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# Social Deictics in the Arsi-Bale Dialect of Oromo

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## Abstract

The main objective of this study is to investigate and describe the forms and functions of social deictics in Arsi-Bale dialect of Oromo<sup>3</sup> which is spoken in the southeastern part of Ethiopia. Social deictics are the means to encode verbal pointing in a speech event taking into account the relationship or social status between a speaker, an addressee, and a non-participant. The study is a qualitative one for which data were collected through note-taking of free language use, elicitation and introspection. The findings show that social deictics in the dialect are encoded lexically and grammatically. While relational kinship terms (e.g., *ʔabba*: ‘father/dad’), expressions signalling social status (e.g. *ʃe:ka* ‘sheikh’) and personal names are used for lexical encoding, plural personal pronouns and the corresponding agreement marking on predicate verbs are used for grammatical encoding. Among some speakers of the dialect, reference to certain phenomena which are considered sacred (water, fire, grass, etc.) is encoded with the third person plural agreement marking of the predicate verb.

[Keywords: absolute, honorific, kinship term, relational, social deictic]

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<sup>3</sup> Oromo is the name of the people; it is also used for the language in the literature. Otherwise, the speakers of the language call it *Afaan Oromoo* ‘language of Oromo’; literally, mouth of Oromo.

### Section One: Preliminary

This section comprises a brief introduction about the subject matter of deixis in general and social deictics in particular. Reviews of theoretical as well as related works on the subject have also been treated. The study is qualitative and Basic Linguistic Theory is the model that the study employed. Levinson's (1983) model of the classification of deictics has also been adopted.

Deixis is the way reference is made in an utterance to a specific element in relation to the speaker or addressee as well as the specific place or time. The origin of the term deixis is a Greek word which means 'pointing' or indicating (Lyons 1977: 636). The linguistic unit employed for such a reference is deictic. The latter is also used as an adjective (Levinson 1983:54). There are five major deictic types: place, time, person, discourse and social deictics (Fillmore 1971:38; Levinson, 1983:62; Cruse 2000:319). Among studies available on deixis are: Fillmore (1971), Lyons (1977), Anderson & Keenan (1985), Diessel (1999), Saeed (2003) and Yule (2006). Apart from Fillmore (1971), most of the other studies devote a chapter or just a section. With respect to studies on deixis in the Ethiopian languages, mention could be made of Baye and Rawda (2007) on Silt'e, Hirut (2007) on Gamo, Dessalegn (2012) on Kambaata, Aweke (2012) on Ezha, Mi'eessaa, Heimstead and Clamons (2012) and Shimelis (2020) on Oromo and Dereje (2013) on Hadiyya. While the focus of those on Oromo is spatial deixis that of the rest is one deixis in general.

The subject of this study, Oromo, belongs to the Cushitic family and is spoken mainly in Ethiopia. It is also spoken in northern Kenya and on the periphery of Somalia bordering Ethiopia. It is an SOV (Subject-Object-Verb language) language written in the Latin script.

To lay the ground for investigation of social deictics in the Arsi-Bale dialect of Oromo, which is spoken in southeastern Ethiopia, we begin by defining the term social deixis. Usually, in a communicative situation, one implies in one's utterance the kind of relationship that exists between oneself and an addressee(s) or the status of the latter. That pointing expression which implies relationship or status is what is termed as social deixis. Thus, in the Oromo

variety under examination, socially deictic information, i.e., information pertaining to relation with or social status of an addressee or addressees is expressed lexically or grammatically. It is manifested through pronouns, agreement marking, titles, honorifics, forms of greeting, leave-taking, thanking, or identifying oneself or a counterpart are employed. Kinship terms, names, nicknames (combination of the latter two), euphemisms and dysphemisms are also ways in which socially deictic information is expressed (Fillmore 1971:76ff). Foley (1997:315) suggests that social deictics may also be signaled by diminutives, augmentatives, classifiers, auxiliaries and number distinctions.

### **Section Two: Methodology**

This study aims, specifically, to investigate how social deictics are encoded and used in the Arsi-Bale dialect of Oromo. The researchers, who are familiar with the dialect and who have also consulted native speakers, examine expressions that are of social deictic nature in light of the existing theoretical principles including those proposed by Lyons (1977), Fillmore (1971; 1975) and Levinson (1983).

The study is a qualitative one. The data were collected through note-taking of free language use, elicitation, and introspection. Basic Linguistic theory is the model used for this study. Three Oromo teachers were also consulted for verification of the data gathered; pertinent features were identified, analyzed and described. Two major types of social deictics viz lexical and grammatical were identified and dealt with. In the sections and subsections that follow, we shall describe and exemplify each one of them.

### **Section Three: Data Analysis and Discussion**

The data analysis and discussion have two subsections. Subsection 3 deals with the different lexical words which embody social deictic information. These are relative, absolute and lexical expressions that are used by the dialect speakers. Subsection 4 is concerned with the grammatical social deictics in which the use of different person pronouns and the agreement forms of verbs are discussed. The issue of politeness which is the non-verbal

aspect of social deictics is also treated in the same Subsection (4). Subsection 5 presents the conclusion of the study paper and makes a recommendation.

### **3.1 Lexical Social Deictics**

These are lexical items with social deictic implications in specific situations. According to Levinson (1979:20 & 1983:90), there are two basic kinds of social deixis: relational and absolute. Relational social deixis concerns relationship (based on blood or marriage) between a speaker and an addressee or a non-participant related to the speech event. On the contrary, absolute social deixis is a type of addressing based on the social status or characteristic of a referent. In other words, it is a type of addressing usually reserved for addressees of higher rank. Both relational and absolute deixis are of formal nature. Opposed to them is informal social deixis (Levinson 1983: 90f.).

In the dialect under investigation, apart from lexical subclass of simple social deictics, there is a subclass that we termed as “enhanced social deictics”. The latter are amplified lexical items which were already signifying social deictics. Of the lexical social deictics, the simple ones are dealt with in section 3.1.1 and the enhanced in section 3.1.2.

#### **3.1.1 Simple Social Deictics**

As indicated above, the topic of simple social deictics concerns simple lexical items that are of social deictic significance. There are three subclasses that are respectively dealt with in the section: relational social deictics, absolute social deictics and informal social deictics.

##### **3.1.1.1 Relational Social Deictics**

In the Arsi-Bale dialect, relational deictic words; i.e. words signifying connection by blood or marriage, express politeness, closeness or respect. It is kinship terms that are used in such situations.

As suggested by Hale and Shrestha (1996: 403), kinship terms are divided into two: terms of address and terms of reference. The former ones are used to address (used for vocative purpose) whereas the latter ones are used to identify referents. The Arsi-Bale kinship terms in the table below, most of

which are also encountered elsewhere in the Oromo language, could be used to bear relational social deictic information. That is, they can have a deictic value when they are used for vocative or directly addressing a person.

<b>Kinship term</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>?abba:</i>	‘father’
<i>?a:jjɔ:</i>	‘mother’
<i>?ada:da:</i>	‘aunt’ (sister of one’s mother or father)
<i>?e:ssuma</i>	‘uncle’ (brother of one’s mother)
<i>?abbe:ra:</i>	‘uncle’ (brother of one’s father)
<i>?aka:kajju:</i>	‘grandfather’ (father of one’s mother or father)
<i>?akko:</i>	‘grandmother’ (mother of one’s mother or father)
<i>?aba:bajju:</i>	‘great-grandfather’ (grandfather of one’s mother or father) <sup>4</sup>
<i>durbi:</i>	‘cousin’ (a child of one’s aunt or uncle)
<i>?obbole:tti:</i>	‘sister’
<i>?obbole:ssa</i>	‘brother’
<i>?a:ji guddo:</i>	‘stepmother’ (Lit. big mother) <sup>5</sup>
<i>sodda:</i>	‘father- in-law’
<i>sodda:ti:</i>	‘mother-in-law’

**Table 1: Kinship terms in Arsi-Bale deictics**

The above are relational kinship terms which are used either as address or reference terms. They have inbuilt socially deictic nature in that in their very form they communicate the kind of relationship that exists between conversation participants. That means for example when a speaker addresses somebody saying: *?e:ssuma* ‘uncle’, it is understood that the addressee is a brother of the speaker’s mother in Arsi-Bale dialect. Instead of directly addressing with a bare name, speakers use relational deictic kinship terms alone or in combination with the proper names.

<sup>4</sup> There is no special term for ‘great grandmother’ in the Arsi-Bale dialect.

<sup>5</sup> There is no special term for ‘stepfather’. He is addressed by stepchildren simply as *?aba:* ‘father’.

### 3.1.1.1.1 Kinship Terms of Addressing

As indicated above, a kinship term of address is used to address a relative who is a partner in a speech event or who is in the scene. Based on the type of relationship, the speakers of the dialect use appropriate forms of address as in the examples below. In example [1], the utterance is made by a child who addresses his/her father in a face-to-face situation.

- (1) *ʔabba:*      *jo:m*              *gal-t-e*  
 father          when              come.back.home-2S-PFV  
 ‘Dad, when did you come back home?’

The usage of the relational word *ʔabba:*, in the given specific situation, is deictic as it points to the father. It has a social implication in that it shows blood relationship between father and child. The child uses the kinship term without adding the name of the father.

The next example is another case of a speaker directly addressing his/her uncle.

- (2)      *ʔe:ssuma*                      *dif-n-e*  
          Uncle                      come-1PL-PFV  
          ‘Uncle, we have come.’

In the example, *ʔe:ssuma* ‘uncle’ is used as a face-to-face address by the speaker (a nephew or a niece). As in example [1], the speaker does not mention the name of the uncle along with the kinship term. That is a sign of respect.

Syntactically, address words assume relative independence (separated with a pause in speech and a comma in writing) from the rest of the components in a sentence. Pragmatically, to draw attention towards the proposition, it may precede the address term. The example below is a case in point.

- (3) *mutfá:-n*      *ke:ssan*<sup>6</sup>      *ʔe:ssa*      *de:m-ø-e*      *ʔada:da:*  
 son-NOM      your.PL      Where      go-3ms-PFV      aunt  
 ‘Where did your (HON) son go, auntie?’

In (3), the word that refers to the addressee, *ʔada:da* ‘aunt’, is at the end of the utterance. Note that the form of the possessive adjective *ke:ssan* ‘your’ is a plural of respect, not of number in this usage. It has been used here to signify respect.

One addresses one’s father simply as *ʔa:bba:* or *ʔa:bbiʔʔo:*; one’s mother as *ʔa:jjá*, *ʔa:jjó:*, *ʔa:ddo:* or *ʔa:jjiiʔʔo:*; one’s uncle (father’s brother) *ʔabbe:ra:*, etc. In the dialect under study, addressing a relative who is older than oneself by name or by name and kinship term, in a face-to-face interaction, is unusual and it would be considered disrespectful.

The case of one’s father-in-law and mother-in-law is different. One can mention neither his/her name nor his/her name with a kinship term. In a face-to-face encounter, one uses the second person plural pronoun. Unlike in the case of the kinship terms of blood relatives, *sodda:* ‘father-in-law’ and *sodda:ti:* ‘mother-in-law’ are used only in the absence of the individuals in reference to them, in which case they are not deictic (see subsection 3.1.1.2).

In the Arsi-Bale community, it is customary that adult strangers should be addressed by the kinship terms. In the example below, the addressee is an elderly woman who is a stranger and not one’s mother. Yet, she is addressed as *ʔa:jjó:* ‘mother.’

- (4)      *ʔa:jjó:*                      *se:n-a:*  
          mother                      come.in-2PL.HON.IMPV  
          ‘Mother, come in.’

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<sup>6</sup>The proper glossing of *ke:ssan* is your.PL. But, in the example, the plural number is employed to signify respect; hence, glossed as HON.

In this subsection, we saw how kinship terms play social deictic roles in specific addressing situations. In the next subsection, we will look at the role kinship terms play in reference.

### 3.1.1.1.2 Kinship Terms of Reference

As pointed out above, for reference to a subject who is not a participant of a linguistic interaction that could be addressed directly, one may use, again, a kinship term or a kinship term with the name of the individual. In the example below, someone tells an addressee that a person passing by is his uncle (his father's brother). The utterance is made in a manner that appears to be pointing to the passer by with the kinship term.

- (5)            *ʔabbe:ra:-da*  
                     uncle-COP  
                     ‘(My) uncle.’

Insofar as the individual referred to is unambiguously pointed to, the kinship term, *ʔabbe:ra:* ‘uncle’, has a social deictic value of a reference type.

In example (6), the reference is made with the kinship term *ʔabbe:ra:* ‘uncle’ followed by the name of the individual, *dʒejla:n,*

- (6)            *ʔabbe:ra:*                                *dʒejla:n-i*  
                     uncle    Jeylan-COP  
                     ‘(That is) Uncle Jeylan.’

In essence, example (6) repeats example [5] except that the referent is more specified by adding the name of the referent to the kinship term.

Using the kinship term along with the individual’s name and not the name alone shows the respect the speaker has for the person referred to. In such a situation, using only the individual’s name is disrespectful and it is not encountered in the Arsi-Bale community.



Concerning relational social deixis in the Arsi-Bale dialect, we could generalize that it is expressed through kinship terms and also with names of addressees or referents added. But in the case of father-in-law and mother-in-law, their names cannot be mentioned. They are, rather, addressed through the second-person plural pronoun and verbs inflected for the second person plural as we shall see in section 3.

### 3.1.1.2 Absolute Social Deictics

As pointed out earlier, absolute social deictic expressions are those reserved for individuals with higher status. A typical case is an address concerning a royal person; say, a king or a queen. While the royal person addresses self as ‘We’, he/she is addressed by others as ‘Your Majesty’ (Levinson 1983: 91). The rank of the individual requires such an absolute term of address. In the Arsi-Bale dialect, the following absolute terms of address, which refer to individuals of higher social positions, are in social deictic use. Most of them are used either alone or preceding the name(s) of the addressee(s). In the following table, the expressions would become absolute social deictics when used alone or with the addressee’s name(s) in specific contexts.

Term	Gloss
<i>kabadžamo:</i>	‘your honor/ excellency!’
<i>kabadžamto:ta</i>	‘your honors/excellencies’
<i>dža:l</i>	‘dear’
<i>dža:lle:wwan</i>	‘dear ones’
<i>je:ka</i>	Applied to one who has religious knowledge
<i>ha:dži:</i>	Applied to one who paid a visit to the Kaʔaba in Saudi Arabia
<i>ʔobbo:</i>	‘mister’
<i>ʔa:dde:</i>	‘madam/miss’ married/unmarried)
<i>dubre:</i>	‘miss’ unmarried)
<i>manguddo:ta</i>	‘elders’
<i>ʔabba:</i> + name of firstborn	‘Jamal’s father’ etc.
<i>ha:da</i> + name of firstborn	‘Bontu’s mother’ etc.
<i>barsi:sa:</i> (m.)/ <i>barsi:stu:</i> (f.)	‘teacher’
<i>dža:rs-ota</i>	‘elderly men’

**Table 2: Potential absolute social deictic terms**

Using any one of the above expressions before a person’s name in a specific situation would indicate his/her social status: age, rank, and position.

In each of the two instances in example [7] below, it is assumed that the speaker addresses, respectively, a group of *abba gadas* and an individual called Sheikh Ibrahim.

- |     |    |  |                                    |
|-----|----|--|------------------------------------|
| (7) | a) | <i>kabadzam-to:ta</i><br>respected-PL.HON<br>‘Respected Abba Gadas!’ | <i>ʔabba: gada:</i><br>father gada |
|     | b) | ]e:k <sup>7</sup><br>sheikh<br>‘Sheikh Ibrahim!’                     | <i>ʔibrahim</i><br>Ibrahim         |

In [7a], the address term *kabadzam-to:ta* ‘respected ones’ refers to a group of *abba gadas* possibly sitting in front of the speaker. Hence, the address term with a specific target is a social deictic. Similarly, in [7b], ]e:k .refers to a person called Ibrahim and who is addressed by the speaker. Again, the address term ]e:k is in a social deictic function. In both [7a] and [7b], the terms are absolute social deictics pointing to the addressees with the status indicated.

As hinted above, absolute social deictics are used from formal socio-cultural perspectives. They are used for addressing individuals who are of respected status in the community whereas office-related terms are reserved for addressing authorities.

In example [8a] below, *ha:da dʒama:l* ‘Jamal’s mother’ refers to a woman whose first son bears the name Jamal. Such addressing is honorific. Example [8b], *ʔabba: dʒama:l* ‘Jamal’s father’ is a similar honorific addressing.

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<sup>7</sup> In the Arsi-Bale dialect (possibly also elsewhere among Muslem speakers of the language), the word is ]e:ka; but, when a name follows it, the final vowel is dropped; e.g., ]e:ka > ]e:k *Ibrahim*. The origin is Arabic, *sheikh*.

- (8) a) *ha:da* *dʒama:l*  
Mother Jamal  
'Jamal's mother!'
- b) *ʒabba:* *dʒama:l*  
father Jamal  
'Jamal's father!'

Each of the two expressions is a social deictic in that it points to a specific individual who has a child or children and is privileged to be addressed through the name of the firstborn. Addressing a person through the name of her/his firstborn is being respectful. In both (8a and 8b) the expressions used are absolute social deictic when used by a speaker who does not have any blood relationship with the addressee. However, when used by a speaker who is a relative of the addressee, the expression is both relative and absolute social deictic.

### 3.1.1.3 Informal Social Deictics

Fillmore (1971:76) says that social deixis deals with the different ways in which names, titles, and kinship terms vary in form and usage according to the relationships among the participants in a communication process. Linguistic utterances as social acts, insults, greetings and/or expressions of gratitude are also aspects of social deixis in their occurrence in specific situations.

The use of a bare name for a vocative purpose with no concern for politeness is attested among speakers of the dialect under investigation. This stems from the high position of the speaker in relation to the addressee. Such a speaker is heard using slang or even taboo words. This happens especially when the user of such expressions wants to vent his/her emotion against individuals he/she is dealing with. In addressing his rebellious son, a father may utter the following words.

- (9) *gurba:* *ʔas* *ko:tt-u*  
 boy. (INS) Here come-2s.IMPV  
 ‘Boy (you), come here!’

Normally, a father does not address his son simply as *gurba*: ‘boy (you)’. He does so, when he is angry or unhappy about the behavior of his son and wants to belittle him. Otherwise, under a normal circumstance, he would say *gurba: kijja* ‘my boy’ or *ʔilma kijja* ‘my son’.

A disgruntled husband may also address his wife in the manner seen below.

- (10) *ʔintala:* *ʔidʒo:lle:-n* *sunni:n* *ʔe:ssa* *dʒir-t-i?*  
 wife.(INS)<sup>8</sup> children- those.NOM where exist-3fs-  
 NOM IPFV?  
 ‘Wife, (INS) where are those children?’

The utterance is an expression of discontent by an angry husband. He used the word *ʔintala*: ‘girl’, in which case it has a demeaning sense. The utterance demonstrates the superiority or power of the husband in relation to his wife.

Social deictics of the sort seen above are informal in view of the fact that they are unceremonious and, in some cases, entailing even interpretations of insult. With regard to this Fillmore (1971: 40) states that Social deixis includes such relationships between participants in a communicative event where people choose to use insulting speech.

### 3.1.2 Enhanced Social Deictics

In the Arsi-Bale dialect, enhancing lexical social deictics, especially those based on kinship terms and proper nouns, with endearment is a common practice. Accordingly, kinship terms, in a social deictic role, are suffixed with the endearment marker *-ʔʃʃo:*<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, names of individuals in deictic function are suffixed with *-u:*. In Table 3 below, the kinship terms in the left

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<sup>8</sup> The actual meaning of *ʔintala* is ‘girl/ daughter’. But, in the above utterance, it implies ‘Wife!’, which insinuates disrespect.

<sup>9</sup> The formative *-ʔʃʃo:*, which is used to mark endearment, is possibly a derivative of the singulative marker- *ʔʃʃa* (*nama* ‘person’ > *nam-i-ʔʃʃa* ‘the man (singled out)’).

column are considered social deictics with the assumption that each is uttered for a vocative purpose in a specific situation in which a speaker (deictic center) and an addressee are involved. With the formative *-ffo:* suffixed to each one of them, the social deictics in the left column have become enhanced social deictics in the right column, given that they occurred in the proper pragmatic contexts.

Social deictic	Gloss	Enhanced social deictic	Gloss
<i>ʔabba:</i>	‘father/Dad’	<i>ʔabbiʔffo:</i>	‘My (dear) father/dad!’
<i>ʔajja:</i>	‘mother/Mom’	<i>ʔajjiʔffo:</i>	‘My dear mother/ mom!’
<i>ʔada:da:</i>	‘auntie’	<i>ʔada:diʔffo:</i>	‘My dear auntie!’

**Table 3: Enhanced social deictics with *-ffo:***

The next table illustrates enhancement with the endearment formative *-u:* suffixed to proper nouns; i.e., to the names of male or female addressees. Again, the assumption is that each of the utterances was made in a specific pragmatic situation.

Proper noun	Enhanced social deictic	Gloss
<i>dʒama:l</i> (m.)	<i>dʒam-u:</i>	‘My beloved Jamal!’
<i>ʃamsijja:</i> (f)	<i>ʃa:ms-u:</i>	‘My beloved Shamsiyya!’
<i>kadir</i> (m)	<i>kad-u:</i>	‘My beloved Kadir!’
<i>hasan</i> (m)	<i>has-u:</i>	‘My beloved Hasan!’

**Table 4: Enhanced social deictics with *-u:***

The form of enhancement used here involves proper names with the endearment marker *-u* suffixed to each one of them. Social deictics marked with the endearment suffixes *-ffo:* and *-u:* could be used either as address or reference term. A name pronounced with the enhanced mode is reflective of the speaker’s warm attitude towards the addressee. In the case of endearment involving *-u:*, the names are phonetically reduced; usually to two syllables.

Enhanced social deictics play a very important role in engendering love and cohesion among the speakers of the dialect.

#### Section Four: Grammatical Social Deictics

Using grammatical means involving person and number suffixation for social deixis is a common practice. In this section, we shall examine how pronouns and predicates are used as social deictics.

The T/V phenomenon—as in French *tu* ‘you’ (informal) and *vous* ‘you’ (formal)—is the best known example in which socially deictic information is expressed in many languages of the world (Foley 1997: 314). In the dialect under investigation, the plural forms of the first, second, and third person pronouns and the corresponding agreements on verbs are used to encode social deixis. We shall examine each of these in the following sections.

##### 4.1. Honorific First Person Plural

An expression with which a speaker verbally shows their own social status in relation to an addressee or addressees is known as speaker honorific. That is usually expressed through the first person plural pronoun, commonly known as “royal ‘we’”, and the corresponding agreement marker. In the dialect under examination, the use of such a means to show one’s high status is not uncommon. Here is an example in which a speaker (who deems himself of a higher social status) refers to himself using the first-person plural form in his talk to his addressee(s).

- (11)    *nu*                                    *kale:ssa*                                    *duf-n-e*  
           we.NOM.HON                        yesterday                                come-1PL.HON-PFV  
           ‘We (HON) came yesterday.’

In the example, both the first-person plural pronoun *nu* ‘we’ and the predicate *duf-n-e* ‘we came’ carry socially deictic information. The speaker’s choice of the expressions denotes the speaker’s social status or power. Consequently, apart from pointing to the speaker, the pronoun and the corresponding agreement marker together pronounce that the speaker is of higher social status.

Besides, since Oromo is a pro-drop language, the subject pronoun could be omitted and the predicate could convey the same information; hence, *kale:ssa duf-n-e* ‘We came yesterday’. The subject pronoun is inferable from the agreement marking on the verb.

#### **4.2. Honorific Second Person Plural**

The second person plural, in tandem with a predicate, is used to address an addressee of higher social position in order to show respect. This is in a similar manner to what we have seen in 4.1 except that the addressing is in the second person plural instead of the first-person plural. In both cases, it is a single individual who is addressed with the grammatical plural markings because of status. In the following example, the subject that is marked for the second person plural is actually a second person singular addressee.

- (12)     *ɖisin*   *nama*   *ga:ri:*  
          you.2PL.NOM.HON                     person   good  
          ‘You (HON) are a good person.’

When reference is made to what a respected addressee possesses, a possessive adjective corresponding in number to the possessor pronoun is used. That is what is observed in the following example.

- (13)     *man-n-i*   *ke:ssan*   *ɖe:ssa*  
          house-NOM-EP                             your.2PL.HON                                 where  
          ‘Where is your (HON) house?’

The possessor in the example is pragmatically understood to be worthy of respect. Therefore, it is marked for the plural number which bears an honorific interpretation in the given situation.

The speaker may proceed to invite the addressee for coffee and utter the following.

- (14)     *buna*                    *dug-a:*  
          Coffee                 drink-2PL.HON.IMPV  
          ‘Let’s have coffee?’ (Lit. Drink coffee).

The predicate *dug-a:* which is inflected for the second person plural, has an interpretation of respect. The utterance is considered to have been made taking into account either age or another social factor, possibly rank, which is worthy of respect. It is rude if one fails to show due respect to a deserving person, unless one is alien to the culture of the community or deficient in communicative competence. In a situation where the addressees are more than one and command respect, the plural pronoun and/or the verb in agreement would serve both purposes of plurality and respect at the same time. Accordingly, depending on context, the construction in the above example, *buna dug-a:*, which means, literally, ‘(You.2s.HON) drink coffee’, could also be employed to mean ‘(You. 2PL.HON) drink coffee’. In the former case, the addressing is to a single respected individual, while in the latter, the addressing is to a group of respected individuals. The latter is also be applicable to a group which may not command respect. In terms of employing the plural number for honorific purpose, the effect is the same both in the second person, as discussed in this section, and in the third person, as seen in the next section.

### 4.3. Honorific Third Person Plural

In person deixis, the participant role of the first and the second person in a speech event is that of a speaker and an addressee. While the speaker identifies himself/herself as ‘I’, s/he identifies the addressee as ‘you’. The reference to ‘I’ and ‘you’ is direct and hence deictic. But in the case of the third person, who is normally a non-participant in a speech event and is talked about cannot be pointed to. When one utters ‘he’, ‘she’ or ‘they’, one is not pointing directly to the respective subject. Therefore, the pronouns are not normally deictic. However, as suggested, for instance by Yule (1996: 11), a third person form may be used where a second person fits. This could be exemplified by borrowing Yule’s own examples. In [15a] one ironically addresses a lazy person, while in [15b] one makes a potential accusation and in [15c] one makes a personal issue seem impersonal.



- (15) a) Would his highness like some coffee?  
 [To mean: ‘Do you like some coffee?’]
- b) Somebody didn’t clean up after himself.  
 [To mean: ‘You didn’t clean up after yourself.’]
- b) Each person has to clean up after himself or herself.  
 [To mean: ‘Each one of you has to clean up after yourself.’]

Using a third-person pronoun in place of a second-person pronoun is also observed occasionally in the Arsi-Bale dialect. In the example below, a mother addresses her male little kid in the third person as marked on the predicate.

- |      |                        |                |
|------|------------------------|----------------|
| (16) | <i>le:nf"-i-ɸɸ-ø-i</i> | <i>dɪf-ø-e</i> |
|      | lion-EP-SGV-NOM-EP     | come-3ms-PFV   |
|      | ‘The lion has come.’   |                |

The third person masculine singular marking on the predicate (*dɪfe* ‘he came’) actually refers to a second person. It is a case of addressing a second person in a humorous way, as if the mother announcing to the world the arrival of her little kid.

In a situation where a speaker uses a third-person pronoun to make a pointing reference to a non-participant, the third person pronoun as such would have a deictic value. For instance, the utterance below is a case of reference to an elderly person who is on the scene of a speech event but who is not a participant.

- |      |                              |                    |
|------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| (17) | <i>?isa:n</i>                | <i>?affe:r-ø-e</i> |
|      | them.HON                     | invite-1s-PFV      |
|      | ‘I have invited them (HON).’ |                    |

In the utterance above, the third-person plural is an honorific reference with a social deictic role. Unlike what we have seen concerning reference to a respected individual with a plural pronoun, one encounters, in the Arsi-Bale

dialect, a case where some speakers use the third person plural pronoun in a face-to-face communication. In [18a] below, a speaker utters a question by way of greeting a person in power. The speaker employs a verb inflected for the third person plural and a third person plural pronoun. S/he does so to imply esteem. In [18b], however, the respondent uses a verb inflected for the first-person singular with no implication of esteem to oneself.

- (18) a) *jo:m*            *duf-ø-an-ø*            *?isa:n*  
 When            come-3-PL.HON-PFV    2PL.HON  
 ‘When did you come?’ (Lit. When did they come?)
- b) *kale:ssa*        *duf-ø-e*  
 yesterday        come-1s-PFV  
 ‘I came yesterday.’

Unlike using the third-person plural pronoun for respect, there is a case where the third person masculine singular pronoun is employed for a taboo reason. In the Arsi-Bale community, a wife does not mention the name of her husband whether in his presence or in his absence. The next section deals with how a wife addresses her husband in his presence and refers to him in his absence.

#### 4.4. Address And Reference to A Husband

In the Arsi-Bale community, a wife addresses and refers to her husband in a complex manner. In his presence, she addresses him using the second person plural pronoun and, in his absence, she refers to him with the third person masculine singular pronoun. In the utterance below, a husband is addressed with the pronoun *?isin* ‘you (PL)’ which signifies respect.

- (19) *la:k’ana*        *?isini:-f*        *dihe:ss-ø-e*  
 Lunch            you-DAT        bring.near-1s-PFV  
 ‘Lunch is ready.’ (Lit. I have brought near the lunch for you. )

Even when there is disharmony between them, the custom requires the wife to address her husband in a face-to-face communication through the second

person plural pronoun. In his absence, she refers to him through the third person masculine singular pronoun. For example, a wife who tells the whereabouts of her husband may say the following.

- (20)      *ʔinni*                      *gaba:*                      *dak'-Ø-e*  
            he.NOM                      market                      go-3ms-PFV  
            'He went to the market.'

At no time would a wife mention the name of her husband. Normally, whereas the second person plural pronoun employed for addressing is a social deictic, the third person masculine pronoun used for reference is not.

According to the custom, after a firstborn child (male or female), a wife addresses or refers to her husband as 'Father of (name of the child)' as in the case of absolute social deictics in section 3.1.1.2. For example, a wife would address her husband using the name of their firstborn daughter called Kaddo in the following manner.

- (21)      *ʔabba:*              *kaddo:*              *me:*                      *ko:tt-a:*  
            father              kaddo              please                      come-2PL.IMPV  
            'Kaddo's father, please come.'

The modifier proper noun, *kaddo:* qualifies the appositive *ʔabba:* 'father'. In other words, the target referred to is specified. The combination thus results in a social deictic. The next section is concerned with what appears to be unique to the Arsi-Bale community.

#### **4.5. Reverential Agreement**

In the lowland areas of Bale, natural entities such as water, cattle and fire are precious in the life of the people and they are even considered sacred. To show reverence to the phenomena, verbs inflected for the plural number are used when they are referred to. The plural marking on the predicate seems to have honorific value as we have seen above in relation to human beings; hence apparently bearing the sense of social deictic. For example, looking at water spilling in front of him, a speaker may utter the following.

The plural verb in the example with honorific sense is an expression of

- (22) *bi|a:n*                      *dʒig-ø-an-ø*  
 water.NOM      tumble.down-3-PL.HON-PFV  
 ‘The water spilled (HON).’

reverence that the speaker has for water. Similarly, a verb inflected for the plural number in an utterance related to fire dying down, as in the following example, again, signifies reverence.

- (23)                      *?ibidd-ø-i*                      *da:m-ø-an-ø*  
 fire-NOM-EP                      die.down-3-PL-PFV  
 ‘The fire has died down.’

In both the above examples, the plurality which signifies the reverence the speakers have for what are referred to, considered to have social deictic implication.

#### 4.6 Politeness

As it has been raised in the preceding discussions, the first, second, and third person pronouns forms and the third person singular masculine pronouns, and the agreement forms show respect in the dialect under study. This is the verbal aspect of politeness. Linguistic politeness has generally been considered the proper concern of ‘pragmatics’, the area of linguistics that accounts for how we attribute meaning to utterances in context, or ‘meaning in interaction’ (Thomas 1995:23). The kind of politeness that is described under this subsection is the non-verbal one which operates when people are engaged in a face-to-face communication.

Paying proper respect to elders, strangers, parents, in-laws, and people holding some important social positions in the society is among the social norms among the speakers of the dialect. Especially, one of the most important social norms is marriage-related politeness. Marriage-ties form a very strong social bond between the members thus related. As the age-old saying of these society goes: *namni fu:de ganda warra intala: hunda fu:de* which is literally translated as: “When a man marries he marries not only the bride, but also her entire clan”. This means when a man marries the marriage

ties entails that he should show proper respect, care and support to the wife's relatives, kinsfolk and tribes. The failure to do so could result in losing not only the bride, but also the family, or the kins of the wife who might threaten to take back their daughter.

Similarly, a married wife in the society should show respect to her husband, and all the family members of her husband. She never calls her husband's father and mother by their names, nor even call other people outside of her in-law circles with their names if they bear the same name with her in-laws if they are in the immediate communication context. Also, the son-in-law should never call his in-laws with their name, nor even face them straight in the normal face-to-face communication. He must be very indirect in communication with them. This is because as the age-old Oromo saying goes: *sodda:n soda:!* which literally means 'in-laws are frightening.'

This doesn't just mean that one has to run away from one's in-laws. It rather means one has to pay due respect to one's in laws which in his case means that one has to show respect in terms of how one talks to them, in giving precedence in social dealings with them, and in being considerate of their needs, especially when they are in a problem.

The dialect speakers represent one of the conservative societies wherein kinship links and age rank are the base of the social structure. The older age grades usually hold the power and the highest status is entitled to them. Among the speakers of this dialect, certain relatives of both man and a woman are *wajju:* 'sacred' or a 'taboo', to both the husband and the wife. Of these relatives is the man's father, mother, and father-in-law, and mother-in-law, his wife's elder brothers and sisters, her uncles (both her mother's brother and her father's brother, and nearly most of the relatives of his wife, even the neighbors of his inlaws whose presence he had to avoid strictly deserve utmost respect. Reverse wise also the wife is expected to show the proper respect to the elderly families and relatives of her husband.

Avoidance behavior, though, was not the only way to express deference and respect. If one has to speak, one has to mind how one speaks. One is supposed to speak to a mother-in-law or a father-in-law in a deliberately subdued

voice, drawing out words and dropping into a near whisper” because “speaking loudly and rapidly was associated not only with familiarity and informality, but also with anger, or lack of respect. Besides, one should speak “sideways” trying not to face one’s mother-in-law or father-in-law or address them directly. When at home the man addresses his mother-in-law behind the curtain. And, so is the latter. Physical proximity with one’s in-laws is also impolite.

Still, there is social distanced between the elderly and the youth. If the two happen to meet outside of the home environment, the younger person has to show a proper respect to the elder. This may be done by initiating the greeting, avoiding looking at the elder person in the eye-but instead the younger person should communicate respect through looking sideways or looking down on to the ground; talking quietly and softly to the elder person if at all the younger person has to do so, or simply listening to the elder person while he/she is talking without interrupting him/her unless he/she is invited to talk. These nonverbal forms communicate politeness, or respect to the person to whom it is due no less than the verbal forms in Oromo.

### **Section Five: Conclusion**

Social deictics are expressions used for encoding mechanisms of addressing or making reference to individuals or groups that are participants in a speech situation or that are referents based on the relationships between them and their status in the community. The Arsi-Bale dialect employs lexical and grammatical means. Of the lexical means, there are two categories: simple social deictics and enhanced social deictics. The category of simple social deictics is further subdivided into three types: relational social deictics, absolute social deictics and informal social deictics. While relational deictics are expressed through kinship terms, absolute social deictics are expressed through terms of status or rank. On the other hand, informal social deictics are expressed through words, including personal names, without regard for politeness or respect. Enhanced social deictics are basically lexical but are suffixed with the formatives *i-fff*o: or *-u:*. While the former is suffixed to kinship terms the latter is suffixed to personal names.

To encode social deictics grammatically, predicate verbs are inflected for person and number. Accordingly, first-, second- and third-person plural pronouns are used for honorific purpose. Within the category of grammatical encoding, the way a wife addresses her husband through the second person plural pronoun in his presence and the manner in which she refers to him with the third person singular pronoun in his absence is an interesting feature. Another interesting and perhaps peculiar to the dialect is the reverence some speakers, essentially in the lowland area, have for such phenomena as water, fire, cattle, food, grass, etc. and the way they refer to them. The phenomena are referred to in honorific fashion with predicate verbs inflected for the third person plural.

The formal and functional investigation of the research reveals that social deictics in the Arsi-Bale dialect of Oromo are characteristically compliant to the theoretical generalization that social deixis is concerned with addressing and reference taking into account relation and status between participants and referents in a speech event. However, the dialect manifests some peculiarities in the manner it employs social deictics. Using second person plural and third person masculine singular pronouns and their agreements in reference to a husband in his presence and absence, respectively, is a case in point. There are many instances which testify that the forms and functions of social deictics encountered in the Arsi-Bale dialect are also shared by the Oromo language in general. Expanding on the results of this research and those of Shimelis (2020) (on spatial deictics in the eastern variety) as well as working on the other aspects of deixis, including in the other varieties, is imperative for a holistic understanding of deixis in Oromo.

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### Abbreviations

AL	Allative
m	masculine
COP	Copula
MD	Middle term
DAT	Dative
NOM	Nominative
END	Endearment
PFV	Perfective
EP	Epenthesis
PL	Plural
f	feminine
POSS	Possessive
HON	Honorific
s	singular
IMPV	Imperative
SGV	Singulative
INS	Insult
IPFV	Imperfective
1	First Person
2	Second person
3	Third person
∅	zero morpheme

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