical and pragmatic dimensions.

2.2. Gestural and Symbolic Deixis

Levinson (1983, 65) states that some deixis requires, for its interpretation, a reference to an audio-visual-tactile monitoring of the speech event. These are referred to as *gestural deixis*. Examples include demonstrative pronouns utilized with a selecting gesture, or second- or third-person pronouns used with some physical indication of the referent, as in:

This one's genuine, but this one is a fake.

He's not the Duke, he is. He's the butler.

Nonetheless, symbolic deixis only requires an understanding of the fundamental spatial and temporal context of the speaking situation. Thus, awareness of the participant's general location is sufficient for its interpretation:

This city is really beautiful (Levinson ,1983).

For Cruse (2004:235), the interpretation of symbolic deixis does not rely on constant reference to the immediate speech context. Rather, the relevant parameters are established across broader stretches of discourse, as shown in examples such as:

I've lived in this town for twenty years.

Those foreigners are always whining.

Regarding the distinction between the two specified utilizes, it appears to be one of degree. However, an important implication arises from this distinction: only in the case of gestural deixis does the location indicated by *here* not necessarily include the speaker's own position, as shown in: *Will you please sign here, sir?* (Cruse, 2004: 326).

2.3. Deixis and Indexicality

Grundy (2000, p.23) points out that this dimension of language is termed indexicality while the lexical items that signal contextual information are referred to as deixis. Similarly, Levinson (1983, p.57) emphasizes that such context- dependent expressions include

demonstrative and first- and second-person pronouns, and tense-marking morphemes—have long attracted philosophical attention. Peirce was the first to label such expressions as **indexical signs**, suggesting that they signify by establishing an existential relationship between the sign and its referent. Although his classification included a broader range of signs than the contemporary deictic or indexical expressions, Peirce's specific categorization has largely been overlooked in linguistic pragmatics.

LoCastro (2003:23; 2012:23) contends that referential expressions play a vital role in connecting context with a speaker's communicative intent in every language, and these expressions are recognized as indexicals. Consequently, **indexicality** can be understood as a linguistic phenomenon reflecting the potential contextual meanings associated with a word. For instance, the sentence "*I am here now*" conveys different meanings depending on the situation in which it is spoken. If a friend calls from Grand Central Station in New York City and says, "*I am here now*," both the speaker and listener must share a mutual understanding of what *here* and *now* refer to; otherwise, locating one another within the large train station could become difficult.

Indexicals represent typical signs used to refer to interlocutors. They are essential for accounting for the indeterminacy of linguistic forms with no apparent meaning outside of an instance of use. For example, if one son returns home without the other, their mother might ask: *Where's Tony?* She may receive the answer: *He fell down*. Here, the indeterminacy of the words obliges her to allocate sense and reference to the utterance. In such a context, words such as *he* and *fell down* are indexed—their meaning is governed by linking them to elements in the local condition (LoCastro 2003, 23; LoCastro 2012, 23).

Williams (2019, 3) offers a contemporary perspective in which deixis is considered a subtype of indexicality, reflecting a linguistic-anthropological approach rooted in Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. In this perspective, indexicality plays a semiotic role in which a signifier points to an object or entity based on its spatial and temporal proximity. This indexical function is distinguished from two other semiotic functions: the symbolic, characterized by an arbitrary relationship, and the iconic, which is based on resemblance.

Researchers have further distinguished between two forms of indexicality: referential and nonreferential. Referential indexicals directly convey the semantic and referential meaning of an utterance, whereas non-referential indexicals usually do not. However, social deixis can complicate this distinction. Referential indexical plays a direct role in conveying the semantic-referential content of an utterance, while nonreferential indexicality typically does not, although social deixis can blur this distinction. Examples of nonreferential indexicality include regional accents, markers of the speaker's gender, honorifics, and certain speech acts (Williams 2019, 3).

Subsequent studies in linguistic anthropology have focused on the complex interplay between language and other semiotic practices, examining how these interactions play a role in the socially constructed development of identity. Meanwhile, linguists have examined deixis more closely from the perspective of referential functions, leading descriptive linguistics to place significant emphasis on deixis and its cross-linguistic universality (Williams 2019, 23).

3. Types of Deixis

The most shared classes of deixis are those of person, place, and time (Levinson 2000, 68). Other linguists, such as Lyons (1968) and (1977), Fillmore (1975), and Cummings (2015, 201), argue that there are five types of deixis: personal, spatial, social, temporal, and discourse.

3.1. Personal Deixis

It is worth mentioning that personal deixis is expressed through the use of personal pronouns: I, you, and he, which correspond to the first person, second person, and third person, respectively (Brinton 2000, 111). Person deixis refers to a deictic reference to the speaker (I), the addressee/audience (you), and those who are neither the speaker nor the addressee (e.g., he, she, it, they). Therefore, personal pronouns are essential in personal deixis (Kalajdžisalihović 2016, 125).

According to Juez (2009, 63), person deixis is related to encoding participants' function in the speech event in which the utterance in question is conveyed. This function is clearly represented in the first, second, and third-person pronouns. According to Briner (2012, 210), personal deixis operates in three fundamental sections as follows:

1. The first-person singular (I, my, myself, mine) or plural (we, us, ourselves, our, ours).
2. The second person refers to *you*. It is a deictic reference to an individual or group recognized as recipients, such as *you, yourself, yourselves, your, yours*.
3. The third person singular refers to *he, she, or it*. It is a deictic reference to a referent which is neither the utterer nor the recipient, and often shows the referent's gender (*he, she, they, him, himself, her, herself*).

3.2. Spatial Deixis

As Kalajdžisalihović (2016) discussed, the concept of distances is closely related to spatial deixis, which signifies the relative position of people and objects (Yule 1996, 12). According to Brown (1995, 109-110), spatial deixis arises when a person points to an object or location within their immediate surroundings.

Spatial deixis distinguishes between three planes of reference. First, it involves an axis running vertically through the center of the body, as in left/right. Second, it relates to the horizontal plane of the body at different points, such as up/down. Third, it includes an axis running vertically through the center of the body, referring to directions like before (in front of)/behind.

Juez (2009, 63) argues that place deixis concerns encoding spatial positions comparative to participants' positions in a speech event. Deictic adverbs of place, e.g., *here/ there*, and demonstrative e.g., *this/that*, are prototypical linguistic realizations of this deixis. *This* and *here* exemplifies proximal deixis (relative to the speaker), while *that* and *there* represent distal deixis (non-proximal to the speaker).

3.3. Temporal Deixis (Time)

Levinson (1983, p. 73) suggests that time deixis serves to indicate participant roles. Temporal adverbs, such as *now*, can pinpoint the exact moment when a speaker produces an utterance. It is crucial to differentiate between coding time (CT)—the time at which an utterance is created—and receiving time (RT)—the time at which it is perceived. Time-deictic expressions frequently align with natural, recurring cycles, including day and night, months, seasons, and years. Examples of such expressions are

Temporal adverbs like today, now, tomorrow, yesterday, then and others.

Grenoble (1998, p.52) and Verschueren (1999, p.18) note that time deixis is relative to the timing of the speech event. Temporal references can be expressed through simple adverbials like then, now, recently, soon, today, tomorrow, yesterday, as well as more complex forms such as next day, last Wednesday, or this night. For example:

1. *Pull the trigger now!* (Levinson, 1983, p. 74)
2. *I was in London then.*

Levinson (1983, p. 73) further explains that time can be tracked through verb tenses, which relate to the timing of an utterance. The past tense refers to events that occurred before the moment of speaking, the present tense highlights events happening at the time of speaking, and the future tense points to actions that will take place after the utterance. For instance:

3. *He went to the cinema yesterday.*
4. *He is playing the piano very well.*
5. *I will visit you next week.*

Finally, Levinson (1983, p. 79) emphasizes that temporal deixis is closely connected with other deictic elements. Greetings, in particular, are highly sensitive to temporal context. For example:

6. *Good morning.*

3.4. Discourse (Text) Deixis

Discourse deixis involves deictic expressions that point to previous or forthcoming segments of the discourse. In essence, these are words and phrases that establish the relationship between an utterance and its surrounding context. They function as a way for speakers to guide or clarify the text or conversation. Expressions such as *therefore*, *actually*, *but*, *in conclusion*, and *all in all* play a role in structuring discourse and positioning the current utterance in a sequential framework (Schiffrin, 1987).

Suleymanova (2018) notes that discourse deixis encompasses words that either refer backward to prior discourse (anaphora) or forward to subsequent discourse (cataphora). For example, the

proximal demonstrative *this* in *This is how birds evolved from predatory dishonors* points forward to information presented later in the discourse.

Similarly, the proximal adverb of place *here* in “*Here goes the same argument*” anticipates the upcoming discourse. In contrast, the distal demonstrative *that* in *That's Tonight's Evening News* indicates back to a preceding portion of the discourse (Huang, 2014, p.172).

Levinson (1983) emphasized the need to distinguish between anaphoric expressions and discourse deixis. Anaphora involves using a pronoun to mean the same entity as a prior expression, which may occur within a sentence, across sentences, or in dialogue. On the other hand, deictic expressions, present a referent, whereas anaphoric pronouns point back to an already mentioned entity. A pronoun functions as discourse deixis when it refers to the linguistic expression itself, but when it indicates to the same entity as prior expression, it is categorized as anaphoric. In this sense discourse deixis, similar to anaphora and cataphora, operates as a cohesive device within discourse.

In summary, discourse deixis is a crucial element of language that enhances coherence and in in conversation or text by linking and referencing discourse fundamentals. It facilitates the precise and efficient communication of information (Fries, 1994).

3.5. Social Deixis

Social deixis refers to the classification of the social status of the speaker, the listener, a third party, or an entity, along with the social relationships that exist among them (Huang, 2012:208-211).It can involve factors such as social class, kinship ties, gender, age, occupation, and ethnicity , and may be expressed through various linguistic means, including adverbs, affixes, particles, and lexical choices. The study of social deixis mainly focuses on the grammatical encoding of social relationships and the analysis of pronouns; however, it as well addresses broader patterns of language use (Hinze, 2006: 3). According to Fillmore (1975: 76), social deixis is the component of sentences that reflects, constructs, or is clarified by the social realities present in the context of the speech act.

Social deixis can be divided into two types: absolute and relational. Absolute deixis is consistently linked to social roles—for instance, expressions such as *Your Honor* or *Mr. President*, where the reference is to the “office” rather than the individual. Relational deixis, in contrast, directly connects individuals to the speaker, rather than to fixed societal roles (Hatch, 1992: 221).

Chapman (2011: 24, 42) observes that concepts of address exemplify social deixis, as they position an utterance according to the social rapports in the context. For example, while *I'm pleased to see you, John*, and *I'm pleased to see you, Mr. Smith* convey the same propositional meaning, the choice of form reflects differences in social or personal relationships. English, however, has a relatively limited set of such terms, whereas languages like Japanese employ a far more complex system for signaling social status.

A prominent instance of social differentiation in forms of address is the T/V distinction, which appears in several languages such as French, German, and Spanish. This distinction separates familiar from formal address, reflecting the relationship dynamics between the speaker and the listener. Typically, the higher-status, older, or more authoritative individual uses the familiar form (*tu*) with a younger or lower-status person, while the latter addresses the superior using the formal form (*vous*) (Yule, 1996, p.11).

4. Methodology

This study examines how various deixis are utilised in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar. It also seeks to determine which type of deixis is used most frequently in this Epistle, aiming to identify its key role in conveying ideas to readers. To achieve this, the study primarily employs a traditional method of analysis, specifically a manual approach. Additionally, a descriptive-qualitative method is used to analyse different deictic expressions. The study applies Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis as its theoretical framework. The Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib is taken from: <https://theislamicworkplace.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/11/ali-r-letter-to-malik>

4.1. Personal Deixis

This section examines the use of personal deixis and its various types in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar. خطأ! لم يتم العثور

below presents the distribution of the three types of personal pronouns found in the Epistle.

Table 1: Distribution of Personal Deixis

1st Person		2nd Person		3rd Person	
I	3	you	125	he	19
my	3	yourself	17	it	56
we	3	your	90	they	34
us	2	yours	2	him	21
ourselves	1	234		himself	4
our	10			134	
22					
Total			390		

خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. displays the total number of personal deixis (390). The most prominent personal deixis is the second-person pronoun *you* (125), followed by *your* (90), *it* (56), *they* (34), *him* (21), *he* (19), *yourself* (17), *our* (10), and *himself* (4). Next are *I*, *my*, and *we*, each with a frequency of (3), and *ourselves* (1). By addressing Malik directly and using the pronoun “*you*,” *Ali Ibn Abi Talib* may have intended to emphasize the significance of individual actions and decision-making.

The following examples, taken from the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar, illustrate the use of personal deixis:

Keep your desires under control and deny yourself that which you have been prohibited from.

We have an army formed of the soldiers of God.

It is they who furnish the proof of your actions.

Once you have selected the right man for the office, pay him handsomely enough to let him live in comfort and in keeping with his position-enough to keep him above temptations.

He who demands revenue without helping the cultivator improve his hand.

....so that mankind might cherish our memory and our work may survive.

Do not say: I am your overlord and dictator, and you should, therefore, bow to my commands.

4.2. Spatial Deixis

This section examines the use of various spatial deixis in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar. خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. below presents the distribution of the deixis found in the Epistle.

Table 2: Distribution of Spatial Deixis

Spatial Deixis	
this	16
that	62
those	15
these	10
here	1
there	18
Total	122

خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. illustrates all types of spatial deixis found in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar. The most frequent word is *that* (62), followed by *there* (18). Next are the words *this* (16), *those* (15), *these* (10), and *here* (1). Ali Ibn Abi Talib motivates Malik to take a direct role with the people he administers by indicating particular communities and locations. This act fosters a sense of accountability and connection between the governor and the governed.

Overall, by using spatial deixis in his Epistle to Malik al-Ashtar, Ali Ibn Abi Talib makes his advice more effective, relevant, and clear, while also ensuring that it is grounded in the realities of the people Malik will be serving.

The following are examples of spatial deixis in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar:

There is nothing more harmful than this, which brings about one's ruin.

I have given you this here, and you have solemnly undertaken to follow it.

The fact is that the public speaks well only of those who do good.

Adopt useful schemes presented before those engaged in trade and industry, and assist them with wise counsel.

The men who established these noble traditions have received their reward.

4.3. Temporal Deixis

This section provides a sketch of the temporal deixis used in the Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar. خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. below displays these deixis.

Table 3: Distribution of Temporal Deixis

Temporal Deixis	
then	10
before	10
past	5
present	1
future	53
Total	79

خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. reveals that the total number of temporal deixis in The Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar is 79. The most frequently repeated temporal deixis is *future* (53), followed by *then* (10) and *before* (10). Other occurrences include *past* (5) and *present* (1). Ali Ibn Abi Talib acknowledges that both righteous and unjust rulers have governed the area. This acknowledgement serves as a reminder to Malik of the challenges of governance and the importance of learning from past experiences.

The following are examples of temporal deixis:

They will then have no excuse.

Adopt useful schemes presented before those engaged in trade and industry

They will try to side-track justice.

Be it known to you, O Malik, that I am sending you as governor to a country which, in the past, has experienced both just and unjust rule.

4.4. Discourse Deixis

This section discusses the discourse deixis used in The Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar. خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. below displays this deixis.

Table 4: Distribution of Discourse Deixis

Discourse Deixis	
but	14
therefore	2
above	3
last	3
so	20
however	4
after all	2
Total	48

خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. shows that the most frequent discourse deixis is found in the word *so* (20), followed by the word *but* (14), *therefore* (2), *however* (4), and *after all* (2). These are followed by *above* and *last*, each with a frequency of 3. The use of discourse markers in this Epistle establishes a dialogical rapport with Malik, making the instructions personal, trustworthy, and highly contemplative. Ali Ibn Abi Talib motivates Malik to visualise himself in connection with the people he serves.

The following are examples of discourse deixis:

But forgive them even as you would like God to forgive you.

After all, the masses are not free from weaknesses.

I have said above bear one thing in mind.

The rule of such a person does not last long.

I am your overlord and dictator, and that you should, therefore, bow to my commands.

So live in close contact with the masses and be mindful of their welfare.

However much your officers might try to intercede them.

4.5. Social Deixis

This section examines the use of various social deixis in The Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar. خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. below presents the distribution of this deixis in the Epistle.

Table 5: Distribution of Social Deixis

Social Deixis	
God	54

officers	11
children	1
men	22
Total	88

خطأ! لم يتم العثور على مصدر المرجع. illustrates that the total number of social deixis is 88. The most notable social deixis is *God* (54), followed by *men* (22), *officers* (11), and *children* (1). Ali Ibn Abi Talib invokes God in his Epistle to Malik to show that wisdom and guidance come from a higher power. Ali Ibn Abi Talib also advises Malik to choose the right man for the right position.

He emphasizes the necessity of applying God's command and that of His prophet, as all regulations are related to God, His prophet, and those among you who hold authority.

Examples of social deixis can be seen as follows:

Turn to God and to His prophet for guidance whenever you feel uncertain as to what you have to do. There is the commandment of God delivered to those people whom He wishes to guide aright: 'O people of the faith! Obey God and obey His prophet and those from among you who hold authority over you.'

After the selection of your chief judge, give careful consideration to the selection of other officers.

Care for them with tenderness with which you care for your children.

Of these, select for higher posts men of experience, men firm in faith and belonging to good families such men will not fall easy prey to temptation and will discharge their duties with an eye on the abiding good of others.

5. Conclusions

Deixis refers to words or phrases whose meaning depends on the context in which they are used and the speaker's intention. As such, it is a key subject in pragmatics and is vital to human language. Understanding deictic expressions requires context, as it offers details about the situational environment in which these expressions occur, especially across various forms of deixis.

Based on the analysis of *The Epistle of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Malik Al-Ashtar*, the researcher identified five categories of deixis. The Epistle

contains a total of 727 deictic expressions. Personal deixis is the most frequently observed (53.64%), followed by spatial deixis (16.78%), social deixis (12.10%), temporal deixis (10.86%), and discourse deixis (6.60%).

Within personal deixis, second-person pronouns are the most common, appearing 234 times, followed by third-person pronouns (134 occurrences) and first-person pronouns (22 occurrences). The predominance of personal deixis over temporal, spatial, discourse, and social deixis in the Epistle may be explained by the following:

1. Ali Ibn Abi Talib extensively employs the second-person pronoun *you* to emphasize the addressee's personal accountability and responsibilities.
2. By directly addressing Malik using *the term "you,"* Ali Ibn Abi Talib highlights the significance of individual actions and decision-making. This strategy likely aims to persuade Malik to acknowledge his role and take ownership of his responsibilities, reinforcing his ability to influence outcomes through his decisions.

Additionally, spatial deixis contributes to communication by clarifying relationships between entities and their locations. Social deixis is illustrated when Ali Ibn Abi Talib invokes God, emphasizing that wisdom and guidance stem from a higher power. Temporal deixis is employed to remind Malik of the challenges inherent in governance and to stress the importance of learning from past experiences.

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