Affective positioning in celebrity events:
The use of deictic terms for internet involvement

Shuping Huang
Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

Keywords: Chinese, deixis, discourse analysis, affects

In addition to identifying the space, time, interpersonal, discourse, and manner of a reference in relation to the deictic center, the construction of the deictic mental space can be deployed for locating and indicating the involvement of the speaker, a phenomenon known as affective positioning (Giaxoglou 2015). In a series of discourse studies, van Kieken and many researchers have also pointed out that professional journalists also employ the best viewpoint in news narratives to achieve the intended effects (van Krieken et al., 2019; van Krieken & Sanders, 2019). In the age of digitalization when internet users are actively participating in the report of social events, the perspectives they take to construct the social sphere with themselves in it is investigated in the current study. Special focus has been placed on deictic terms which are claimed in linguistic theories to play a crucial role of viewpoint construction. Two events have been tracked: (1) Post-divorce of Barbie Hsu and (2) Sung's church events. They are the most-talked-about events in entertainment news of Taiwan during 2022~2023. In the developments of these events, the celebrities issued official declarations or posted on their personal FB/Weibo to attack others and to defend themselves from accusations of infidelity, domestic violence, gaslighting, deception, accumulating wealth, etc. Internet users' use of deictic terms have been analyzed in relation to their roles (general users, journalists, celebrities themselves) and the information they provide (personal experience, journalist expertise, history of the entertainment circles) to put themselves in the discourse. Our analysis shows that general internet users, though not actually involved in the events, used first and second person deixis to demonstrate their authorship and involvement. Proximate deixis was employed to express positive feelings and attitude, such as love and trust. Meanwhile, intersubjective uses of deixis, such as deictic projection (cf. Lyons 1977) and peudo-inclusive pronouns, have also been found. On the contrary, remote deictic expressions have been used for mental distancing, such as criticism, accusations, and indifference. This study fills the gap of deixis studies at a discourse and sentiment level.

References

Giaxoglou, Korina. 2015. "Everywhere I go, you're going with me": Time and space deixis as affective positioning resources in shared moments of digital mourning. *Discourse, Context and Media* 9. 55–63.

Krieken, Kobie van & José Sanders. 2019. Smoothly moving through Mental Spaces: Linguistic patterns of viewpoint transfer in news narratives. *Cognitive Linguistics* 30. 499–529.

Krieken, Kobie van, José Sanders & Eve Sweetser. 2019. Linguistic and cognitive representation of time and viewpoint in narrative discourse. *Cognitive Linguistics* 30. 243–251.

Lyons, John. 1977. *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.