

## **Skill Development Activity: IMPROVING SPATIAL STRUCTURING Referencing and Deixis - English Texts**

Levinson (1983) identified five major types of deictic markers: person, place, time, discourse, and social.

### 1. Person Deixis

Refers to grammatical markers of participant roles in speech events. First person is the speaker's reference to self; second person is the speaker's reference to addressee(s), and third person is reference to others who are neither speaker nor addressee (Hatch, 1994).

A common error made by interpreters is the failure to identify referent shifts.

### 2. Place / Spatial Deixis

Refers to how languages show the relationship between space and the location of the participants in the discourse. In English, this distinction is realized in demonstratives (this versus that) or in adverbs (here versus there), or in phrases (in front, in back, at our place, out back). The 'here' versus 'there' distinctions also reflect social organization. Examples are "across the tracks," "the other side of town," and "moving uptown."

Learning to locate yourself and objects in space that are not visible depends on at least three types of abilities:

- Cognitive (developing a 'spatial map' that includes familiar pathways in your environment and the relationship of these paths to those that are unknown)
- Interactive (taking account of the listener's knowledge of these spatial relations)
- Linguistic (how these are mapped on language)

### 3. Temporal Deixis

Refers to time relative to the time of speaking. Examples are now versus then, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Confusion occurs when units are not clearly indicated as being definite calendar times or definite in relation to the moment in which we are located.

Other temporal deixis functions include:

- Giving verisimilitude to our stories (i.e., Once upon a time...)
- When locating the time of an action precisely will give it more credibility (i.e., Saturday night, May 25 at 6 PM someone knocked at the door)
- When a specific referent is not needed (i.e., remember when...)

#### 4. Discourse Deixis

Refers to keeping track of reference in the unfolding discourse. We use a variety of deictic markers to point the way to various parts of the discourse. The frequency of all deictic terms varies across types of text. The more formal the discourse, the more markers are needed to keep the text coherent.

Discourse deixis keeps the text connected on a textual level. It involves ways of tying segments of the text together through tie-backs and transition markers.

- Example: “Earlier in the Module we discussed three strategies you can use to improve your transcription samples. I want to refer back to the second strategy we discussed.”
- Example: “Now that we have completed our discussion of transcription strategies, I would like to shift to a discussion of transcription symbols. First, turn to page 21 of the Green Book and look at the standard symbols used to transcribe ASL.”

#### 5. Social Deixis

Used to code social relationships between speakers and addressee or audiences. Included in this category are honorifics, titles, vocatives and pronouns.

- Example: Your Honor, Mr. President, Madame Chairperson, my husband, teacher, preacher, you, your, etc.

Since reference / deixis play such an important semantic role in messages, it is important for interpreters to know the types and functions of various reference / deixis features. It is Levinson’s categories that you will apply as you analyze ASL texts in this guide. In preparation, think about how you would use space to convey each of Levinson’s categories of reference and deixis. For example, how is honorific reference conveyed in ASL? What are some examples of discourse deixis in ASL? How does eye-gaze use in ASL (e.g. movement of eyes up or down) in conjunction with directional verbs impact the use of social and person deixis in ASL? How is space used in ASL to convey temporal elements - such as the past, the future, the present, a series of things that happened over a period of time? Considering examples from your own experience will provide you with excellent rehearsal for the following exercises.

**Exercise A:** Below is a spoken English presentation - supported by a PPT - about deixis that provides further illustration of this language feature. It is 15 minutes in length and offers valuable elaboration.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LK-lc0wLf8>

Now, consider the same text again - this will likely require you to view it again...AT LEAST THE FIRST TEN MINUTES. This time, isolate and categorize the examples of referencing and deixis. How did the speaker apply referencing and deixis during this presentation? Can you categorize the types of deixis that were used? How might you represent the use of deixis in ASL? Where do opportunities for constructed action and/or constructed dialogue exist? Are there other opportunities for depiction in this text? Share your observations with a mentor or other interpreter.

How do your findings compare with the list of examples below?

*NOTE: these examples are not listed in the order they occurred, but rather they are categorized by the type of deixis reference they represent. The list is not necessarily all inclusive either.*

<p><u>PERSON DEIXIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● I, me</li><li>● You-singular, you-plural</li><li>● He/him, she/her</li><li>● It</li><li>● They/them</li><li>● We/us</li><li>● My audience</li></ul>	<p><u>PLACE/SPATIAL DEIXIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Here, there</li><li>● This, that, these, those</li><li>● Above, below</li><li>● Went into, came into</li><li>● Yonder, over there</li></ul>
<p><u>TEMPORAL DEIXIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Before</li><li>● After</li><li>● Then</li><li>● Now</li></ul>	<p><u>DISCOURSE DEIXIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● This</li><li>● That</li></ul>
<p><u>SOCIAL DEIXIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Only discussed designations in French and German that represent formal references to individuals and their status versus informal, conversational references</li></ul>	

Next, consider these various examples and how you would express each of them in ASL. Once you have identified options, practice interpreting the text, integrating the deixis in an appropriate manner.

Once you believe you have a good representation, record yourself interpreting the text. Conduct a self-assessment and also ask a mentor or other interpreter to provide an assessment. How effective were you in conveying the various reference/deixis functions? What would you do differently next time? Incorporating your own feedback, as well as that from a mentor and/or other interpreter, re-do the interpretation making the changes you believe will strengthen your performance.

**Exercise B:** Apply the following steps to analyze the English texts provided below.

Step 1. View the text for comprehension.

Step 2. View the text again to isolate, identify, and categorize the various referent / deixis markers that occur in the text.

Step 3. Consider and determine ASL equivalents for the various English referent / deixis markers.

Step 4. Using the cross-linguistic equivalents you determined, practice interpreting the text in entirety.

Step 5. When you are satisfied with your practice, record yourself interpreting the text.

Step 6. Conduct a self-assessment of your performance. Were you successful in applying the

cross-linguistic strategies you intended? Are there things you would change? Where and why?

Step 7. Have a mentor or fellow interpreter conduct a review and provide feedback.

Step 8. Using your own assessment and the mentor or peer feedback you received, re-do your interpretation.

Repeat these steps with each of the texts, as well as others to which you have access. Regular attention to this process will strengthen your competence in this aspect of spatial structuring/voice interpreting.

## **English Texts**

“Beginning Your Presentation in English” – 7:33 minutes

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAS11BcYjbs&list=PLLbb6BaLIOfTjxiSSUFFGQC0P121f\\_h2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAS11BcYjbs&list=PLLbb6BaLIOfTjxiSSUFFGQC0P121f_h2)

“How to Start a Presentation with a Story” – 2:52 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCWQqp9v3k4>

“How to use Storytelling in a Speech” – 3:39 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CI0I4DzoVLk>

## **Resources**

### **Free Online Materials**

**ASL Storytime** from the Department of Sign Language and Interpretation at Gallaudet University

- This series includes three volumes, each containing stories with a broad variety of ASL features.
- Available on YouTube.
  - Volume 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLxddLdxbOw>
  - Volume 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAGx5CXgmTU>
  - Volume 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqx4wCZoCMU>

**NOTE:** These stories are good for practice of many ASL features so use them with other instructional sheets in addition to this one!

**TerpTalks** from the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC)

- This series includes diverse ASL and English texts available for practice interpreting.
- There is no charge for accessing these materials, although you may be required to register to access.
- Available on NCIEC’s website: <http://www.interpretereducation.org/tim/terptalks/browse/>

### **Purchasable Materials**

*The following resources may be available for use from your local interpreter education program or through your public library. If the library does not have them, request that they purchase them for community use.*

**Interpreter Practice Materials** from Sign Media ([www.signmedia.com](http://www.signmedia.com))

- Set of 33 DVDs includes 12 simultaneous texts, 12 consecutive texts, 7 one-to-one situations, 2 small groups, 6 ASL texts and 6 English texts.
- Excellent for individual, study group, or classroom skill development exercises.