



Use of anaphoric demonstrative pronoun *this* in research article writing of Nigerian authors

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Abstract

Researchers present writing with clarity for their target audience to comprehend the intended meaning of the writer. To achieve this clarity, writers employed the use of appropriate linguistic devices such as the demonstratives. The use of proximal anaphoric demonstratives is considered the most common device to indicate referent in academic writing. Therefore, this study intends to examine the use English proximal anaphoric demonstratives among Nigerian academic writers. Using the Journal of the Humanity, Law, Social and Management Sciences in one of the Nigerian University, the researchers analyzed the frequency and percentage of use of the attended and unattended demonstratives from 20 articles of the journal. The result indicated that Nigerian article writers most frequently use the attended proximal demonstrative pronoun than unattended. Therefore, further research should be conducted to compare the use of attended proximal demonstratives based on discipline in order to understand which discipline frequently used the attended demonstratives and why.

Keywords: anaphoric demonstrative, attended, unattended, cohesive devices, demonstrative pronoun

1. Introduction

Credibility of an academic writing lies in the appropriate selection and application of cohesive devices in writing to achieve clarity (Jiang, 2014) [19]. As such, writers should use cohesive devices to organize their work to convey meaning through foregrounding the most important ideas (Adams, 2002; Dastjerdi & Samian, 2011) [1, 7]. Readers are guided by the appropriate use of grammatical elements, and demonstrative pronouns to easily understand work (Hunt, 1965; Schleppegrell, 1998, 2005) [18, 29, 30]. Taki (2010) [35] established that the use of demonstratives has the effect of instructing the addressee to identify correctly the intended referent. Considering the importance of the use of demonstratives in writing, scholars (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Strauss, 2002) [14] categorize the referent type into two - *spatio-temporal deixis*, or *exophora*, and the other discourse *deixis*, or *endophora*. The *exophoric* use of demonstratives involves reference to items that are primarily situationally identifiable or mean temporal reference, and not through linguistic cues; Rustipa (2015) [28] simply puts as the referring expression used to refer to something outside the text.

In the case of (1) and (2), the example of using as a spatial reference, the presence of the dog in the context of the utterance in first sentence is the referent.

1. *This* is my dog, Angie.
2. I should be done with the project by *this* time next week.

The demonstrative determiner *this* in (2) is referencing the day of the week, or possibly a more specific time at which the utterance took place.

On the other hand, the *endophoric* use of demonstratives

involves a spoken or written textual reference. Simply put by Rustipa (2015) [28], it is used to refer to the words in the text. There are two kinds of *endophora*: one is *cataphora* and the other is *anaphora*. The *cataphoric* use of demonstrative occurs when a reference is made to an entity in the forthcoming discourse. The *anaphoric* use of demonstratives instructs the addressee to go back to the previous mention of the noun phrase referent as in (3) or to the entire previous utterance itself as in (4).

3. I loved the salad.
Yeah, *that* was great.
4. He said he would be back by Tuesday.
That cannot be right. His flight does not get in until Wednesday morning.

Anaphoric, being the most frequently used form of demonstratives in academic composition (Hedberg, Gundel, & Zacharski, 2007; Swales, 2005) [15, 33], thus, the focus of this research. Corroborating this position, Gray and Cortes (2011) [13]; Swales (2005) [33], observe that often writers subconsciously use demonstrative *this/these* unattended. When demonstrative *this/these* is unattended (Römer & Wulff, 2010) [27], it most often create ambiguity to which the *this/these* is pointing at (Byron & Allen, 1998), which is the basis of this research. Rustipa (2015) [28] opines that when *this* is immediately followed by a noun or noun phrase and so has an associated nominal, it is often referred to as attended *this*. Whereas when *this* is not immediately followed by a noun or noun phrase and so it stands alone, it is often referred to as unattended *this*. There is a great concern over the use of unattended *this* in academic writing. Explaining this claim,

Swales (2005)^[33] presents sentences (5) in one of his work to illustrate the impact of unattended *this* with a potential ambiguity:

5. Most phrasal verbs in English have both literal and idiomatic meanings, and are used in both general and highly specialized contexts. *This* causes problems for learners.

To explain (5), the use of *this* in the second part of the sentence is unclear (Huang, 2000)^[17]. It may be referred to information in the second clause of the first sentence, which may mean, for example, “*The specialized context causes problems for learners*” or the whole sentence. Use of *this* in (5) often create ambiguity and according to Esaiasson, Kölln, and Turper (2015)^[9]; Kölln (2006)^[20] such ambiguity is referred to as a “broad reference”. Such use of *this* above may make a reader to ask a question *this, what?* (Comrie, 1997)^[6]. Therefore, the use of *this* in (5) could be considered an unattended anaphoric demonstrative pronoun *this*.

Despite the importance of the use of attended *this* in understanding a text (Swales, 2005)^[33], writers most often seem not to be using it (ibid); probably they do not understand how it may create confusion to readers. Though, sometimes, the use of anaphoric demonstrative *this* are well attended (Ford, 1996)^[11] and supported (Olsen & Huckin, 1991)^[25]. Due to their relevance in writing, demonstratives, such as *this/these* and *that/those* have been studied by many researchers (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Hedberg *et al.*, 2007; C. Lyons, 1999; Strauss, 2002)^[14, 15, 22] focusing on their different functions and applications. Swales and Feak (2004)^[34] describe the use of attended *this* as this + summary word. Example (6) by Swales (2005)^[33] illustrate the use of the attended *this*:

6. Senator Smith called members of his party useless, and *this gaff* is likely to cause his resignation.

In the example above, the writer used the attended “this + a summary word”, *This gaff...* The anaphoric function of the demonstrative *this* as used here is clear and unambiguous. Similarly, Swales (2005)^[33] illustrating the use of “this + summary word” in one of his works, give (7) and explain such use in (8 and 9):

7. Each chapter ends with a summary of the main parts.
8. *This summary* is designed to help students studying in their own.
9. *This strategy* is designed to help students studying in their own.

Interestingly, this author not only illustrate the use of anaphoric demonstrative “this + summary word”, but also provides us with an alternative of choice of an appropriate summary word(s) as in sentences 8 and 9 above (#8*this* + *summary* or #9*this* + *strategy*). It is important to note that the use of appropriate summary word(s) could reduce ambiguity in writing. For this reason, linguists (Oluga, 2010; Yusuf, 1990)^[26, 37] encouraged writers to be explicit while writing. Portraying further, Oluga (2010)^[26] explains that ambiguity can be a hindrance to effective communication just because of the semantic confusion that arises from the susceptibility of an

ambiguous expression to double or multiple semantic interpretations. It may equally interest you to note that, use of demonstrative alone could establish joint attention (Diessel, 2006)^[8]. Joint attention, according to Diessel (2006)^[8] mean elements employed in language use to direct the attention of listener/ reader on an entity/situation of interest in a discussion. However, there are many other linguistic means that can be used to establish joint focus attention (ibid), nevertheless, demonstratives are considered the most (Clark, 1996; Skarabela, Allen, & Scott-Phillips, 2013)^[5, 31]. The primary function of English demonstratives, which includes *this, these, that, and those* (Chen, 1990; Maclaran, 1982)^[4, 24] are to point at the location of a referent (Diessel, 2006)^[8]. Moreover, Diessel (2006)^[8] suggest two other functions of an English demonstrative, which include “indicating the location of a referent relative to the deictic center and serve to coordinate the interlocutors’ joint attentional focus” (p 469). Some linguists (Diessel, 2006; Fillmore, 1982; Levinson, 2004; J. Lyons, 1977; Wu, 2004)^[8, 10, 21, 23, 36] have described the use of demonstrative in relation to pointing at linguistic elements in a discourse. Explaining this definition, Diessel (2006)^[8] maintains that the deictic center is shifted from the physical world, i.e., the speaker’s location at the time of the utterance, to a particular point in the unfolding discourse.

To this end, demonstrative sometimes is used anaphorically (Ariel, 1988)^[2]. This use of demonstrative is the main concern of this paper. *Anaphoric* use of demonstratives usually co-referentially is used with an earlier discourse participant (Diessel, 2006)^[8]. Illustrating the use of *anaphoric* demonstrative, Diessel (2006)^[8] gives the following excerpt:

10. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of *this* ice were as many feet of snow.

The demonstrative in (10) is an *anaphoric* demonstrative that indicates a co-reference relationship between the current NP and a referent in the previous sentence. The *anaphoric* demonstrative discourse pragmatic functions is to keep track of prior discourse participants in writing (Himmelman, 2004)^[16]. Therefore, in this paper the researchers examine the use of *anaphoric* demonstratives pronoun among Nigerian academic writers.

2. Methodology

The researchers analyzed the articles from the journals of the Humanity, Law, Social and Management Sciences Vol.1. No.1 with ISSN: 2616-0455 (AL-MUQADDIMA). This is one of the University journals in Nigeria. There are twenty-three (23) articles across the four (4) disciplines (*Arts and Education, Law, Sciences, as well as Social and Management Sciences*). Out of the twenty-three articles in the journal, three were not considered because they were written in Arabic and Hausa Languages orthographies, which are not the interest of the researchers. Therefore, the focus of the analysis is on the use of the English proximal anaphoric demonstratives in in articles written by Nigerians. The researchers manually identified and classified the English Proximal demonstratives used as attended and unattended. Using simple percentage and frequency count, the researchers determined the frequency of usage and interpreted the data.

3. Results & discussion

Table 1: Analysis of the Use of Anaphoric Demonstrative

No. of articles	No. of <i>Anaphoric Demonstratives Used</i>
20	485

Based on table 1 above, the result indicated that *anaphoric* demonstratives are used in Nigerian article writings. This usage seems to be common as opined by (Hedberg *et al.*, 2007; Swales, 2005) [15, 33] who conclude that the most dominant demonstrative used in writing is the *anaphoric*. This corroborated the finding of this study as illustrated in table 1 above. Few examples of the use of *anaphoric* demonstratives in this analysis are given below:

11. In the earlier 19th century in Hausa land, reform and jihad movement was organized and led by Sheikh Usman Dan-Fodio (1755-1817). *This reform movement* led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the present day of Northern Nigeria in 1810 CE.
12. Crowther expounds the theory that the Akpoto are the antecedents of the Igalala. *This view* might not be holistic,...
13. Language is a *weapon with two sharp edges*; it can be *either for or against development*. *This* may be the reason why each and every (sic) individual tries to apply language for his (sic) own survival in the universe.
14. For significant proportion of the farmers, yields are better whenever they used fertilizers. *This* suggests that if properly managed ...

With these few examples, the research has identified both attended (#11 and #12) and unattended (#13 and #14) use of the *anaphoric* demonstrative pronouns.

Table 2: Frequency of Use of Attended and Unattended *Anaphoric*

Attended <i>anaphoric</i>	Unattended <i>anaphoric</i>	Total usage
289 (60%)	196 (40%)	485 (100%)

Based on table 2 above, the Nigerian research article (RA) writers seem to be employing more of attended *anaphoric* demonstratives than the unattended as shown in the table 2 above. From the analyses, the following examples illustrated the use of attended and unattended *anaphoric*.

15. The research site is located within latitude 9^o 00¹ and 9^o 30¹ N and longitude 8^o 30¹ and 9^o 4¹ E on the Jos-Plateau Nigeria. In *this area*, the period between Octobers to April constitute the dry season while May to October is the raining season.
16. The manipulation of peoples’ belief system in pursuance of political and other selfish interests further entrenched divisions among Nigerians. This is because people respond when an issue is packaged with religious coloration and given a religious name.

In sentences (#15 and #16), attended and unattended usage of the *anaphoric* are exemplified. For example, (#15) is used as attended where the, *this* has a summary word (this + area). For example, In *this area*...

In (#16) it is used as unattended where the use of “this” may have different alternate interpretations. It raises the question

“this what?” as questioned by (Comrie, 1997) [6]. For example, it may mean one of the following:

- *This* manipulation ...
- *This* peoples’ belief system ...
- *This* pursuance of political and other selfish interest ...
- *This* division

Therefore, the use of *this* in #15 is attended while that of #16 is considered to be unattended. According to Esaiasson *et al.* (2015) [9]; Kolln (2006) [20] this use of reference is “broad reference”.

4. Conclusion

In this study, attended *anaphoric* demonstrative were identified as the most frequently used by Nigerian RA writers. This *anaphoric* used is considered important in making clear and easy understanding of the referent pointed at. Linguists (Galti, Mamman, Clifford, & Alkali, 2016; Oluga, 2010; Rustipa, 2015) [26, 28] explain the importance of clear and unambiguous presentations of facts and ideas in RA writing. To achieve this clarity, Swales (2005) [33] encouraged the need for the use of linguistic devices such as determiners and demonstratives, most specifically the *anaphoric* demonstratives. Thus, there is need to further investigate the use of *anaphoric* demonstratives in different academic disciplines to identify why the use of the *anaphoric* is necessary in a particular disciplines.

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