Figurative Deictic Use: A Semiotic Analysis

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Introduction

“I,” “you” as person deictics and “this,” “that” as space deictics are particular lexical categories which hasten imaginative thinking. Only when children master full-fledged symbolic use can they facilitate imaginative thought. The iconic and indexical use is non-deictic1 – “I” referring to self only or “that” used noncontrastively. When these deictics are used deictically, they are used symbolically, in that their referents shift and their invariant meaning is apprehended to be speaker or place far from speaker, and they enhance the imagination. It is the symbolic, deictic use of these shifters which serves as the foundation for metaphoric extension from human contexts to inanimates. Symbolic meaning classifies – “I” refers initially to any speaker and later its use is extended to representational play objects, despite their inability to converse or to assume functional roles. Applying functional roles/orientations to

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1 Non-deictic uses are characterized by a lack of reciprocity between contrastive speech participants, between places of objects and between points of orientation to those objects. Deictic uses entail apprehension of shifting conversational roles and the location of objects in distinctive orientations to participants in those roles (West, 1986 p. 68; in press).
dolls/puppets constitutes metaphoric use of the symbolic, deictic function. Without apprehension of the symbolic deictic use and without its extension to play exchanges, metaphoric and imaginative thought would be thwarted -- conversational/functional roles would remain static and literal and not accorded to inanimates.

Since, from a Peircian perspective, the literal use of person and space deictics constitutes indexical symbols and hence are subject to shifting reference, their mastery takes place during a rather lengthy interval in ontogeny (see Appendix A). Nonetheless, deictic development would be truncated at best were it to stop prior to its metaphoric extension into imaginative realms. According to Vygotsky, deictic use is first social (between human conversational partners), extending to psychological use (in self to self monologues) (see Appendix B). The further claim here is that deictic use is necessary to the development of imaginative thinking and constitutes the linchpin toward its imaginative, metaphoric use.

**Semiotic Indicators of Deictic Use**

Peirce constructs his theory of Phenomenology on triadic properties; his categories of signs are referred to as Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness. Peirce’s division of signs is likewise trianary: “1) the sign in itself, 2) the sign in relation to its object, and 3) the sign in relation to its interpretant” (Gouudge, 1950 p. 139). The earliest signs which children use from among Peirce’s trianary categorization of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness appear to be Secondness (Pierce, 1931, 1:433, 1:427). Peirce establishes that Firstness cannot exist independent of the other sign categories since it is a quality/affect which is unrealizable apart from its existence in Secondness (Pierce, 1931, 1:253). Secondness, for Peirce, consists of individual facts having a “determinate state of affairs” and affecting the interpreter with “brute force” such that they impose themselves on the interpreter (in Ayer, 1968, p. 115). Peirce considers thought/concepts to be a form of Thirdness (Pierce, 1931, 1:420). Thoughts are Thirdness in that they are general: they refer to “all possible things, and not merely to those which happen to exist” (Peirce, 1931, 1: 420). Secondness characterizes the foundation of the child's early experience, but Secondness cannot be entirely
disentangled from the element of Firstness in such experience since the child's preferences and motives are propelled by idiosyncratic affect, the essence of Firstness. Children choose which experiences to focus on; and their choice is governed by personal unmanaged preference. When children's use of gestural indicators materializes both Secondness and Firstness operate together in non-deictic uses to differentiate one object of focus/preference from others. The advent of Thirdness, with respect to deictics, characterizes the segue into the literal, social application of linguistic index enriched by symbolic meaning. Once children apprehend that all instances of deictic use coalesce in an invariant/general meaning, e.g., speaker, addressee/proximal, distal object from an Origo, shifting conversational roles and orientational placements can legitimize the reciprocal nature of conversational experience.

Peircian sign theory can provide rationale for the shift from non-deictic to deictic use in that indexical symbols are employed initially as indexes and later assume a symbolic function which permits distinct instantiations of deictic use to coalesce in general meaning, vis a vis participation in the narrated situation only to realization of speaker and addressee as conversational roles, to apprehension of place and orientation distinctions. Peirce's notion of "Interpretant"\(^2\) can illustrate the nature of the shift among Origos and among orientations to those Origos. The essence of the Immediate Interpretant alters as orientations and points of orientation shift. Since the essence of interpretant is the effect of the sign-object relationship on the interpreter, the Immediate Interpretant, on the pre-linguistic level, characterizes the effect arising from the child's interaction with an object; when language emerges the Immediate Interpretant (effect) arises from the exchange between child and other; whereas after metaphoric application, the Immediate Interpretant results from the influence of internal operations upon the self. Furthermore, in representational play scenarios the Immediate Interpretant extends the latter operation, namely, perspective shifting between human like inanimates, or between the self and a single inanimate. When anthropomorphized, inanimates can illustrate distinctive perspectives of the same child.

\(^2\) The Immediate Interpretant, Dynamic Interpretant, and Final Interpretant constitute Peirce's "triadic production of the interpretant essential to a sign" (in Fitzgerald, 1966 p.73).
implemented to resolve a possible thought incongruity; and the character of the Immediate Interpretant, at more advanced developmental levels, is either congruity or more profound incongruity.

Other types of interpretants, especially those of the dynamic sort, similarly change their force when they are applied to deictic as opposed to non-deictic contexts. "The first proper significate effect of a sign is a feeling produced by it. There is almost always a feeling which we come to interpret as evidence that we comprehend the proper effect of a sign" (Peirce, 1935: 5.473). This "Emotional Interpretant" represents Peirce's first member of the triad of Dynamic Interpretants. The Dynamic Interpretant, which involves emotive qualities, illustrates the import of affect in establishing novel, unconventional applications--affect impels the interpreter toward metonymic and metaphoric genres. This feeling based effect is dynamic in that the source giving rise to the affect is qualitatively different at each developmental level: feeling consequent to object discovery/object concept (pre-linguistic), to feeling emanating from conversational exchange (literal), to feeling after concept extension to novel genres (metaphoric).

Similarly, the second member of the Dynamic Interpretant triad (Energetic Interpretant) is influenced by the nature of children's goals at each developmental level: from physical effort, such as prehensile grasping of objects (pre-linguistic), to mental effort toward social/conversational adequacy (literal), finally to mental effort in locating novel genres for deictic application (metaphoric). The Logical Interpretant is the third member of Peirce's Dynamic Interpretant triad; any reference to this third member is sketchy at best as Peirce's theory is not fully developed.³ In taking some liberty, the effect of the extension of a concept on other related concepts as an intrapsychological function can serve as a working definition of Logical Interpretant. Further liberties with Peirce's unfinished business of Logical Interpretant, characterize its application primarily to non-literal contexts of deictic use. Accommodation

³ Peirce comments about the Logical Interpretant: "In advance of ascertaining the nature of this effect, it will be convenient to adopt a designation for it. I will call it the Logical Interpretant, without as yet determining whether this term will extend to anything besides the meaning of a general concept, though certainly closely related to that, or not. Shall we say this effect may be a thought, that is to say, a mental sign? No doubt, it may be so; it must itself have a logical interpretant; so that it cannot be the ultimate Logical Interpretant of that concept. It can be proved that the only mental effect that can be produced and that is not a sign but is of a general application is a habit-change; meaning by a habit change a modification of a person's tendencies toward action resulting from previous experiences of from previous exertions of his will or acts, or from a complexus of both kinds of causes" (Peirce in Fitzgerald, 1966 p. 144).
among concepts which results in conscious intrapsychological regulation are not typically realizable until metaphoric uses of deictics emerge.

**Metaphoric Use of Deictics as Intrapsychological Regulator**

Metaphor boasts of a host of meanings, many of which overlap. Even sources for metaphoric construction are controversial. The primary overlap among definitions typically characterizes the similarity between seemingly dissimilar wholes such that parts/attributes of one are imputed to the other. Nonetheless, contiguity relations are likewise necessary to metaphoric applications. Thus, "the gestalt view is particularly relevant to the assumption that the comprehension of metaphor involves a special kind of relational perception" (Paivio & Walsh, 1993 p. 310). The remaining parts of the whole to which the attribute has been uncharacteristically imputed must be able to assume the imputation because the original parts of the whole receiving the imputed part need to be sufficiently able to coexist in semantic/logical contiguity with the new characteristic. Transferring a similarity from its original whole to a less conventional application often requires a substitution/ focus on an attribute which is selected for transfer. Implicit in this latter premise is the Jakobsonian claim, which likewise represents a gestalt orientation, that combination and selection are inseparable components of language use: "Any linguistic sign involves two modes of arrangement... (1) combination... (2) selection" (Jakobson in Waugh, 1998, p. 117).

Linguistic signs which are used metaphorically such that new/extended meanings are created are no exception to qualitative dependence on similarity and contiguity relations through, for example, their application of deictics used with humans to their use with inanimates in representational play scenarios. The similarity which is imputed from human interchanges to inanimates is the means to assume conversational roles despite their inability to: perceive/receive sensory input, linguistically produce or receive messages, etc. Somehow, the importation of deictic shifters to inanimates functions on a

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4 "Similarity and relation are implied in definitions of metaphor" (Paivio and Walsh, 1993, p. 152).
metaphoric plane despite the dissimilarities between human and inanimate capabilities. The attribute pools are quite distinctive; still, the original parts of the imputed whole (inanimate play objects) coalesce with the imputed characteristic/s inherent to conversational functions. This deictic extension becomes a successful metaphor consequent to two primary factors: (1) personal involvement in conversational exchanges, and (2) noticing the perceptual similarities incumbent between humans and certain inanimate counterparts, e.g. dolls, teddies. Both the former and the latter are drawn from personal experience with other humans in social contexts and with their direct familiarity with human-like inanimates. In fact, this imputation of deictics to human-like inanimates and not to non-human-like inanimates, however unconscious, demonstrates the salience of physical attributes and the recognition of the similarity of attributes between the two groups.5

The imputation of conversational roles to inanimates is grounded upon image based physical similarities between humans and dolls and illustrates the legitimate classification of inanimate deictic use as a primary metaphor, as Grady (1997) perceives it to be. "Each primary metaphor has a minimal structure and arises naturally, automatically, and unconsciously through everyday experience" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999 p. 46). Children's early experience represented in visual memories provides the substance for later metaphoric extension by comparing and fitting in attributes conceived through recognition of the symbolic function of two distinctive wholes, and by integrating the novel attribute into a dissimilar genre with distinctive qualities. Paivio & Walsh (1993) claim that

"Typically, metaphor has been analyzed in terms of imagery of a rather abstract nature. Susanne Langer, for example, wrote that 'Metaphor is our most striking evidence of abstractive seeing, of the power of the human mind to use presentational symbols' (1948 reprint, p.14) Conversely, the symbolic function of images is revealed in 'their tendency to become metaphorical' (p. 117)... These symbolic images are not only comprised of visual ingredients but are complex elements more appropriately described as 'fantasies.'"

5 In cognitive tasks measuring perspective taking, children were more successful orienting a representational object to an appropriate person (each child attained mastery between 2;1 and 3;0) than a nonrepresentational object (some children attained highest level at 3;2, while another was not successful even at 3;4) (West, 1986 p. 155).
They derive from experience, but the original perception of experience is ‘promptly and spontaneously abstracted, and used symbolically to represent a whole kind of actual happening’ (p.118). Further abstraction of this literal generality under appropriate circumstances results in a metaphorical fantasy, a figurative meaning” (Paivio & Walsh in Ortony, 1993 p. 312).

The fact that imagery is foundational to metaphor underscores the pivotal role of Peirce's iconic Firstness in metaphoric applications. Since an image is initially a reproduction/memory of an experience which the child has participated in/observed, Firstness is operating as a catalyst towards superseding Secondness (pure experience) to either modify the memory of that experience to or apply that experience to novel genres/participants. Thereby images are recreated with representational objects and with linguistic tools which have the power to transform the function of image to social instrument and social instrument to psychological instrument/thought. These memory modifications and extensions to new contexts (inclusive of play) illustrate how children use their affect together with unconscious symbolic knowledge to imagine or to "see" abstractly. Children's use of play objects can serve an intrapsychological function--violating the conventional Thirdness of social deictic use and recreating an idiosyncratic intrapsychological forum in which play discourse regulates children's more literal meanings.

**Metaphoric Deictic Use in Imaginative Play**

Cognitive and linguistic precursors to the development of representational play include object focus and its incumbent prehensile schemes, mental imagery, social performatives, conversational turn taking, contrastive demonstrative use, and self to self discourse involving intrapsychological regulation. The first three of these competencies are relatively static; play scenarios developing from these competencies do not rise to the level of symbolic and representational play. Mental imagery, for example, is a rather static recapitulation of an idiosyncratic experience. In fact, Piaget considers a mental image to be a form of "interiorized imitation" (1962, p. 163)--a replication of an event which the child has already experienced without altering features of that event. Even social performatives, though they involve another, still do not
transcend "practical play"-- they do not transcend the child's pleasure based motivation/function. Children's requests are often unidirectional to obtain an object and lack the dynamic character of shifting roles. To constitute symbolic/representational play it must involve "representative thought, as distinct from sensory-motor activity" (Piaget, 1962, p. 163). Whereas mental imagery merely involves a reproduction of an event which is iconic, conversational turn-taking and advanced metaphoric applications of such turn taking epitomize symbolic meaning such that a functional role can be ascribed to any potential participant in that role. The symbol emerges when an arbitrary deictic sign is applied to any participant assuming the conversational role. The further extension of deictics to metaphoric contexts is illustrated within children's symbolic play in that their imagination, specifically buttressed by novel interpretants, provides for unconventional, functional and spatial shifts.

While those competencies intrinsic to practical play (object focus, mental imagery, performatives) are non-deictic, the remaining competencies (conversational turn taking, contrastive demonstrative use, self to self discourse) are deictic in that their mastery entails at least a rudimentary shift between or among Origos and/or between or among contrasting objects, places, or times. These skills progress from object control, to control of other, and finally to self control/regulation. This scheme follows Vygotsky's developmental trajectory of physical exploration to social partnership and finally to psychological/internal influence illustrated by "chimpanzoid age," social speech, followed by monologic/egocentric speech, and finally inner speech or thought affecting thought (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 14, 149). The Vygotskian perspective validates the claim that use of spatial and conversational shifters proceeds from non-deictic to deictic-- static focus of Origo to a single object at any one point in time in the "chimpanzoid age" to shifting conversational Origos in social speech to shifting conversational Origos in self speech (egocentric) to shifting perspectives of the same Origo in inner speech/thought. How social relations/cognitions/emotions extend their character from static, non-shifting Origos/orientations to dynamic, shifting ones and beyond to unconventional/imaginative deictic use needs to be addressed.
A quintessential illustration of how deictics transcend their literal use materializes in representational play scenarios. Children utilize the literal, social use of conversational deictics in play scenarios in which “I”/“you” is extended to imaginative settings, and to representational objects. In the case of the latter, children apply conversational deictics to tangible objects which are inanimate, extending the Origo of speaker to them together with shifting spatial orientations to those Origos. Application of “I” and “you” in these representational play scenarios extends their meaning—“I” and “you” as human participants to “I” and “you” between inanimates or within a single inanimate. Similarly, these inanimate Origos are afforded perceptual attributes and the means to change orientation to objects in their surround. The metaphor is illustrated by amplification of the original, literal meaning between humans, to its less literal meaning within human monologues, and finally to its non literal meaning with objects whose capacities preclude taking speaker/listener roles, or perceptual orientations. This metaphoric use of “I” and “you,” and “this” and “that,” demonstrates increased imaginative thinking such that inter and intra psychological skills are extended to those who do not possess such skills, e.g., puppets or dolls within representational play can take on speaker or addressee shifting roles even though they are not animate and cannot converse, and cannot experience sensorily. When linguistic shifters are used to accompany representational play scenarios, they are applied in a metaphoric sense in that the inanimate referent of “I” lacks the means to speak interactively; and inanimate referents of “you” lack the means to take the role of listener. In fact they neither speak nor listen, it is the child who speaks in their stead and listens in their stead. Conversational and orientational deictics used metaphorically transform the event from the actual to the imaginative. In Peircian terms, the character of the interpretant is altered from conventional/social meaning in human to human conversational exchanges to a more metaphoric extended interpretant when inanimates assume conversational roles and orientations to objects which they do not have conventionally. This transcendency to imaginative contexts illustrates a significant modification of deictic

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6 Metaphoric use here refers to non-literal and often involves some extension of meaning of the original use of a concept or term to a somewhat analogous context.
use and, consequently, an extension of the symbolic/literal meaning of conversational and space deictics to imaginative uses.

Application of deictic shifters to inanmites is a quintessential illustration of imaginative thinking in that metaphoric extension from human to non-human and “a departure from reality” are both present. According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 349), imagination must ‘depart from reality’; it must exhibit a certain distance from the immediate spacio-temporal context. Uses of deictics with human-like inanmites distances deictics from their immediate spacial context since the child is not one of the referents, neither is any of the child's interlocuters. Literal space and time are extended in that the child creates a separate world within which dolls take on conversational roles and have spacial orientations. Vygotsky (1978, p. 94) adds that some measure of emotive functioning/ affect is present in imaginative thinking. The presence of emotion underscores the critical function of subjectivity in developing the imagination. Subjectivity, in this case, takes the form of the satisfaction of a need on the part of children to gain intrapsychological control by manipulating conversational partners. Representational play functions as a forum to display subjective emotion driven thoughts and to integrate and resolve conflicts among thoughts. Children’s impetus for representational play according to Vygotsky (1978, p. 93) is a consequence of desires which are not realizable. In representational play the child is reenacting some semblance of actual events at a later time, and perhaps in a different place. Moreover, the participants of the exchange depart from reality/ the actual since they are inanmites and are not conversational partners in the real world. The child must go beyond the actual in space and time and in participant role recognition to ascertain imaginative thinking through representational play. Modifying the original social event using different types of participants in the same event roles, and/or displacing the original events to distinct settings, demonstrates a departure from reality. Perceiving inanimate participants as subject and object to one another and to themselves amplifies participant roles from the actual (literal) static function to a more dynamic metaphoric function. Extending functional roles uncharacteristically to inanmites is

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7 Vygotsky notes that although in large part affect impels imaginative thinking, affect can likewise be present in “realistic” (non-imaginative) thinking, especially when an experience/discovery is intense (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 347).
unattainable without advances in intrapsychological development, a skill without which imaginative thinking could not develop.
Appendix A

Table 1.1 Preeminence of person deictic use over shifting perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literal Use: Birth- 2;1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-contrastive conversational deictic use.</td>
<td>Non-contrastive demonstrative use.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literal Use: 2;1- 2;8</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partial contrastive conversational deictic use.</td>
<td>Non-contrastive demonstrative use.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literal Use: 2;8- 3;4</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full contrastive conversational deictic use.</td>
<td>Partial contrastive demonstrative use: Proximal accurate from single/static contrast.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literal Use: 3;4- 4;1</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full contrastive conversational deictic use.</td>
<td>Partial contrastive demonstrative use: Proximal accurate from double/nonstatic contrast.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literal Use: 4;1- 4;8</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full contrastive conversational deictic use.</td>
<td>Partial contrastive demonstrative use: 60% accuracy of proximal/distal from double/nonstatic contrast.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphoric Use: 4;8+</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full contrastive conversational deictic use.</td>
<td>Full imaginative contrastive demonstrative use.</td>
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Ages derived from Tanz’s (2009 p. 87, 125) data and West’s (1986 p. 155 data).
Appendix B

Table 2.1

The Development of Shifting Conversational Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGES</th>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>Perspective Taking</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child ↓ Object</td>
<td>Child ↓ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimpanzoid</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Speech</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egocentric Speech</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inner Speech</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imaginative Speech</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*M= monologues; *T= thought
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