Different Articles Used as Deictic Expressions in English & Arabic (A Contrastive Study)

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Abstract

The theoretical material in the current study is helpful for anyone who needs to comprehend some different articles of deictic expressions.

It deals with the definite article 'the' comparative references study in English and Arabic. It targets at investigating the ways in which these deictic expressions are identified in two languages above. It is an attempt to show the similarities and differences existing between them on the syntactic and semantic levels.

The similarities and differences between these languages would impact the process of learning and teaching English deictic expressions to Arab learners and the translation of deictic expressions from English to Arabic and vice versa.

1. Introduction

The word deictic has its roots in the Greek word 'deiktikos', meaning 'able to show'; which comes from the word deiktos; which is a verbal of the word deiknynai, meaning to show. (Lyons, 1994, Vol. II:636)

A related word to deictic is deixis, used in linguistics and pragmatics where it refers to a procedure whereby either words or expressions are seen to depend absolutely on context.

Deictic is a term used in linguistic theory to subsume those features of language which refer directly to the personal, locational, and temporal characteristics of the situation within which an utterance takes place and whose meaning is relative to that situation, e.g., *I/you, here/there, this/that, now/then* are deictics. (Crystal, 2008:159).

This aspect of language is realized and manifested in different languages which are in English and Arabic as seen in the following examples:

English:
(1) *I* am working in *the same* garden *now*.

Arabic:
(2) *anaa* ?mal-u   fi: *al*-ḥdyqt-I   *ala:n   nafsha:*
     I am working-NOM in *the-same* garden-GEN *now*

I am working in the same garden now.

2. Different Articles Used as Deictics in English

In English there are some other items that can be used as deictic expressions and these are: the definite article 'the', and some types of comparative references.

2.1.   The Definite Article 'The'

In the Indo-European languages, the definite article, demonstrative pronouns, and the third person pronouns are diachronically related. The demonstrative pronouns are the source of the definite article and the third person pronouns in the Germanic and the Romance languages. The definite article *the* is reduced from the demonstrative pronoun *that*. The definite article in English is a unique member of a class, it is a specifying agent serving to identify and specify some individuals that are found in certain universe. (Halliday and Hassan, 2013:70; Lyons, 1994, Vol. 2: 646) Examples are:

(1) Look at *the* flowers.

(2) Don't go, *the* train is coming.

In these examples the referent is fully specified by the context of situation, and it is known for both the speaker and the addressee. The deictic sense of *the* is also found in expressions of suddenness like:

(3) Mind *the* car.

And other cases of time, place, etc.

(4) I am busy at *the* time. (now)
(5) I bought *the* house.

In this respect Leech (1990:168) says that in English the presence of the definite feature of *the* is marked by the definite article *the* in a NP; it is also   present   in the meanings of the personal pronouns *he*, *she*, *you*, *they*, etc. and in deictic expressions (such as *this*, *that*, *here*, *now*, *there*, *then*).

2.2.   Comparatives

General comparison is a type of comparison in terms of likeness and unlikeness, that is two things may be the same, similar or different, (Halliday and Hassan, 2013:77).

(6) John used *the same* book.
(7) John bought *a similar* car.
(8) John saw *a different* film.

Deictic expressions can be seen simply in a general type of comparison, because the above examples can only be analyzed by comparing them with other objects in the context of situation or in the real world, for instance (6) means "the same book as that on the desk", (7) means "a similar car to mine", and (8) could mean "a different film from the one you saw."

In English there are some generalized exophoric (deictic) comparatives used as defining modifiers as in:

(9) *The milder* tobacco. (than any)

There are also some exophoric examples in particular comparison, i.e., the comparison between things in respect of a particular property. This type of exophoric comparative is commonly used form of instruction and observation in everyday life as in:

(10) Would you like the water *cooler*?
 (used by the hair dresser)
(11) I need a *sharper* one.
 (related to something else)
(12) Mine was *much* prettier.   (Ibid.:82-3)

3. Different Articles Used as Deictics in Arabic

In Arabic there are also some other elements that are used as deictic expressions such as the definite article ' the, al-' and some kinds of comparatives.

3.1. The Definite Article 'The, Al-'

The definite article (the, al-) is considered as a kind of demonstratives because it can give the meaning of (ha:ða) or (ha:ðh) (this) in certain cases, and originally has the meaning of reference. For example when we say:

(13) ?sa:fr-u   ala lndn-i   al-ywam-a /   al-li:lt-a
     travel-I   to London-GEN today-ACC/ tonight-ACC
     I will travel to London today/tonight.

The words (al-ywam) and (al-li:lta) can mean (ha:ða alywam) (this day) or (ha:ði al-li:lta) (this night) which means also (al-) (the) was not origin for definiteness only but it was a demonstrative and it kept this meaning in certain cases. (Al-Saki, 1977:244-5)

Beeston (1970:24) states that the definite article has two functions and the context is the only means by which we know of the two functions is intended. It may denote an item or a referent mentioned previously or there is a shared knowledge about it between the speaker and the addressee, and here (al-) (the) has the meaning of specification, e.g.,

(14) ʔʃtri:-tu   al-bai:t-a

bought-I   *the*-house-ACC

I bought *the* house.

The second function is that (al-) (the) denotes or refers to an item found within the context of situation in the same place at the time of speaking. For example when the speaker points to some flowers in front of him and says to his friend:

(15) ʔnðr   ala al-azhar-i

look   at   *the*-flowers-GEN

Look at *the* flowers.

Or someone warns his friend by saying:

(16) ? ḥðr   al-si:art-a

mind   *the*-car-ACC

Mind *the* car.

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The above examples can be deictics because they refer to specific objects or articles which are known for both the speaker and the addressee or pointing to items in the context of situation.

Arab grammarians divide the definite article (al-) (the) into two types that is (al-ʕhdi:h) (what has been mentioned before), and (al-aljnsi:h) this type indicates the genus of a certain entity and has a generic reference. (Al-Samraeey, 1987:122)

(17) al-nmr-u   aqwa   mn   al-θalb-I
      the-tiger-NOM   stronger   than   *the*-fox-GEN
      The tiger is stronger than *the* fox.

3.2. Comparatives

The idea of general comparison can be presented by using words like, or means (muta:bq) or (mta:bq) "identical", (mumaθlh) or (mʃabah) which means similar to (nafsa) (ʕain) (ða:ta) mean the same, and means (muktlfa) or (ghair) "different".

(18) qrah   ali:-un   al-ktab-a   nafs-hu
      read   ali-NOM   the-book-ACC   same
      Ali read the same book.

(19) ?ʃtra   ali:-un   si:art-an   mʃabahta / mumaθlta
      bought   ali-NOM   car-ACC   similar
      Ali bought a similar car.

(20) ?ʃtra   ali:-un   si:art-an   muktlftan
      bought   ali-NOM   car-ACC   different
      Ali bought a different car.

The above examples are deictics because they show comparison with entities in the context of situation.

Comparatives in Arabic language is formed according to the pattern (?fal) which expresses both comparative and superlative and this form is called "Elative" (?sm al-tafdeel) . The Elative as comparative is the same for all genders and numbers, it is followed by (mn) to express the English *than*.

(21) ali:-un   akber mn   ahamed-I
      ali-NOM   older   than   ahmed-GEN
      Ali is older than Ahmed.

The elative (?sm al-tafdeel) as superlative is always defined by the definite article (the, al-), or following genitive or pronominal suffixes and it has number distinction as (?fal) (masc.), (fuala:) (fem.) and (fual) (pl.) (Thatcher, 1993, 253-4 and Tritton, 1967:68-69).

(22) hw-un   al-atwal-an
     he-NOM   the-tallest-ACC
     He is the tallest.

(23) hi:a-un   al-hwsna:-an
     she-NOM   the-most beautiful-ACC
     She is the most beautiful.

(24) ha:ða   ?zkar-an
     this   smaller-ACC
     This is smaller

The above examples can be used as deictic expressions as they may refer to persons or objects in front of the speaker and addressee, or they have shared information about them.

4. Contrastive analysis

4.1 The Definite Article 'The, Al-'

The definite article 'the' in English and Arabic has the meaning of specification and it is a unique member of a class. It is used to define noun phrases and it cannot stand alone in an utterance. In English and Arabic it precedes the noun phrase. See (2.1.), (3.1.) as shown in table (1).

Table (1) The Definite Article in English and Arabic

English	Arabic
The	Al-

Examples are:

(25) al-wald-u   mjthd-un

     The-boy-NOM clever-NOM

     The boy is clever.

(26) ʔʃtri:-tu   al-bai:t-a

     bought-I   *the*-house-ACC

     I bought *the* house.

(27) ʔnðr   ala al-zhart-i

     look   at *the*-flower-GEN

     Look at *the* flower.

In the above examples the definite article consists of the elements of deictic expressions because it includes certain objects known by the speaker and the addressee, found in the context of situation, or in the real world.

4.2. Comparatives

As it is mentioned in sections (2.2.), (3.2.)   the general type of comparison is a comparison in terms of likeness and unlikeness, i.e., two things may be the same, similar, or different. Deictic expressions can be seen in this type of comparison obviously in the two compared languages. This is shown in table (2).

Table (2) Some Items of Comparatives in English and
Arabic

English	**Arabic**
Same	(nafsa) (ʕain)
Similar	(mʃabah)
Different	(muktlfa)

Examples are:

(28)   ha:ðh   al-fta:t-u   nafsha:
       this   *the*-girl-NOM   *same*
       This *is the same* girl.

(29) ʔʃtra   si:art-an   mumaθlt-an
      bought-he   car-ACC   *similar-ACC*
      He bought *a similar* car.

(30) kun-tu   atwqa   ʃks-an   axar
      was-I   expecting someone-ACC   *different*
      I was expecting someone *different*.

The example (28) could mean "the same girl we saw the day after yesterday, or before, the example (29) could mean "a similar car to yours", and the example (30) could mean "someone different from you". In other words, the above examples may be compared with objects in the real world, or within the context of situation.

5. Conclusion

The definite article in the two languages is deictic expression which habitually refers and specifies to objects known by the speaker and the addressee , and the definite article appears at the beginning of the noun phrase.

Some kinds of comparatives can be used as deictic expressions. General comparison for instance, is a comparison in terms of likeness and unlikeness, that is two things may be the same, similar or different and deictic expressions can be seen clearly in this type of comparison because it is made with objects in the real world.

In the above examples, The comparison demonstrated some situations context of similarity between English and Arabic in deictic expressions, and this result has supported to extent the concept of universality in human natural languages.

If we parallel any two of human natural languages from the point of view of their structure we see that in spite of their great variety they show remarkable similarities. Even the analogy made was between the language of primitive peoples and the languages of highly developed civilized peoples. There are striking correspondences within their variety. In that they all share the

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same principles, i.e., they all have phonemes, morphemes, words, sentences, and certain types of sentences with different parts of speech, … etc.

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(Contrastive Study)

المستخلص

أن المادة النظرية في الدراسة الحالية مساعدة لمن يحتاج إلى فهم بعض العناصر المختلفة من العبارات الاشارية (Deictic Expressions).

و أنها تتناول دراسة (أداة التعريف "ال" وبعض مراجع المقارنة) في اللغة الإنجليزية واللغة العربية ، حيث تهدف الدراسة إلى التحقيق بالطرق التي يتم تحديد هذه العبارات الاشارية (Deictic Expressions) والتعريف بها في اللغتين المذكورتين أعلاه ، فهي محاولة لإظهار أوجه الشبه والاختلاف القائمة بينهما على المستوى النحوي والدلالي.

حيث توثر أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين هاتين اللغتين على عملية التعلم و التدريس لدى المتعلمين العرب لعبارات الإشارة في اللغة الانجليزية وكذلك في ترجمة العبارات الاشارية من اللغة الانجليزية إلى اللغة العربية وبالعكس.

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