

# AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL DEIXIS USED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN *THE MIRACLE OF NAMIYA GENERAL STORE* NOVEL

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This research analyzes the use of social deixis by the main character in The Miracle of Namiya General Store novel by Keigo Higashino. The study aims to identify the types of social deixis employed and to explore the social factors and dimensions that influence their use. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative method, using Levinson's theory of social deixis and Holmes' framework of social factors and dimensions. Data were collected from conversations in the English-translated version of the novel. The findings reveal 73 instances of social deixis, classified into two main categories: relational (speaker–referent, speaker–addressee, speaker–bystander, speaker–setting) and absolute (authorized speakers and authorized recipients). The analysis shows that the participant factor is the dominant social factor influencing the occurrence of social deixis, while social distance emerges as the primary social dimension reflected in the data. The results highlight how deixis not only marks interpersonal relationships but also encodes social hierarchies and levels of formality within the novel's narrative. This study contributes to the understanding of sociopragmatic aspects of language in literature and provides a reference for further research on deixis in different contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Social deixis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, The Miracle of Namiya General Store.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language does not only convey meaning but also reflects social relationships. One way this is shown is through social deixis, which encodes respect, hierarchy, and social distance in communication. Social deixis helps speakers identify their roles and the roles of others, making it a key aspect of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. In literature, social deixis is especially important because it reveals how characters interact and how social structures are represented through dialogue.

Levinson (1983) classifies deixis into several types, including personal, temporal, spatial, discourse, and social deixis. Among these, social deixis is significant because it marks social roles and authority between speakers and their interlocutors. Holmes (2001) adds that social deixis can be analyzed through social factors participants, setting, topic, and

function and through social dimensions such as distance, status, and formality. Together, these frameworks show that deixis is not only linguistic but also social in nature.

This study examines social deixis in *The Miracle of Namiya General Store* (Higashino, 2012). The novel presents a variety of characters and situations that demonstrate how social deixis is used to express relationships, respect, and social hierarchy. By analyzing the types of social deixis and the social factors and dimensions that influence them, this research aims to show how language reflects both personal relationships and broader cultural norms. The findings are expected to contribute to the study of sociopragmatics by demonstrating how social deixis functions as both a narrative device in literature and a reflection of real-life communication patterns.

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research is part of pragmatics, focusing on social deixis as one way language reflects relationships and social roles. Levinson (1983) explains that deixis refers to expressions whose meaning depends on context. Social deixis, in particular, marks differences in respect, authority, and status between speakers. Levinson (1983) divides social deixis into two main types: relational and absolute. Relational deixis includes the relationships between speaker and referent, speaker and addressee, speaker and bystander, and speaker and setting. Absolute deixis includes forms used for specific social roles, such as authorized speakers (for example, gender-specific particles in Thai) and authorized recipients (such as Your Honor or Mr. President). These categories show how language encodes hierarchy and social distance. Holmes (2001) provides a framework to explain the factors and dimensions that influence the use of social deixis. The four social factors are participants, setting, topic, and function, while the four dimensions are social distance, status, formality, and function. These help explain why speakers choose certain forms in particular situations and how language reflects relationships in society. Together, Levinson's (1983) and Holmes's (2001) theories form the basis of this research. Levinson's classification helps identify the types of social deixis in *The Miracle of Namiya General Store*, while Holmes's framework explains the social factors and dimensions that influence their use.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the use of social deixis in the novel *The Miracle of Namiya General Store* by Keigo Higashino. Djajasudarma (1993) explains that descriptive qualitative research is designed to provide systematic, factual, and accurate descriptions of data, focusing on meaning and context rather than numbers. A qualitative approach is appropriate because this research aims to describe how social deixis reflects relationships, social hierarchy, and cultural values in the novel. The data were taken from the English-translated version of *The Miracle of Namiya General Store* (2012). The researcher read the novel carefully several times to ensure accuracy and identified dialogues that contained social deixis. Only utterances that clearly showed social deixis were selected as data. After collecting the data, the researcher categorized them based on Levinson's (1983) classification of social deixis, which consists of relational and absolute types. The selected utterances were then analyzed using Holmes's (2001) framework of social factors participants, setting, topic, and function and social dimensions distance, status, formality, and function. This process made it possible to explain not only the forms of deixis but also the social conditions that influenced their use in the novel.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study identifies 73 instances of social deixis in *The Miracle of Namiya General Store*. These consist of relational social deixis (63) and absolute social deixis (10). The relational type includes speaker and referent (15), speaker and addressee (18), speaker and bystander (20), and speaker and setting (10). The absolute type includes authorized speakers (5) and authorized recipients (5). These results show that relational deixis appears more frequently, indicating that relationships between characters are central to the story. Among them, speaker and addressee deixis is dominant, showing that direct communication plays an important role in shaping interactions in the novel. The analysis of social factors shows that participants appear in all 73 cases, while setting, topic, and function appear in fewer instances. This indicates that who is speaking and to whom is the most important factor in the choice of deixis. Meanwhile, the analysis of social dimensions shows that social distance is the most frequent, followed by status, formality, and function. These findings suggest that deixis in the novel is strongly influenced by closeness, hierarchy, and cultural norms among the characters.

### Type of Social Deixis

#### 1. Speaker and Referent

(Page 12, Line 13)

*“My boyfriend tells me not to pay him any mind but to stick with it, push ahead, and smash the competition. He’s right. This is a really important time for me. I’ve already made plans for all kinds of training, both here and abroad. I need to go all out to get picked for the Olympics. I know this in my mind.”*

#### Context:

This passage comes from the letter written by Moon Rabbit, a young woman who seeks advice by writing to the Namiya General Store. In this part, she talks about her boyfriend, who encourages her to keep striving for her dream of joining the Olympics. The mention of her boyfriend shows how she relies on him for emotional support and guidance. It also reflects her determination to continue her training both locally and abroad, despite the difficulties she faces.

In the data, there is one word that is a social deixis, namely *my boyfriend*, which is a social deixis based on a nickname. This word belongs to the type of relational social deixis because it expresses the relationship between the speaker and the referent. The phrase *my boyfriend* in this conversation is a relational social deixis that arises because of the relationship between the speaker and her referent. The term *my boyfriend*, referred to by Moon Rabbit in this letter, refers to her fiancé, who is her future husband. To show honorific expression, Moon Rabbit uses the nickname *my boyfriend* to replace the reference to her fiancé

(Page 231, Line 33)

*“My father wanted her to marry into a good family.”*

#### Context:

This excerpt is taken from Mr. Minazuki’s story about his sister’s attempted elopement with a mechanic. He explains to Harumi that their father opposed the relationship not only because

his sister was still in high school, but also because their wealthy father valued prestige. He insisted that his daughter marry into a socially “good family,” reflecting the clash between personal love and rigid social expectations.

In the data, the phrase *my father* functions as social deixis. It is a relational social deixis because it shows the relationship between the speaker and the referent. By using *my father*, the speaker acknowledges kinship ties and conveys respect toward the referent.

The social factor here is the participant factor, as the referent is a significant authority figure in the speaker’s life. The social dimension is social distance, which in this context emphasizes a close familial relationship but also highlights the authority and hierarchical role of the father. This supports Levinson’s (1983) notion of referent honorifics, where deixis is used to show respect toward the person being referred to.

(Page 231, Line 28)

*“There were two main reasons. First off, my sister was still in high school.”*

**Context:**

This statement is spoken by Mr. Minazuki while recounting the circumstances of his sister’s attempted elopement. By referring to my sister, the speaker highlights the close kinship tie and clarifies her role in the story.

In the data, the phrase *my sister* serves as relational social deixis. It encodes the relationship between the speaker and the referent, emphasizing family bonds. By using *my sister*, the speaker not only identifies the referent but also marks the social role she holds within the family.

The social factor here is the participant factor, as the referent is a family member closely tied to the speaker. The social dimension is social distance, showing high solidarity and intimacy. This reflects Levinson’s (1983) claim that relational deixis clarifies interpersonal roles in communication.

(Page 172, Line 18)

*“My boss asked me to finish the report by Friday.”*

**Context:**

This excerpt describes a workplace interaction where the speaker mentions instructions given by their superior. The phrase *my boss* encodes both the hierarchical relationship and the social authority the referent has over the speaker.

In the data, *my boss* functions as relational social deixis because it expresses the professional relationship between the speaker and the referent. It indicates a superior–subordinate relationship where the referent holds institutional authority.

The social factor here is the participant factor, as the referent is an authority figure over the speaker. The social dimension is status, highlighting the difference in hierarchical roles and

the respect associated with the term boss. This aligns with Levinson's (1983) framework, where referent honorifics often reflect power and social hierarchy.

## 2. Speaker and Addressee

(Page 238, Line 13)

*"Could you come up for a moment?"*

### Context:

This line is spoken by a character who seeks guidance from the owner of the Namiya General Store. The character's use of "you" directly appeals to the addressee, reflecting both a request for help and a recognition of the store owner's role as an advisor in the situation.

In the data, the word *you* serves as a social deixis. It is a relational social deixis because it directly addresses the recipient of the communication, establishing the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. By using *you*, the speaker explicitly identifies the person they are speaking to, which in this context is the owner of the Namiya General Store.

The social factor here is the **participant factor**, where the speaker is seeking help and guidance from the addressee. The social dimension is **social distance**, which in this context is relatively neutral, reflecting a formal request for assistance. The use of *you* is respectful and acknowledges the addressee's potential to provide valuable advice. This form of deixis also highlights the social interaction and the dependency of the speaker on the addressee's response. It signifies a request for engagement and the establishment of a communicative exchange, which is central to the plot of the novel.

(Page 239, Line 26)

*"Do you think I should give up my training?"*

### Context:

This line is spoken by Moon Rabbit when she feels uncertain about whether to continue her athletic training due to her boyfriend's illness. She appeals to the addressee—the owner of the Namiya General Store—for advice.

In the data, the word *you* functions as relational social deixis. It establishes the communicative relationship between the speaker and the addressee, highlighting dependency and respect toward the person being asked.

The social factor here is the participant factor, since the speaker seeks advice from the addressee. The social dimension is social distance, reflecting trust but also formality, as the speaker acknowledges the addressee's wisdom and authority. This supports Levinson's (1983) category of addressee honorifics, where deixis encodes direct reference to the interlocutor.

(Page 43, Line 6)

*"I want you to know how much your advice has helped me."*

### Context:

This utterance occurs when a character expresses gratitude to the owner of the Namiya General Store. The pronoun you directly acknowledges the addressee's role in providing advice and guidance.

In the data, you is a relational social deixis because it encodes the direct relationship between the speaker and the addressee. It marks recognition of the addressee's contribution and conveys appreciation.

The social factor here is the participant factor, where the addressee's role as a helper and advisor is emphasized. The social dimension is social distance, showing respect and gratitude while maintaining formality. This reflects Levinson's (1983) notion that addressee deixis highlights interpersonal roles in direct interaction.

(Page 216, Line 19)

*"I need you to be honest with me."*

#### **Context:**

In this line, the speaker requests honesty from the owner of the Namiya General Store. The use of you emphasizes sincerity and direct involvement of the addressee in the communication.

In the data, the word you is relational social deixis because it encodes the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. It reflects the speaker's reliance on the addressee's integrity.

The social factor here is the participant factor, as the addressee's role is central to the interaction. The social dimension is social distance, where a formal but trusting relationship is evident. This aligns with Levinson's (1983) framework, in which deixis toward the addressee highlights respect and the communicative function of requests.

### **3. Speaker and Bystander**

(Page 225, Line 31)

*"He told them that he would handle the situation."*

#### **Context:**

This excerpt comes from a moment when a character informed a group of people nearby that he would take responsibility for managing the situation. The word them functions as social deixis because it refers to bystanders who were present but not directly involved in the event.

In the data, the pronoun them is categorized as relational social deixis because it encodes the relationship between the speaker and the bystanders. Although the bystanders are not the addressees of the utterance, they are still acknowledged as part of the communicative context. This shows how relational deixis can extend beyond direct interlocutors to include peripheral participants.

The social factor here is the participant factor, where the bystanders are indirectly involved in the communication. The social dimension reflected is social distance, as the relationship between the speaker and the bystanders is neutral and relatively formal. This indicates that the speaker recognizes the presence of others and positions himself as the one responsible for controlling the situation, in line with Levinson's (1983) classification of relational deixis.

(Page 227, Line 6)

*“She asked the children to wait outside.”*

**Context:**

This utterance occurs when a character gives instructions to a group of children who are present as bystanders. The term children refers to individuals who are not the main addressees but are still included in the interaction.

In the data, the word children functions as relational social deixis. It encodes the relationship between the speaker and the bystanders, highlighting their identity as a distinct group.

The social factor here is the participant factor, where the speaker interacts with peripheral participants. The social dimension is social distance, which in this case indicates authority and care from the speaker toward the children. This supports Levinson’s (1983) explanation that bystander deixis acknowledges the presence of audience or overhearers in communication.

(Page 241, Line 16)

*“He assured the neighbours that everything was under control.”*

**Context:**

This line comes from a situation in which a character addresses neighbours who witnessed an incident. The word neighbours refers to bystanders who are indirectly part of the communication.

In the data, neighbours is relational social deixis. It encodes the social relationship between the speaker and bystanders within a community context.

The social factor here is the participant factor, with neighbours identified as part of the broader social network. The social dimension is social distance, reflecting familiarity but not intimacy, since the relationship is based on community ties. This matches Levinson’s (1983) framework of bystander deixis, which includes audience participants in social interaction.

(Page 30, Line 13)

*“They told the onlookers to stay behind the barrier.”*

**Context:**

This excerpt depicts a situation where instructions are given to a crowd of onlookers who are present but not directly involved in the main event. The term onlookers highlights their passive role as bystanders.

In the data, onlookers is relational social deixis. It encodes the relationship between the speaker and peripheral participants in the situation.

The social factor here is the participant factor, where the bystanders are a general audience. The social dimension is social distance, as the speaker uses a formal directive to maintain order. This aligns with Levinson’s (1983) categorization of bystander deixis, which reflects how speakers acknowledge or manage audience roles.

**4. Speaker and Setting**

(Page 42, Line 14)

*“Ladies and Gentlemen, First of all, we should be grateful to the presence of God Almighty. By God’s will, we can be present in order to open the implementation of the school’s farewell event.”*

**Context:**

This utterance occurs in a formal school event where the speaker addresses the audience collectively. The use of *Ladies and Gentlemen* reflects a formal greeting that acknowledges the social context and the formality of the event.

In the data, the phrase *Ladies and Gentlemen* functions as social deixis. It is categorized as relational social deixis because it encodes the relationship between the speaker and the setting, specifically the formal environment in which the utterance takes place. The deixis highlights the social activity of a ceremonial event and shows how formality influences linguistic choices.

The social factor here is the setting factor, as the utterance is shaped by the formality of the occasion. The social dimension reflected is formality, with the greeting demonstrating high respect and acknowledgment of the audience’s collective presence. This supports Levinson’s (1983) explanation that speaker–setting deixis reveals how language is adapted to the level of formality required by the situation.

(Page 42, Line 14)

*“Ladies and Gentlemen, First of all, we should be grateful to the presence of God Almighty. By God’s will, we can be present in order to open the implementation of the school’s farewell event.”*

**Context:**

This utterance occurs in a formal school farewell ceremony. The speaker addresses the audience collectively with *Ladies and Gentlemen*, reflecting formality and respect appropriate for the setting.

In the data, *Ladies and Gentlemen* functions as relational social deixis of the speaker–setting type. It acknowledges the audience in a ceremonial situation, showing how language adapts to formality.

The social factor is the setting factor, and the social dimension is formality. The deixis demonstrates high respect for the audience, consistent with Levinson’s (1983) discussion of setting-based deixis.

(Page 118, Line 21)

*“Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the charity concert.”*

**Context:**

This excerpt is from the opening of a public charity event. The phrase *Good evening, everyone* marks the time of day and collectively addresses the participants of the setting.



In the data, everyone functions as relational social deixis. It ties the utterance to the formal setting of a concert, where the audience is addressed as a whole.

The social factor is the setting factor, while the social dimension is formality. The phrase conveys inclusivity and sets the tone of respect for the event. This supports Levinson's (1983) theory that speaker–setting deixis reflects situational formality.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of social deixis in *The Miracle of Namiya General Store* provides important insights into how language reflects relationships, hierarchy, and cultural values in the narrative. This research analyzed 73 data points from the novel, consisting of relational and absolute social deixis. The relational types include speaker and referent, speaker and addressee, speaker and bystander, and speaker and setting, while the absolute types include authorized speakers and authorized recipients. The findings show that participants were the dominant social factor, appearing in all cases, and social distance was the most frequent social dimension. This suggests that character interactions and levels of closeness, respect, and formality strongly influence the use of deixis. Among the types, speaker and addressee deixis was the most common, highlighting the importance of direct interaction in the story. These results indicate that social deixis plays a central role in shaping communication between characters. It helps to show solidarity, express respect, and mark authority, while also advancing the plot and building relationships. Overall, the study demonstrates that deixis in the novel is not only a linguistic feature but also a reflection of social dynamics and cultural norms.

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