

## Exploring Hindko Indexicals: A Pragmatic Analysis with Implications for Language Teaching

Mir Ahsan Javed<sup>1</sup>, Maqddus Mahroof<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Ashar Fyyaz<sup>3</sup>  
Khawaja Umer Rashid<sup>4</sup>

Department of English, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan

[miraahsanjaved@gmail.com](mailto:miraahsanjaved@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

[maqddusmahroofkhan@gmail.com](mailto:maqddusmahroofkhan@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>

[muhammadasharfayyaz@gmail.com](mailto:muhammadasharfayyaz@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>

[rashid.umer291@gmail.com](mailto:rashid.umer291@gmail.com)<sup>4</sup>

Received : February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024    Accepted : February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024    Published : February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### Abstract

The study aims to address the challenges faced by English language teachers and learners in multilingual contexts by examining the deictic expressions in Hindko, an under-documented and endangered language. In a world where linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened, documenting lesser-known languages like Hindko becomes imperative to preserve cultural heritage and enrich linguistic understanding. This research focuses on the comparative analysis of deictic expressions in Hindko and English, specifically exploring person, spatial, and temporal deixis. By elucidating the differences between these languages' deictic systems, the study aims to equip English language teachers with insights into potential pitfalls Hindko-speaking learners may encounter when acquiring English deixis. Moreover, the research identifies common errors made by Hindko-speaking learners and provides strategies for addressing these challenges in English language teaching. Additionally, the study enhances linguistic knowledge by delving into the intricacies of marking numbers and gender on Hindko indexical, offering learners and language teachers a deeper understanding of linguistic diversity and cultural nuances. Through its findings, this research contributes to the broader scope of English Language Teaching by fostering cross-linguistic awareness, promoting cultural sensitivity, and enhancing language instruction in diverse educational settings.

**Keywords:** Deixis; deictic expression\_indexical.

### INTRODUCTION

The significance of deixis extends to English Language Teaching (ELT), where educators recognize its importance in shaping learners' proficiency and communicative competence in English. By comparing deixis in different languages, such as Hindko and English, educators can

deepen their understanding of language structures and anticipate challenges Hindko-speaking learners may encounter in acquiring

Levinson (1983) describes that deixis includes:

- 1) Personal and possessive pronouns (I, my, mine, yours)
- 2) Demonstrative pronouns (this, that)
- 3) Spatial and temporal adverbs (here, there, now, then)
- 4) Articles (The)

The focus of this study will be personal, temporal, and spatial deixis because they are the most frequent forms used in the Hindko language. Deixis, a fundamental aspect of language pragmatics, plays a crucial role in language acquisition and communication. It involves the reference of words and expressions to the context of the utterance, as well as the time and place, and is essential for effective communication in any language (Imai, 2009).

Hindko, an under-documented and endangered language spoken in the Indian Subcontinent, serves as a case study for examining deixis in a multilingual context. It is spoken by nearly four million speakers primarily in north-eastern Pakistan, where it faces continuous pressure from dominant languages like Urdu and English (Rizwan & Butt, 2019). The Muzaffarabadi dialect of Hindko, widely spoken in Tehsil Patika, Tehsil Muzaffarabad, and number of other Tehsils, serve as the focus of this study.

The study aims to address the challenges posed by language shift and endangerment in multilingual environments, where dominant languages influence the usage and status of indigenous languages (Campbell, 1994). Despite efforts to preserve linguistic diversity, an estimated 90% of the world's languages are at risk of disappearing by the end of the 21st century (UNESCO, 2003). Hindko, like many other languages, faces the threat of language death due to lack of language use, prestige, institutional support, and power (Ali & Khan, 2021).

Previous research on Hindko has primarily focused on its phonological system and verbal phrase structure (Awan & Elahi Bakssh, 1971), with limited attention given to pragmatic aspects such as deixis. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of deixis expressions in Hindko, particularly focusing on personal, temporal, and spatial deixis.

Moreover, comparative linguistic studies have identified lexical similarities and differences among languages spoken in the Greater Hindu Kush region, suggesting a long history of contact and influence between these languages (Venetz, 2019). Understanding the linguistic dynamics of this region, including the interaction between Hindko and other Indo-Aryan languages, is crucial for elucidating the patterns of language shift and maintenance. The establishment of Gandara Hindko Board (1993) has proved much beneficial in drawing attention towards this language and for the promotion and preservation of Hindko language. Due to its elaborate case system, Hindko has a quiet flexible word order, but SOV is the canonical word order in Hindko, like Urdu and Punjabi (Raja, et al 2011). This flexible word order can be a source of disparities and hindrance in learning any foreign language. Deictic expressions are among the first to be learned by children while learning any language (Yule, 1996).

The literature mentioned above indicates that deixis is very important in language teaching, and has received much attention from researchers of the world in different languages, throughout the modern epoch. Although linguists have studied this pragmatic aspect in detail, but several unexplored facets including the different behavior of deictic words in different languages, how and why they hinder second language acquisition is a loophole that need further research and study in respective languages. Research has been done on different aspects of Hindko language like

its phonology and the influence of other languages on it, but a grey area is still present i.e. Deictic in Hindko language and how gender is marked on them. There is a limited study undertaken and published regarding deictic expressions in Hindko. However, no study offers an in-depth description of the Hindko indexical and their role in learning. So, the authors have conscientiously studied and analyzed this aspect in detail.

## METHODS

This section outlines the methodology employed to investigate the nature and characteristics of deixis in the Muzaffarabadi dialect of the Hindko language. It elucidates the data source and procedure utilized for data analysis.

### Data Source and Procedure

The data for this study stems from a descriptive analysis, contrastive examination, and collaborative discussions among the authors, three of whom are native speakers of Hindko and two of Pahari language. These discussions centered on sentence structure in Hindko, the usage of deictic expressions in English compared to their Hindko equivalents, and the nuances of marking number and gender on personal deixis. Additionally, to deepen our understanding of concepts such as deixis and deictic expressions, various academic sources including books, research papers, theses, and online resources were consulted. These references are cited at the end of the article rather than within the text to streamline readability.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Data Analysis

This section delves into the analysis of deixis in the Muzaffarabadi dialect of the Hindko language, focusing on three main types: person, temporal, and spatial deixis. The analysis includes examples to illustrate how number and gender are marked in Hindko when deictic expressions are employed. The analysis provides insights into how deixis operates in Hindko, facilitating a better understanding for English language teachers and learners.

### Person Deixis in Hindko

Person deixis concerns the utterance of the speaker. These deictic words refer to persons. This includes first and second-person pronouns which are considered as primary deictic words and third-person pronouns which are considered as secondary deictic words.

Person pronouns with different cases are analyzed with examples in both English and Hindko languages (Romanized form).

#### (a) First Person

First Person Pronouns: Refer to the person speaking. It is the grammaticalization of the speaker's reference to himself/herself. (I, me, mine, we, our, us).

#### 1. "Subjective case"

I am going. (mein juldān/juldi ān) **Male or Female, Singular**

We are going. (asyn juldī ān/juldian) **Male or Female, Plural**

(In the subjective case of the first-person pronoun, Hindko's deictic word is "*mein*" for both male and female in the case of singular and "*asyn*" in the case of plural. So gender is not marked on the deictic word, but is marked on the verb.)

#### 2. "Possessive case"

Give me my pen. (marā pen muko dy) **Singular Male**  
Give me my cycle. (marī cycle muko dy) **Singular Female**  
My biscuits are tasty. (mary bisct mazy day hyn) **Plural Male**  
My cows are beautiful. (marian gaeyan sunryan en) **Plural Female**

(In the possessive case of the first-person pronoun, Hindko deictic words are “*marā*”, “*marī*”, “*mary*” and “*marian*” for singular male, singular female, plural male and plural female respectively. So, the gender is marked on deictic words and only context can help a listener to determine the gender.)

### 3. “Objective case”

He killed me. (us muko marya) **Male or Female, Singular**  
He beat us. (us asanko marya) **Male or Female, Plural**

(In the objective case of first-person pronoun, Hindko deictic words are “*muko*” and “*asanko*” for singular (male/female) and plural (male/female) respectively. Here gender is neither marked on the deictic word nor the main verb, instead, it is ignored and depends completely on pragmatic context.)

### (b) Second Person

Second Person Pronouns: Refer to the person spoken to. It is the speaker’s reference to one or more addressee. (You, your, you).

#### 1. Subjective case:

You run fast. (tuun tez dorda/dordi hyn) **Male or Female, Singular**  
You all run fast. (tusyn tez dordy/dordian ho.) **Male or Female, Plural**

(In the subjective case of the second person pronoun, Hindko deictic word is “*tuu-nsilent*”, for singular (male/female) and “*tusyn*” for plural (male/female). Here gender is marked on the main verb instead of the deictic word.)

#### 2. Possessive case:

Your lie is exposed. (tura chuth pkry gea a) **Singular Male**  
Your lies are exposed. (tury chuuth pakrey gy hen) **Plural Male**  
Your chair is broken. (turi kursi paj gai a) **Singular Female**  
Your chairs are broken. (turian kursian paj gean hen) **Plural Female**

(In the possessive case of the second person pronoun, Hindko deictic words are “*tura*”, “*turi*”, “*tury*” and “*turian*” for singular male, singular female, plural male and plural female respectively. Here gender is marked on the deictic word.)

#### 3. Objective case:

I will beat you. (mein tuko marsan) **Male or Female, Singular**  
The police will find you. (police tusan ko tuund kinsi) **Male or Female, Plural**

(In the objective case of second person pronoun, Hindko deictic words are “*tuko*” for singular (male/female) and “*tusan*” for plural (male/female). Gender is purely context-dependent here and cannot be determined from deictic words or main verb.)

(c) **Third Person**

Third Person Pronouns: Refer to the person spoken about. It is the indication of the persons or entities which are neither the speaker nor the addressee (he, him, his, she, her, it, its, they, them, etc.). Describing individuals or entities not involved in the conversation, third-person pronouns vary based on proximity and gender in subjective and possessive cases. Gender marking is context-dependent in its objective cases.

**1. Subjective case:**

He is eating an apple. (ey/o saib khenda a) **Singular Male**

She is eating an apple. (ey/o saib khendi a) **Singular Female**

They are eating an apple. (ey/o, saib khendy/khendian hyn) **Male or Female, Plural**

(In the subjective case of the third person pronoun, Hindko deictic words are “ey” for proximal singular (male/female) and “o” for distal singular (male/female). However for plural “inna” for proximal, and “unna” for distal is used. However, “ey”/“o” of third-person singular pronouns is also used for third- person plural pronouns. Gender is marked on a verb instead of the deictic word. Whether the person is proximal or distal, will be determined from a pragmatic context only.)

**2. Possessive case:**

His shoes are black. (esdy/usdy boot kaly hyn) **Male, Singular**

Her shoes are black. (esdy/usdy boot kaly hyn) **Female, Singular**

Their shoes are black. (endy/undy boot kaly hyn) **Male or Female, Plural**

(In possessive case of third person pronoun, Hindko deictic words are “esdy”, “usdy”, “indy” and “undy” for proximal singular (male/female), distal singular (male/female), proximal plural (male/female) and distal plural (male/female) respectively. Here gender can be determined from a pragmatic context only.)

**3. Objective case:**

The lion killed him/her. (shera esko/usko marya) **Male or Female, Singular**

The lion killed them. (shera inako/unako marya) **Male or Female, Plural**

(In the objective case of third person pronoun, Hindko deictic words are “esko”, “usko”, “inako” and “unako” for proximal singular (male/female), distal singular (male/female), proximal plural (male/female) and distal plural (male/female) respectively. Gender is purely context-dependent here and cannot be determined from a deictic word or main verb.)

**Temporal Deixis in Hindko**

Temporal deixis refers to time. Every utterance is delivered in a specific place, likewise, every utterance is delivered in a particular time. This time specification is told through the temporal deixis. These are concerned with the time specification. Like other deictic expressions temporal deixis also depends on knowing the relevant time for the understanding of the utterance. Temporal deixis denotes time and is crucial for understanding utterances. Hindko utilizes specific terms to convey temporal information, such as "kal" for yesterday and "ajh" for today, with examples illustrating their usage.

In Hindko terminologies used for temporal deixis are:

- Yesterday (kal)  
Yesterday, I was in Lahore. (Kal mein lore asan).
- Tomorrow (enry vala kal)  
I will come tomorrow. (Mein kal aysan).
- Day after tomorrow (parsuun)  
Naila will visit her mother the day after tomorrow. (Naila apni mau dy khar parsu julsi).
- Today (ajh)  
It's hot today. (Ajh garmi a).
- Tonight (ratyn)  
We will watch a movie tonight. (ratyn asyn film dekhsan)
- Next Week (agly hafty)  
The papers are starting from next week. (Paper agly hafty shru hosan).

### 1. Spatial Deixis in Hindko

Spatial deixis refers to place, also known as space or place deixis, they tell how the place of the utterance is being specified because every utterance is delivered in a specific place. Spatial deixis are used to specify the particular and relative location of utterance. In spatial deixis, the location or the place from the speaker's perspective can be sometimes fixed mentally as well as physically.

In Hindko most commonly used spatial indexical are:

“Etha” and “Utha”, “Aran” and “Paran”, “Uta” and “Tala”, “Agga” and “Pecha”.

#### Proximal: Etha

e.g. When he comes here, I will talk to him. (Jadu o etha aya me gal karsa.) It's too much hot here. (Etha much garmi a aj kal.)

(Near the speaker's location or moving towards the speaker's location)

#### Distal: Utha

e.g. I have gone there. (Mein utha gea da asan.)

It is better to stay at home instead of going there. (Utha genry kolo acha a mw khar tika revan.)

(Far from the speaker's location or moving away from the speaker's location)

The place of “come” and “go” when they act as deictics in English is filled by “aran” and “paran” in Hindko.

- Aran

e.g. Come here. (Aran a.)

(It refers to movement towards the speaker.)

- Paran

Go away. (Paran jul.)

(It refers to movement away from the speaker.)

English makes use of only two spatial adverbs “here” and “there”. In older texts of English “younder” (more distant from the speaker), “thither” (to that place) and “thence” (from that place) were also used, but in Hindko, besides proximal and distal terms there are also deictics for right, left, up and down with respect to speaker.

- Right: Sajy

e.g. I live in the house on your right side. (mein tury sajy syda valy khara bey rehnda han.)

- Left: Khaby

e.g. There is a street on your left. (tury khaby sayd gali a.)

- Up: Utta

e.g. He lives on the upper side of the street. (O gali dey utta aly pasy renda a.)

- Down: Tala

e.g. Look down. (Tala dekh.)

## FINDINGS

This section presents the findings and the results of the present study. Apart from different sentence structures in Hindko i.e. flexible and English (SOV), there are many differences in two languages.

**Sentence Structure Variation:** Hindko has a flexible sentence structure and normally employs a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) sentence structure, while English follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) pattern. This structural contrast influences the positioning and function of deictic expressions in both languages. This is one of the reasons of hindrance in learning a foreign language.

**Gender Marking Differences:** In Hindko, gender marking predominantly occurs on verbs rather than on deictic expressions, contrasting with English where gender is typically marked on both deictic expressions and nouns. This grammatical distinction underscores the linguistic divergence between the two languages, and can hamper language learning or even act as a barrier in second language acquisition.

**Number Marking Similarities:** Both Hindko and English utilize noun marking for number, although with occasional exceptions. This shared feature in number marking facilitates comprehension but underscores the necessity for learners to grasp the intricacies of each language's grammatical framework.

**Pragmatic Context Dependency:** Gender determination in Hindko can depend on contextual factors, with gender sometimes unmarked on deictic words or the main verb. This emphasizes the pragmatic nature of language use and emphasizes the importance of context in interpretation.

These findings underscore the importance of understanding linguistic variation in language teaching contexts, particularly in cross-linguistic comparisons between Hindko and English which can be very useful for English Language instructors.

**Table 1: Person Deixis in Hindko and comparison with English**

		Subjective		Possessive		Objective	
		Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Person (Speaker)</b>	<b>Singular</b>	I (mein)	I (mein)	My (mara)	My (mari)	Me (muko)	Me (muko)
	<b>Plural</b>	W (asyn)	W (asyn)	Our (asta)	Our (asti)	Us (asanko)	Us (asanko)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Person (Listener)</b>	<b>Singular</b>	You (tuu-n(silent))	You (tuu-n(silent))	Your (tura)	Your (turi)	You (tuko)	You (tuko)
	<b>Plural</b>	(tusyn)	(tusyn)	(tury)	(turian)	(tusanko)	(tusanko)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Person</b>	<b>Singular</b>	He P: (ey)es D: (oo)us	S he P: (eye)s D: (oo)us	Hi s P: (esta) D: (usta)	Her P: (esti) D: (usti)	Him P:(esko) D: (usko)	Her P:(esko) D: (usko)
	<b>Plural</b>	They P: (ey/ina) D: (o/una)	They P: (ey/ina) D: (o/una)	Their P: (inda) D: (unda)	Their P: (indi) D: (undi)	Them P: (inako) D: (unako)	Them P:(inako) D: (unako)
	<b>Indefinite</b>	It P: Ey D: oo	It P: Ey D: oo	It's P: Esdi D: osdi	It's P: Esdi D: osdi	It P: Esko D:osko	It P:Esko D:osko

Table 1 presents a comprehensive comparative overview of person deixis in Hindko and English, elucidating the disparities in gender and proximity marking between the two languages, by understanding which a language teacher can find where language learners are going to commit mistakes.

**Sub findings**

Analysis of personal deixis enabled authors to predict that these will cause interference while learning deixis in English because these facets are not present in the Hindko indexical.

- 1) Interference in English Learning: Analysis of personal deixis suggests that differences in Hindko indexical may lead to interference in English learning, particularly in areas where Hindko exhibits unique features not present in English.
- 2) Gender Marking in First Person Possessive Case: Hindko distinguishes between masculine and

feminine genders in the first person possessive case, whereas English utilizes the same deictic words for both genders (e.g., "my book," "our house").

- 3) Gender Marking in Second Person Possessive Case: Similarly, Hindko differentiates between masculine and feminine genders in the second person possessive case, while English maintains consistency with the use of "your" for both genders (e.g., "your books," "your houses").
- 4) Gender and Proximal/Distal Differentiation in Third Person Possessive Case: Hindko exhibits distinctions in the third person possessive case based on both gender and proximal/distal terms, whereas English typically uses "his/her" for both proximal and distal references (e.g., "his book," "her house").
- 5) Gender and Proximal/Distal Differentiation in Third Person Plural Possessive Case: Hindko further differentiates between masculine and feminine genders and proximal/distal terms in the third person plural possessive case, unlike English which employs "their" for both proximal and distal references (e.g., "their book," "their shirts").
- 6) Consistency in Third Person Plural Possessive Case: Interestingly, while Hindko maintains distinctions based on gender and proximal/distal terms in the third person plural possessive case, English utilizes "their" consistently for both genders and references (e.g., "their hen," "their dog").

These sub-findings underscore the nuanced differences between Hindko and English in terms of gender marking and proximal/distal differentiation in possessive case deictic expressions. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for language learners and educators to navigate linguistic variation effectively.

## DISCUSSION

Within English language teaching, gender-neutral pronouns pose ongoing challenges due to their ambiguous usage across different genders. In contrast, Hindko demonstrates distinct expressions for gender, person, number, and case, as delineated in Table 1 of the Findings section. This linguistic diversity underscores the richness inherent in the Hindko language, providing educators and learners with valuable insights into language variation and expression. It is crucial for educators to acknowledge and embrace this linguistic diversity, encouraging the preservation and transmission of languages like Hindko to future generations. By doing so, English language educators contribute to the broader goals of linguistic preservation and cultural heritage conservation within the context of language education.

## CONCLUSION

The exploration of Hindko deixis underscores significant disparities, particularly within person deixis, where nuances in gender, number, and case diverge from English conventions. Concurrently, temporal and spatial deixis primarily manifest in distinct terminologies. These findings not only illuminate the inherent variability of deictic expressions across languages but also underscore the vital role of comprehensive linguistic analyses. Moreover, this study underscores the indispensable value of documenting endangered languages like Hindko, particularly within the purview of English language teaching. By shedding light on these linguistic intricacies, this research contributes to the broader discourse on language preservation and acquisition, offering valuable insights for educators and researchers alike.

## DEDICATION:

This paper is dedicated to Meritorious Professor Dr. Nadeem Haider Bukhari (Department of English, University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir), whose unwavering guidance and support has been invaluable to language teachers and researchers like Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan, Dr. Haroon-ur-Rashid, Dr. Ayesha Sohail, Dr. Zafeer Hussain Kiani, Dr. Shahida Khalique, Dr. Tahira Jabeen, Dr. Sabir Hussain Naqvi, Mr. Hamid Zia, Mr. Malik Hafeez Awan and Mr. Israr-ul-haq Nasir (Ex. Director Youth Empowerment Program).

## REFERENCES

- Ali, Z., Ibrar, H. K., & Khan, T. (2021). Language Shift and Maintenance: The Case Study of Hindko Community in Peshawar, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language* 7(2).
- Bhatt, D. N. S. (2004). *Pronouns*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- DAWN. (2016). Analysis: Hindko Matters. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1165113>
- Gulf News. (2019, April 4). "Gandhara Hindko Academy Launches Hindko Language Android App for Children."
- Imai, S. (2009). *Spatial deixis: How finely do languages divide space?* Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Publishing.
- Kiani, Z. H., Khan, A. Q., Yasmin, M., & Iqbal, M. J. (2020). Language Shift in Muzaffarabad: A Case study of Hindko and Kashmiri. *Kashmir Journal of Language Research*, 23(1).
- Khalique, S. (2018). *Pahari Language of Azad Kashmir: A corpus Based Grammatical Description* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir). University Press.
- Khalique, S., Bukhari, N. H., & Ahmad, M. (2022). The Role of Case Marking in Derivation of Pahari Clauses: A Minimalist Analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Languages and Translation Studies*, 10(1), 110-125.
- Khalique, S., Bukhari, N. H., & Jabeen, T. (2022). A Morpho-Syntactic Analysis of Pahari Pronouns. *Kashmir Journal of Language Research*, 17(1), 69-89.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Raja, N. A., & Sohail, A. (2011). A Brief Introduction of Hindko Language. *Language in India*,
- Sabina, M., & Malik, M. (2017). Role of Hindko in Multilingual Community: Issue of Language Choice and Use. *Kashmir Journal of Language Research*, 20(1).
- Shah, S. H., Hamid, N., Khalique, S., & Shafi, S. (2020). Person Deixis in Urdu: A Pragmatic Analysis. *Kashmir Journal of Language Research*, 23(1). Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1287463/call-to-set-up-hindko-studies-dept-in-hazara-university>
- The News. (2011, July 8). "Hindko Alphabets" List Submitted to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board.
- Wales, K. (1996). *Personal Pronouns in Present-day English*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.