

# **Indexicals and L2 learners' metadiscursive awareness**

**Francis Cornish, Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès and CNRS CLLE-ERSS, UMR 5263**

This chapter deals with L2 learners' critical awareness of how indexicals function in extended English texts in terms of analysis and production. Its goal is to encourage L2 English teachers to raise learners' "metadiscursive awareness" levels, by engaging them in text- and discourse-structuring activities in which these expressions assume the major heuristic role. It begins by drawing a key distinction amongst *text*, *context* and *discourse*, and argues that indexical reference (context-bound pointing), though grounded in a variety of textual cues, is basically determined by discourse-level factors, mediated by context. Advanced L1 French learners of English, however, often make erroneous connections between parts of a written text and consequently misinterpret and hence distort the discourse created thereby. This is partly a function of certain models to which they are exposed in their learning experience, which tend to favour describing indexical reference in terms of matching segments of the co-text.

To remedy these erroneous conceptions within learners' metadiscursive awareness, a set of standard guidelines was devised for analysing the discourse associated with non-literary texts. These encourage learners to approach the text from its most general aspect (its rhetorical "super-structure") up to its most specific (the "topic chains" developing two of the major discourse referents within it), via a breakdown of the discourse invoked into its essential parts. This approach entails not only a sensitivity to each stage in the discourse reached by the co-references corresponding to each main link, but also a grasp of the specific types of indexical expression capable of fulfilling each discourse-referring function.

**Keywords:** Context; Discourse; Indexical reference; L2 learners; Metadiscursive awareness; Text

## **1. Introduction**

Indexical expressions (context-bound markers such as demonstratives, 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns, definite and possessive noun phrases and so on) are particularly impor-

tant both in terms of textual comprehension and production: after all, the choice by a speaker or writer of one or other type of marker reflects a delicate appreciation on the text producer's part of the stage reached by the receiver in processing and understanding the message being communicated, at the point of use (in this respect, see Bell, 1984 on the crucial notion of "audience design"). Fostering critical thinking about indexicals is crucial to both the comprehension and meaning making:

- As already mentioned, it helps develop sensitivity towards audiences, which demands the application of critical thinking at different levels: at the level of *national culture* in that different languages have different degrees of tolerance of indexical distance between the indexical marker and the introduction of its referent, and of repetition; at the level of *disciplinary culture* because different fields of human activity may refer to a similar phenomenon, entity or event from different indexical perspectives; at the level of *communicative situation*, because different communicative goals (e.g. persuasion in general and specifically promotionalism, a more or less pedagogical tone, etc.) also affect the distribution and type of indexicals; and finally at the level of *personal idiosyncrasy*, because individual preferences and positioning (i.e. more or less proximal—more or less involved) regarding the topic of communication play a role as well.
- Furthermore, paying critical attention to indexicals is useful for teachers and students alike and for interpreting and producing texts in any discipline and type of English-medium instruction: English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a lingua franca (ELF), content-based language learning (CBL), or content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

Now, recent work in linguistics, specifically in the fields of discourse analysis and indexical reference procedures (deixis, "anadeixis" and anaphora), has a direct bearing on moves to improve L2 language learners' metadiscursive awareness, and stemming from this, their ability to produce as well as comprehend extended text (two fundamental language abilities). This is precisely what I shall be attempting to demonstrate in this chapter. After presenting and analysing several advanced L2 learners' textual analyses as well as productions in English, I will try to suggest ways in which such users may be induced to appreciate the principles lying behind the fluent production and comprehension of cohesive and coherent text in their non-native language (here English), and hence to improve their mastery of these abilities. The L2 learners concerned were advanced 3<sup>rd</sup> year "licence" (B.A.) French-speaking students of English, and the classes referred to were conducted within the context of an obligatory Linguistics part of their programme. Their main field of study was literature. So we are dealing here with a largely English-medium teaching and learning context.

But first, let me sketch the framework within which this study will be conducted: the basic three-way distinction amongst *text*, *context* and *discourse*, and the nature and discourse functions of the indexical referring procedures *deixis*, “*anadeixis*” and *anaphora*.

## **2. Preliminaries: *Text*, *context* and *discourse*, and the indexical procedures *deixis*, “*anadeixis*” and *anaphora***

### **2.1 *Text*, *context* and *discourse* and their harnessing in indexical reference**

In characterizing utterance-level, context-bound phenomena such as the use of pronouns and other indexical expressions, it is useful to start by drawing a three-way distinction amongst the dimensions of *text*, *context* and *discourse*. What I am calling *text* covers the entire perceptible trace of an act of utterance, whether written or spoken. It includes paralinguistic features of the utterance act, as well as non-verbal semiotically relevant signals<sup>1</sup> such as gaze direction, pointing and other gestures, and in the written medium, punctuation, underlining, layout, images etc. —i.e. not just the purely verbal elements. *Text* in this conception is basically linear, unlike *discourse*: for *discourse*, under this conception, is the ever-evolving, revisable interpretation of a particular communicative event. Discourse is jointly constructed mentally by the discourse participants as the text and a relevant context are perceived and evoked (respectively).

As for the *context* in terms of which the language user creates discourse, partly on the basis of text, it comprises at least the following aspects: the *domain of reference* of a given text (including of course the local or general world knowledge that goes with it), the surrounding *co-text* of a referring expression, the *discourse* already constructed prior to its occurrence, the *genre* of speech event in progress, the *socio-cultural environment* assumed by the text, the *interactive relationships* holding between the interlocutors at every point in the discourse, and the specific *utterance situation* at hand. The context is subject to a continuous process of construction and revision as the discourse unfolds. It is the context of utterance of each discourse act that is the most central of these aspects: this functions as a default grounding “anchor” for the discourse being constructed as each utterance is produced. See Widdowson (2004), Haberland (1999), Renkema (2009) and Auer (2009) for similar distinctions amongst the three dimensions of language use.

Now, exploiting this distinction, my hypothesis is that there is a complex interaction between the dimensions of *text* and *discourse*, mediated by *context*, in the

---

<sup>1</sup> See in particular Clark (1996, Chap 6) on non-verbal signalling.

operation of indexical reference. What I call the *antecedent trigger*<sup>2</sup> contributes the *ontological category* or *type* of the anaphor's referent; but the actual referent itself and its characterization are determined by a whole range of factors: what will have been predicated of it up to the point of retrieval, the nature of the coherence/rhetorical relation invoked in order to integrate the two discourse units at issue, and the particular character of the indexical or "host" predication.<sup>3</sup> All these factors come under the heading of *discourse*, under the above definition.

So contrary to the classical conception of discourse anaphora whereby each indexical expression in a text has to be brought into relation with an appropriate co-occurring textual antecedent, whether the referent retrieved via a given indexical (anaphor or "anadeictic" —see below) has been directly and explicitly evoked in the surrounding co-text is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for its existence. For the natural language user, there is no simple "matching" process to be carried out between two separate co-textual expressions (textual antecedent and indexical), independently of their respective semantic-pragmatic environments, as under the traditional account. Instead, it is the entire "host" or indexical predication which is integrated with a salient discourse representation available in working memory, as this will have evolved since its introduction via a relevant antecedent trigger (see note 2). The indexical expression picks up a topical referent within this discourse representation, or may be actually instrumental, together with the host predication, in introducing it into the discourse model.

## 2.2 Deixis, anaphora and anadeixis

As far as deixis and anaphora are concerned, these are essentially attention-coordinating, discourse-management devices entailing the tacit cooperation and involvement of both speaker and addressee.<sup>4</sup>

**Deixis** serves prototypically to direct the addressee's attention focus to a new object of discourse (or to a new aspect of an existing one) that is derived by default via the situational context of utterance —whose centre point is the "here and now" of the speaker's verbal and non-verbal activity in cooperation with the addressee. Deixis is context-creating in that its use invokes the utterance-level parameters which need to be set afresh for particular values, as a function of the roles that are assigned of current speaker and current addressee, time and place of utterance, as well as source of point of view.

---

<sup>2</sup> An utterance token, a percept or a semiotically-relevant gesture —all falling under the dimension *text*.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the clause or phrase containing the indexical expression, as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jones's (1995, p. 38) characterisation of deixis as being essentially "sociocentric" rather than "egocentric" solely in terms of the speaker, as classically conceived.

**Anaphora**, on the other hand, is a discourse-referring procedure designed to maintain the existing attention focus established hitherto: so the referents of (weakly stressed, phonologically non-prominent) anaphors will be assumed to enjoy a relatively high degree of psychological salience or attention focus level for the addressee at the point in the text where they are used. Anaphora, according to this view, plays an essentially integrative role in the creation of discourse.

Yet the relationship between deixis and anaphora is asymmetrical: these are by no means “absolute” or autonomous indexical referring procedures. Lyons (1975) convincingly argued (cf. also Bühler, 1990/1934) that anaphora is derivative upon deixis — both ontogenetically, in the child’s evolving mastery of its native language, and phylogenetically, in terms of the evolution of language forms and constructions throughout history. So deixis is the more fundamental referring procedure. The real relationship between these two indexical procedures may be characterized in terms of a cline or continuum, with a medium term: this intermediate, hybrid level has been termed “**anadeixis**” by Ehlich (1982).

But before developing this “intermediate” indexical procedure, let us look briefly at some basic properties of the context-bound (indexical) expressions which help to realize the indexical procedures of deixis, anadeixis and anaphora.

Regarding *the demonstratives*, proximal *this (N)* is the marked (i.e. ‘special’) member of the pair *this (N)/that (N)*, whereas distal *that (N)* is the unmarked (‘basic’ or ‘normal’) one. When used in context, proximal demonstrative NPs present the information conveyed within them as non-presupposed of the intended referent. Rather, their head noun serves to *classify* the intended referent in terms of the speaker/writer’s subjective conception of the entity at issue: so this classification does not simply transpire by default from the external properties of the object of reference itself. By hypothesis, the use of *proximal* demonstrative forms (*here, now, this (N)*) constitutes a signal of the speaker’s personal, subjective involvement with the referent at issue; whereas that of the *distal* forms (*there, then, that (N)*) presupposes either the speaker’s personal dissociation with regard to the intended referent, or an alignment between speaker and addressee in this respect, where the entity targeted is construed as already-negotiated information, in interactional terms.

As for head nouns within *definite* or *possessive NPs*, the category of entity which these indexical expression types denote is indeed normally presupposed of their referent by the speaker/writer — and this property means that this type of indexical is better suited to the expression of *anaphora* than to *(ana)deixis*, though the latter uses are indeed possible. Moreover, definite expressions refer “inclusively”, whereas demonstratives do so “exclusively”: their use entails that there are *other* entities of the same type which are *not* included in the set of entities which they denote.

Finally, the use of *third person pronouns* carries the assumption that their intended referent is currently at the forefront of the communicators’ attention: hence there is no need for the understander to engage in a cognitive search procedure in

order to locate it. Such indexicals, then, are markers of discourse continuity as well as integration.

Now, to return to *anadeixis*, this is the type of indexical reference which combines the anaphoric and deictic procedures to different degrees: the indexical expressions which realize it (mainly demonstrative-based ones) are *anaphoric* in the sense that their referent is already —potentially— present in the discourse representation assumed by the speaker to be shared by speaker and addressee at the point of occurrence, and is retrieved or created via this reference; however, that referent may be less than highly salient, psychologically, at the point of use, unlike the situation which prevails with canonical anaphora. This is why the *deictic* procedure is a contributory factor in such references. See Cornish (2011, pp. 757–60) for further discussion.

I distinguish three major subtypes of *anadeixis*, namely:

- “*Strict*” *anadeixis*: the subsequent reference to an entity which may have been evoked earlier in a discourse, but which is no longer —or is not yet— topical at the point of use: the referent which is targeted exists in the surrounding discourse, but is not immediately highly accessible —hence the involvement of the deictic dimension (see (1) below for a typical illustration);
- *Recognitional anadeixis*: the indexical reference to an entity —often an event, sometimes stereotypical— that is presumed to be shared within the participants’ long-term memory: here, the referent targeted also exists independently of this indexical reference; but it is even less accessible than in the previous subcase—hence the primacy within this subtype of the deictic dimension, and,
- *Discourse deixis*: the act of cognitive pointing towards a discourse representation in working memory, and the creation from within it of a partly new discourse entity via an inference: the deictic dimension thus performs an even more dominant role in this type of indexical reference —hence its name. (2) below is an attested illustration.

Since the discussion in §3 below adduces only examples illustrating the first and third of these three subtypes (in addition to pure deixis), I will restrict exemplification to these two, as follows:

- (1) ‘*Strict*’ *anadeixis*: ...The journalist (...) gets hold of a copy of the tape [a “cursed” videotape said to bring death to anyone who watches it] and (...) traces it to its source. *This* turns out to be a stable on an island... (Extract from Review of the film “The Ring” by Andrew Collins, *Radio Times* 7-13.08.04, p. 41)

In (1), the referent of the (“strict”) *anadeictic* proximal demonstrative pronoun *this* in line 2 is introduced in the initial sentence of the extract via an “oblique” expression, the prepositional phrase *to its source*. This is part of the new information conveyed by the verb-centred expression (*and*) *traces it to its source* (line 2).

The demonstrative could not be replaced felicitously by a simple 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun (*It*), as in *#It turns out to be a stable on an island* (the crosshatch # indicates the unnaturalness in context of a potential utterance). This is because the referent at issue ('the source where the copy of the videotape in question is located'), although previously mentioned, has not yet been installed as a topic in the reader's mental model of the discourse currently being constructed: so it needs a stronger indexical reference for this to be achieved: the proximal demonstrative pronoun *this* fits the bill admirably here. Note also the subjective, intensity-inducing effect of the use of the proximal demonstrative variant, which is consonant with the use of the present tense of the verb (*turns out to be...*). The possible use of distal *that* instead would be more natural if the tense were the preterit: *That turned out to be...*.

- (2) Discourse deixis: ...“Lack of magnesium causes constipation, high blood pressure, depression, leg cramps, PMS, insomnia and tiredness” [writes Gillian McKeith, nutritionist]. So think before blaming the stresses of modern life if you suffer any of *these symptoms*... (“Eat your greens”, Geoff Ellis, *Radio Times* 7-13.08.04, p. 35)

In (2), the reader's interpretation of the proximal demonstrative noun phrase *these symptoms* in line 3 requires him or her to draw an inference, to the effect that the medical conditions listed in the first sentence (lines 1-2) are in fact “symptoms” that point to some more general cause, rather than just “conditions”. This would explain the use of a (proximal) demonstrative NP to refer to these conditions under this guise (i.e. as “symptoms”, rather than as simply “physical conditions” *per se*). The use of a definite noun phrase, or of a 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun, in its place would not have resulted in a felicitous reference to the conditions at issue *qua* “symptoms” (viz. ...*#if you suffer any of the symptoms/them*). This is because the fact that these conditions may be conceived as “symptoms” cannot be presupposed as known or given by the reader at the point of use. So as in example (1), we are dealing here with an instance of “anadeixis”, and not with straightforward “anaphora”.

### **3. Advanced L2 learners' handling of indexical procedures in producing and comprehending extended text: pure deixis, discourse deixis, 'strict' anadeixis and canonical anaphora**

#### ***3.1 Advanced learners' “metadiscursive” awareness of the contribution of indexicals to textualisation***

Let's look first at what we might call advanced L2 learners' “metadiscursive knowledge”, in particular as regards the textualising functionality of the various

English indexicals. This awareness is of course reflected in their written and oral textual production, a sample of the former of which we will be observing shortly; but it is most evident in their analyses of non-literary, journalistic texts as part of a discourse-analysis task, or of their answers to analytical questions based on a 20<sup>th</sup> Century literary text in end-of-semester written examinations. The extract given in (3) and the discussion below relate to the latter category:

- (3) ...Immediately below them there was a peach tree in first flower, the buds a deep rose colour. The plot of ground marked out by Cecilia for her kitchen garden had been turned over for them by a man on a tractor from the nearby village. (...) Cecilia turned to him ['Harold Chapman, Cecilia's husband'] a face delicately glowing. 'Darling, look at *that patch the man turned over for us*. It has dried from the deep brown it was at first. It is a reddish ochre now, the true Umbria colour.' (...) (Barry Unsworth, *After Hannibal*, 1996. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pp. 3-4).

Now, a majority of students, when asked to analyse the form, meaning and referential function of the determiner *that* in the demonstrative NP *that patch the man turned over for us* (line 5), wrote that it is 'anaphoric' in reference (since the intended referent, 'the plot of ground marked out by Cecilia for her kitchen garden' introduced in line 2, has already been evoked via the subject NP *The plot of ground marked out by Cecilia for her kitchen garden* in line 2).<sup>5</sup> But this is to confuse two levels of discourse: the **narration** (in which this referent was first introduced) and the **dialogue** (see Benveniste's 1974 distinction between "*histoire*" and "*discours*", respectively).

The first level, narration (Benveniste's "*histoire*"), is where the discourse participants are the narrator as locutionary source and the reader as 'addressee' or intended recipient; and the second, a direct speech segment ("*discours*" in Benveniste's sense), involves Cecilia as utterer and Harold as addressee. This latter situation is a **deictic** frame. Note the vocative, attention-attracting noun *Darling* that precedes the indexical predication: the use of this noun signals to the person so addressed that he is being cast in the (deictic) role of 'addressee' by the speaker.

There follows an imperative sentence *Look at that patch the man turned over for us*. In communicative terms, this represents an invitation to the addressee to turn his gaze towards the patch of land at issue — a patch visible from the room in which the interlocutors are situated. The use of the verb *look* is also a clue that it is a question of evoking something new, and not of maintaining some item of information already established in the prior discourse. In addition, the indexical NP *that patch the man turned over for us* is an expanded, not reduced expression — unlike anaphoric markers in general. The reduced restrictive relative clause (*which*) *the man turned over for us* serves here precisely to help the addressee identify the intended referent, using the context of utterance in order to do so. The

---

<sup>5</sup> Of course, it is not *that* by itself that has a reference in this context, but the whole expression which it 'determines'.



distal demonstrative determiner *that* is used in order to establish a joint attention focus on a discourse-new (though no doubt hearer-old) object of discourse.

Those students who classified the reference of the distal demonstrative NP as “anaphoric” were no doubt simply relying on the “objective” situation being evoked via the text as a whole, independently of any metacommunicative frame involving the discourse participants. But it is clearly deictic here.

On another occasion, such students, having been taught the conventional (text-based) account of anaphora stemming from Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) classic work on cohesion, were required to analyse the word *that* (in italics in (4) below, line 6) in an extract from James Joyce’s (1994) *The Dead* (Ed. D.R. Schwarz. New York/Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, p. 21). The passage evokes the arrival of the guests for the Misses Morkans’ annual dance in Dublin.

- (4) ...Lily, the caretaker’s daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also. But Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought of *that* and had converted the bathroom upstairs into a ladies’ dressing room...

The students were asked to analyse this distal demonstrative pronoun by indicating its syntactic category, referential function and interpretation in context. Now, the vast majority of answers (see the representative sample below) were in terms of the static, text-based account of anaphora, completely missing the (coherent) interpretation signalled in context by the pronoun *that* within the indexical clause in line 6 of this extract.

The students had been taught that there are basically two varieties of anaphora: “(co-)textual” or “endophora”, subsuming “anaphora” in the strict sense, where the antecedent precedes the anaphor in the co-text, and “cataphora”, where the anaphor precedes the antecedent; and “situational” (so-called “exophora”). The preponderant interpretation indicated by the examinees was that the referent of the “textual antecedent” of this pronoun (namely the proposition expressed by *It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also* in lines 4-5) corresponded to that of the demonstrative pronoun, evidently taking the host verb *thought of* in the indexical predication as meaning “cognized”.<sup>6</sup> In reality, this verb means something similar to “anticipated” in this context — a rather different interpretation.

The small selection of student responses to this question given below clearly shows the extent to which their understanding of “anaphora” involves simply “matching”, by bringing them together, two segments of co-text — the indexical and its “antecedent trigger”, in my terminology — and mentally copying the latter’s literal interpretation onto the indexical, often irrespective of whether this interpretation fits in with that of the host segment. Here, then, are three highly representative answers to the question:

---

<sup>6</sup> As in “Think of a number. Multiply it by 7 ...”.

- “the lexeme “that” is a demonstrative pronoun. It replaces an idea that has been mentioned before. It refers to the fact that Lily does not need to attend to the ladies. It has an anaphoric value.”
- “(...) Its referential function is that of a proform which picks up Lily’s words (sic), “It was well for her that she had not to attend to the ladies also.” That also has an anaphoric and endophoric value.”
- ““that’ (...) is a deictic proform (...) which [is] anaphoric, since it picks up the entire preceding utterance: “it was well for her that she had not to attend to the ladies also.” In some sense, this utterance is pronominalised by ‘that’ itself.”

Evidently, the interpretation evinced by these students would not be coherent when the indexical clause is integrated with its discourse context: “#But Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought of (= ‘cognized’) the fact that it was well for Lily not to have to attend to the ladies also and had converted the bathroom upstairs into a ladies’ dressing room”. If Miss Kate and Miss Julia thought it was well (a good thing) that Lily should not have to attend to the ladies, then it is unclear why they should have felt the need to “convert the bathroom upstairs into a ladies’ dressing room” (i.e. the relationship between these two factors appears completely unmotivated, even self-contradictory).

All the answers given above characterize the reference of *that* here as purely “anaphoric” (even though the third one states that it is a “deictic proform”). None of them picks up the fact that there is also a deictic dimension to this reference, which would come under the category of “anadeixis” which we saw in §2.2. It is in fact even a “discourse-deictic” reference,<sup>7</sup> since in context, its operation creates via an inference on the basis of a negatively-specified proposition (“Lily did not have to attend to the ladies also”) a quasi-modal referent characterisable informally as “the *need* to attend to the ladies who had been invited to the Misses Morkans’ annual dance in Dublin”. The inference is derived via the following causal connection: “If Lily did not have to attend to the lady guests as well as to the gentlemen, then no provision would have been made to welcome the former category”. But this discourse object is not represented explicitly in the co-text; it is only available via an inference from the latter.<sup>8</sup> This analysis evidently falls under the heading of “discourse”, and not uniquely “text”, as defined in §2.1 above.

The students’<sup>9</sup> analyses of the indexicals in extracts (3) and (4) above show that they have difficulty in distinguishing between the indexical procedures of *deixis* and *anaphora*, and that they assume an extremely broad, undifferentiated conception of the latter (which subsumes in their understanding, but does not overlap with, the former). In particular, it is evident that in general, they do not

---

<sup>7</sup> See the definition given in §2.2 above as well as the illustration in (2).

<sup>8</sup> See also the analysis of *these symptoms* in example (2) above.

<sup>9</sup> Note that there were two distinct cohorts of students at issue in each case.

place the instances of deixis or anaphora which they pinpoint in given texts within the particular interpersonal communicative frameworks which each procedure presupposes. Their analyses also evince a literalistic, strictly text-based approach to these discourse-referring procedures. This approach clearly leads them astray in terms of discourse understanding, as we have seen.

A recent study of the distal demonstrative's marked proximal counterpart, *this*, as used in thesis summaries (Bourdet, 2011, p. 14) also fails to recognise its potential "anadeictic" use in discourse, characterizing its functioning as either "exophoric" or "anaphoric". Revealingly, in the latter case, one of its "endophoric" functions as a determiner is claimed to be as follows (I translate): "*this* and the term it determines retrieves a term used earlier in the text."

### **3.2 Evidence from text production: "strict" anadeixis vs. canonical anaphora**

The evidence that may be gleaned from text production (textualising) strongly corroborates the conception derived from the text analyses of learners' metadiscursive awareness as characterized in §3.1. That is, deixis as well as anadeixis tend to be 'ground down' to the level of anaphora. Anaphora is then for these learners the default indexical procedure.

Here are several examples of the use of an anaphoric pronoun (*it*) at a point where a native writer would use a strict-anadeictic indexical (a demonstrative-based expression).

- (5) a. [Extract from an essay entitled (by the student!) "Journalists don't write articles. They write stories"] (...) In our Western societies at least, people tend to show too much trust and confidence in the news of the written press. I think #*it* is, in some ways, dangerous...
- b. (...) Here we are clearly very close to the family because of the use of nicknames. Indeed, normally we use nicknames in our private circle, for friends, or for a beloved daughter. #*It* is precisely what the writer wants to do, he wants the reader to feel compassion for the family who has overcome such an event...
- c. (...) In this example the reader is obviously led by the writer on a path which depicts Prince Charles in an ironical way as an experienced actor while in fact, he is not (see the 5th paragraph which clearly shows #*it* is not the case).

The infelicitous uses of *it* in (5a-c) (line 3 in each extract) to refer back to the proposition evoked in the preceding sentence or clause may well be due to interference from the writers' L1 here (French), since a neuter clitic demonstrative pronoun (*ce*) might well have been used to express this in their native language (*viz.*, respectively, ... *c'est dangereux*, ...*c'est précisément ce que l'auteur cherche à*

*faire*, and ... *que ce n'est pas le cas* ...). Note that the demonstrative clitic pronoun *ce* as subject of the copula *être* 'be' is not a potentially 'anadeictic' expression; its clitic as well as neuter status mean that it realizes a purely anaphoric functioning in discourse.

However, the contexts in (5) clearly require a "strict"-anadeictically functioning indexical to achieve the retrieval felicitously. This is a frequent textualisation error in French L1 speakers' written production of English text. Clearly, a native English writer would have used a demonstrative pronoun here, most likely the proximal pronoun *this* in each case, since the referent at issue is a proposition (i.e. an abstract, conceptual entity) and not a 1st-order concrete entity. As such, its intrinsic level of potential topicality is lower than that of referents of the latter type; consequently, it requires an anadeictic rather than anaphoric retrieval, in order to raise it to a topical status.<sup>10</sup> The proximal demonstrative pronoun *this* is perfectly suited for this task in these instances, though not the ordinary pronoun *it*.

Demonstratives are recognised and used in all the students' essays on the same topic, but, frequently, the distal member of the pair is wrongly used where the proximal one would be called for. (6a-c) illustrate:

- (6) a. [Extract from same source as example (5a)] ...Articles are condensed and somehow closed whereas literary stories are open to the world and its mysteries, and therefore, give place (sic) to imagination and escape from reality. The first are rational writing (sic), the second are fictional, *#that's* precisely what brings (sic) them apart. ...
- b. [Continuation of same essay] They also could make use of other speech but don't depend on it. *#That's* not the pillar that will sustain the novel...
- c. [Different essays on the same topic. Two articles on the same issue (from two British tabloid newspapers) are being compared] (...) Basically *#those* two articles deal with the same "issue" but they do not use the same method to name the people involved and so, we do not see it in the same way.

In (6a,b) a native English writer would have used proximal *this* in place of the occurrences of *that* as used by the students, and in (6c), *these* instead of *those*. The reason is (by hypothesis) that the referent at issue is at the forefront of attention at the point of use, hence the utterer is still personally involved in it; it is not being distanced, psychologically speaking, by the writer (a value which one use of distal *that* would entail: see the characterisation of the use of *this* vs. *that* in §2.2).<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> See also the attested example (1) above in this respect, where a proximal demonstrative pronoun is used in this very type of context.

<sup>11</sup> See also Cornish (2001) on what I call "modal" *that* in English.

#### 4. Possible ways of remedying learners' deficiencies in handling indexical references in discourse: some proposals

There are three aspects to the problems outlined in section 3: first, the “metadiscursive” conception of anaphora, deixis and anadeixis as advanced learners envisage it. This understanding is often vitiated not only by factors relating to points of potential interference from their L1 (here French), but also through their experience at University level in being exposed to descriptions of the phenomena which are idealised models that in fact lead learners astray when confronted with stretches of extended text in the L2.<sup>12</sup>

The second aspect is learners' grasp of the various indexical procedures together with the appropriate context in which each is used, as well as the range of indexical expressions, each with its distinctive indexical properties, that are capable of realizing them in understanding texts. And the third is their use of these in text production, paying attention to their intended reader's perspective. Both the second and the third of these aspects are directly determined by the first, clearly the more fundamental factor.

In my own teaching at first degree level (third year of undergraduate study), I used the following set of standard guidelines, which were explained and practised in class using a variety of short non-literary texts:

1. Indicate, motivating your judgment, the type of rhetorical “*super-structure*” you believe the author of the following text has adopted.
2. Establish the *discourse structure* that might be associated with this text, by making explicit the broad stages in its development.
3. Isolate the following *topic chains*, as a function of the indexical expressions used in each: [The names of two major discourse referents that receive some development in the text presented for analysis are cited here]. Specify which indexical or other expressions constitute the Head (L1), the second link (L2) and the third (L3). Distinguish between the *anadeictic* and purely *anaphoric* uses of the indexical expressions, as the case may be.

As can be seen, the overall task which students are asked to perform is a discourse analysis of the text presented.<sup>13</sup> Beginning with instruction 1, they are first required to indicate the “super-structure” the writer has assigned to his/her text (“Problem-Solution”, “Cause-Consequence”, “Parallel Contrast”, and so on). Once established, this super-structure will then motivate the division of the text into major as well as minor discourse units (instruction 2), which in combination will be able to implement that super-structure. Finally, instruction 3 asks them to establish the “topic chains”, which correspond to structured sequences of references developing a single (topical) discourse referent within a text. There are ma-

---

<sup>12</sup> The “Cohesion” model proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), though in wide use in language teaching at the present time, is one such, as we have seen.

<sup>13</sup> See Cottrell (2005) for similar text-structuring exercises, as well as the “Sample [class] activities” and experimental protocol reported in Hashemi and Ghanizadeh (2012).

jor, “macro-topical” chains, and more minor, subsidiary ones, termed “micro-topical” chains. By definition, macro-topical chains are developed both in major discourse units as well as in minor, supporting ones throughout a text, whereas micro-topical ones tend only to occur within background units.

Each topic chain involves up to three links: *An initial, introductory link* (L1) which serves to present the referent within the discourse. This initial link is normally expressed via a contextually-autonomous referring expression (i.e. one that does not require appeal to context for resolution); then *a second link* (L2), whose purpose is to confirm the installation of this referent as a macro-topic within the addressee/reader’s mental discourse model. This second link, which may only be needed when the discourse referent is a macro-topic within the discourse as a whole, is often expressed via an anadeictically-functioning indexical —often demonstrative-based; and finally *a third link* (L3), which may be filled by multiple occurrences of indexical expressions. These purely anaphoric expressions serve simply to maintain the high saliency of the topical referent at issue. See Cornish (2006) for further development as well as illustration of “topic chains” within discourse.

The value of this approach lies in the fact that indexical reference is apprehended in terms of discourse structure, as well as in terms of its functionality in relation to the purpose of the reference in question, relative to the particular discourse-cognitive stage of processing and understanding that the reader or addressee has reached: setting up a representation of a discourse-new entity in the latter’s mind in the case of chain heads; where relevant, reconfirming the discourse importance (macro-topical status) of this referent, and, once this is achieved, maintaining its high discourse salience or topicality via the use of dedicated anaphoric expressions.

A selection of preparatory exercises might be as follows: presenting the learners with a text containing a variety of types of indexical reference (deictic, anadeictic and anaphoric) and asking them to recognize each type, justifying their assignments in terms of the context in which each instance occurs. Another such exercise would consist in presenting a similar text, but systematically removing each indexical reference within it (with a variant type proposing a choice amongst two or three alternative indexicals proposed for each such gap). The learners could then be asked to insert the appropriate indexical expression in each gap in the text, again justifying it in contrast to the other alternatives.

In these ways, learners can come to appreciate the distinctions amongst new-referent introduction within a discourse, anadeictic reference back to erstwhile (or not yet) topical referents, and purely anaphoric, topic-maintaining retrievals within internally coherent spans of discourse. This will in principle enable them to grasp the essential semantic-pragmatic differences amongst the various indexical expression types in English capable of realizing each of these major discourse functions. At the same time, they may be brought to appreciate and act upon the all-important distinction between *linear text* and *hierarchical discourse*, where in-

dexical reference partakes of *both* dimensions, and does not simply involve the context alone.

## 5. Conclusions

Two major, mainstream conceptions of indexical reference in extended texts which are widely used in language teaching and learning need to be called into question and significantly revised and overhauled.

They are, first, that anaphora as well as cataphora (both subsumed under the more general banner of “endophora”, i.e. text-internal reference) may best be apprehended solely in terms of the text, and involve a simple matching process between a textual antecedent (characteristically, a referentially autonomous expression) and an anaphor or cataphor (a context-dependent, indexical expression, unable to refer completely on its own). This view is most centrally represented in Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) Cohesion model, which is widely adopted as a teaching and learning model in this field. But see in particular the telling criticisms of this model given in Brown and Yule (1983), as well as my own arguments against the “textualist” model of discourse anaphora more generally (Cornish, 2010). See also Cornish and Salazar Orvig (in press: §2.1). The commentaries on certain advanced L2 learners’ analyses of extracts (3) and (4) show the significant drawbacks of adopting such a conception within a pedagogical perspective. Indeed, it actually has negative consequences in inducing a false conception of the discourse management procedures that are deixis, anadeixis and anaphora. As the discussion of students’ analyses of extract (4) in particular showed, it is the absence of the crucial dimension of “discourse” (in my sense of the term: see §2.1 above) which is the missing link in the equation.

Second, the “spatial” conception which is purported to regulate the use of demonstrative expressions both within the context of utterance and as extended to the textual domain, in temporal terms. This holds that proximal form types are restricted to use in reference to objects which are relatively *near* the speaker, whether spatially in the context of utterance or temporally in terms of relative recency of mention; and that distal form types are limited to use in targeting objects relatively *far* from the speaker, or that are relatively less recent in terms of mention. Yet as shown by a large number of scholars (Cheshire, 1996; Kemmerer, 1999; Cornish, 2001, to name but a few), this is another idealisation which does not correspond to the ways in which demonstratives are actually used in English (and in many other languages as well).

In the above, we have seen ample evidence that advanced L2 learners mishandle demonstratives, both in terms of text comprehension and analysis<sup>14</sup> and production.<sup>15</sup> Again, it is the more “discourse”-oriented conception in terms of the speaker’s personal involvement vs. relative lack of involvement or psychological distancing with respect to the intended referent that is the crucial factor lying behind their perspicuous use, rather than a purely formal, textual or perceptual one.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON FUTURE PRAXIS

Several suggestions for future applications of the themes outlined in this chapter suggest themselves:

- 1) The key concern here is the need to develop students’ awareness of the fact that most indexical expressions may have *different* discourse-referring functions in contexts of use. Namely,
  - a. demonstrative expressions (pronouns or noun phrases), but also definite NPs, may realise **deixis**;
  - b. demonstrative expressions and definite NPs may also realise **anadeixis**: reduced definite NPs are restricted to realising “*strict*” *anadeixis*, while definite NPs extended via a restrictive relative clause may well realise “*recognitional*” *anadeixis* —though not *discourse deixis*. All these subtypes of anadeixis may be expressed via demonstratives.
  - c. zero forms, 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns and reduced (unaccented) definite or possessive NPs may realise **anaphora**.

Relevant text-based exercises can be constructed in order to develop learners’ awareness of this flexibility (i.e. where tokens of the *same* type of indexical realise *different* indexical referring procedures or functions in discourse).

- 2) By priority, exercises should be set up which develop students’ sensitivity to **topicality** in texts: *macro-topics*, *micro-topics* and *subtopics*. What are the textual clues that make it possible to recognise each of these subtypes of topic? Both anaphora and anadeixis are sensitive to these distinct subtypes.

---

<sup>14</sup> See examples (3) and (4), together with the discussion of students’ analyses of the extracts in §3.

<sup>15</sup> See examples (5), where demonstratives were called for but not used, and (6), where the contextually appropriate member of the demonstrative pair was not used.



In this regard, it is necessary to set up certain exercises in *textual analysis* (see Cottrell 2005 for some useful models in this connection). These would enable students to structure the texts concerned (chosen from different genres and sub-genres) in terms of the constituent parts of the message being conveyed, and the ways in which they relate to one another. Again, this will prove essential for a proper understanding of the discourse functioning of both anadeixis and anaphora.

- 3) Regarding the three major indexical referring procedures themselves, exercises are needed in order to sensitize students to the *interpersonal frames* and the *recipient's attention state* that distinguish anaphora, anadeixis and deixis:
  - a. For *deixis*, select a number of relevant dialogues involving situational uses of *this/these (N)* and *that/those (N)*, drawn from novels or from spoken corpora (BNC, COCA etc.). Ask students to characterize the *interpersonal frames* underlying these utterances, determining the specific values for each of the deictic parameters: identity of speaker and of addressee, speaker's communicative intention with respect to the addressee and their social relationship, the place, time and occasion of utterance, and the source of viewpoint. Ask them to characterize the speaker's and addressee's *attention state* both prior to and following these deictic acts of reference.
  - b. For *anadeictic* references (mainly realised via demonstrative expressions), set up exercises requiring students to pinpoint the *interactional relationship* holding between speaker/writer and addressee/reader at the points in a text containing such references. As far as both '*strict*' *anadeixis* and *discourse deixis* are concerned, these exercises should also ask students to determine the *discourse-structural relations* holding between prior references to a given entity and subsequent ones (see in this respect the discourse-structuring type of exercise suggested in 2) above). Again, the recipient's *current attentional state* with respect to the indexical's referent should be determined.
  - c. Finally, regarding *anaphoric* references, texts containing these should be selected from a variety of (sub-)genres. Exercises could be constructed around them requiring students to characterize the *interactional relationship* holding between speaker/writer and addressee/reader prior to the occurrences of the indexical markers involved (zero forms, 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns, or reduced definite or possessive NPs). What is the source of the viewpoint involved? What as-

sumptions are likely on the speaker's/writer's part with respect to the addressee's/reader's *current attention state* in relation to the referent of these indexical markers?

## References

- Auer, P. (2009). Context and contextualisation. In J. Verschueren & J.-O. Östman (Eds.), *Key notions for pragmatics* (pp. 86-101). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Bell, A. (1984). Language style as audience design. *Language in Society*, 13, 145-204.
- Benveniste, E. (1974). *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Tome II. Gallimard: Paris.
- Bourdet, G. (2011). *This* comme marqueur privilégié du genre: le cas des résumés de thèse. *Discours*, 9, 3-29.
- Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bühler, K. (1990/1934). Theory of language: The representational function of language. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Cheshire, J. (1996). That jacksprat: An interactional perspective on English *that*. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25, 369-393.
- Clark, H. H. (1996). *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cornish, F. (2001). "Modal" *that* as determiner and pronoun: The primacy of the cognitive-interactive dimension. *English Language and Linguistics*, 5(2), 297-315.
- Cornish, F. (2006). Discourse anaphora. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (pp. 631-638). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Cornish, F. (2010). Anaphora: Text-based, or discourse-dependent? Functionalist vs. formalist accounts. *Functions of Language*, 17(2), 207-241.
- Cornish, F. (2011). 'Strict' anadeixis, discourse deixis and text structuring. *Language Sciences*, 33(5), 753-767.
- Cornish, F., & Salazar Orvig, A. (in press). A critical look at the notion "pro-form". Evidence from indexical markers, spoken discourse and (French) child language. *Language Sciences*.
- Cottrell, S. (2005). *Critical thinking skills. Developing effective analysis and argument*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Diessel, H. (1999). *Demonstratives. Form, function, and grammaticalization*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Ehlich, K. (1982). Anaphora and deixis: Same, similar, or different? In R. J. Jarvella, & W. Klein (Eds.), *Speech, place and action. Studies in deixis and related topics* (pp. 315-338). Chichester, UK: John Wiley.
- Haberland, H. (1999). Text, discourse, *discours*: The latest from the Terminology Vice Squad. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 911-918.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Hashemi, M. R., & Ghanizadeh, A. (2012). Critical discourse analysis and critical thinking: An experimental study in an EFL context. *System*, 40, 37-47.
- Jones, P. (1995). Philosophical and theoretical issues in the study of deixis: A critique of the standard account. In K. Green K (Ed.), *New essays in deixis. Discourse, narrative, literature* (pp. 27-48). Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi.
- Kemmerer, D. (1999). "Near" and "far" in language and perception. *Cognition*, 73, 35-63.
- Lyons, J. (1975). Deixis as the source of reference. In E.L. Keenan (Ed.), *Formal semantics of natural language* (pp. 61-83). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Renkema, J. (2009). *The texture of discourse*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Widdowson, H. G. (2004). *Text, context, pretext. Critical issues in discourse analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

**Examples**

Collins, A. (2004, August 7-13). Review of the film “The Ring”. *Radio Times*, p. 41.

Ellis, G. (2004, August 7-13). “Eat your greens”. *Radio Times*, p. 35.

Joyce, J. (1994) *The Dead*. Ed. D.R. Schwarz. New York/Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, p. 21.

Unsworth, B. (1996). *After Hannibal*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pp. 3-4.