

## **Pragmatic Analysis of Opening-Closing Arguments at Trump's Impeachment Trial**

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**Abstract:** Donald Trump, the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, was impeached on the eighteenth of December in 2019, when the House of Representatives approved two articles of impeachment by which Trump was accused of power abuse and obstruction of Congress. Trump's impeachment trial was managed by the Democrats who presented the case before the Senate. Adam Schiff, the Head of the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, led a team of Democrats who laid out the charges detailing how Trump had abused his power. This paper presents a pragmatic analysis of Adam Schiff's opening and closing arguments at Trump's impeachment trial, particularly in relation to deixis and vagueness. Our analytical framework includes Levinson's classifications of person, time, and place deixis, along with those of Huang (2004), Fromkin et al. (2003) and Yule (1996). It also uses two models of vague category markers presented by Evinson, McCarthy, and O'Keeffe (2007) and Sabet and Zhang (2015). The results show that Schiff, in both arguments, employed deictic expressions as a pragmatic device serving the purpose of preciseness and presented vague category markers in a limited way. However, although Schiff's opening argument depended on addressing reason and using deixis to offer specific facts, it was characterized by repetitive language. His closing

argument, on the other hand, appealed to people's sentiments via the use of deixis followed by emotional descriptions. It is likely that Schiff's arguments were, to some extent, weakened by his repetitive and exaggerated language, which may have helped Trump's case.

**Keywords:** deictic expressions, pragmatics, Schiff's arguments, Trump impeachment, vague category markers

## INTRODUCTION

Impeachment in the United States is the process that can take place whenever a senior officer in the government is accused of committing crimes while in office. The impeached figure remains in office but has to go on a political trial in the Senate whose members issue their verdict as to the impeached figure's guilt or innocence. Donald Trump, the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, was impeached on the eighteenth of December 2019, when the House of Representatives approved two articles of impeachment by which Trump was accused of power abuse and obstruction of Congress. This is only the third time in American history that a president had to undergo an impeachment trial, a trial that would have resulted in his removal from the office if the Senate had condemned him. The House of Representatives accused Trump of power abuse because he held back on military aid to pressure Ukraine into announcing an investigation into his Democratic opponent, Joe Biden and his son, Hunter. Trump's second charge had to do with obstructing Congress. This was because the White House ordered officials to ignore the subpoenas issued to them demanding their attendance at the first impeachment hearing.

To convict Trump and, appropriately, oust him, a two-thirds majority in the Senate would have to vote to condemn him. Because the Senate majority is Republican, and Trump was the Republican president he was expected to be found guiltless. Over the first three days of Trump's impeachment, Adam Schiff, the Head of the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, led a team of Democrats who explained their reasons and gave evidence to show that Trump had abused his power when he withheld military aid and an invitation to the White House to the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky. By this act, Trump put pressure on Ukraine to announce an investigation into Joe Biden. The Democrats also charged Trump with motivating foreign interference in the 2020 American presidential election so that it might help his re-election campaign.

Adam Schiff, the impeachment manager and the Intelligence Committee Chairman, presented the charges against Trump in a manner so sharp it stirred Trump's fury. Schiff's arguments are the target of the analysis conducted in this paper. Consequently, this paper presents a pragmatic analysis of Adam Schiff's opening and closing arguments at the Trump impeachment trial. The opening argument took place on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, the closing argument on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.

This paper aims to examine Schiff's discourse in the light of the two pragmatic features of deixis and vagueness. A deictic expression, or deixis, points to a certain person or a certain time/place relative to the context of its utterance. It is the identification of persons, objects and events involved in a certain spatio-temporal context (Lyons, 1977). McNeill (2000) is of the opinion that studying authentic deictic expressions is a special task. This opinion may be justified on the grounds that deixis acts as a point of "juncture between grammar and context" (Hanks 1992, P. 47). Words such as "I", "now", and "here" show exactly the speaker, the time and the location of speech. Levinson (1983) classified deictic expressions into person, time, place, discourse and social deixis. In this paper, Levinson's classifications of person, time and place deixis, along with Huang's taxonomy (2004), that of Fromkin et al. (2003) and Yule

(1996) are of central concern. Contrary to the function of deictic expressions is that of vague expressions. Vague language is language that is imprecise when communicating an idea. Words such as “and something”, “and so on” and “and anything else” are used when the speaker is not sure of the details. This study employs two models of vague category markers, namely, Evinson, McCarthy, and O’Keeffe (2007) and Sabet and Zhang (2015).

The discourse investigation of Adam Schiff’s opening and closing arguments is significant in the sense that it clarifies the type of debates presented by the Democrats in terms of both their preciseness via the careful use of deictic expressions and their vagueness via the utilization of vague category markers. In this paper, we address the following research questions:

1. What are the instances of deixis and vagueness in Schiff’s opening and closing arguments at Trump’s impeachment?
2. What are the deictic expressions employed by Schiff in his arguments?
3. What are the vague category markers employed by Schiff?
4. How skillfully does Schiff use pragmatic tools to make his arguments more effective?

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **Pragmatics**

Pragmatics, a branch of Linguistics, deals with the relation between language and its context (Levinson, 1983). Accordingly, it is the investigation of any contextually-dependent linguistic phenomenon (Horn & Ward, 2006 and Ravindran & Amini, 2023).. Crystal (2008) considered pragmatics to be the study of “language from the point of view of its users, especially of the choices they make...” (364). Kearns (2000, p.1) explained the term pragmatics in reference to semantics. He believed that semantics “deals with the literal meaning” whereas pragmatics has to do with the ways this literal meaning “must be refined, enriched or extended to arrive at an understanding of what a speaker meant in uttering a particular expression”. Channell’s equation that “semantics+ pragmatics=meaning” is significant in its distinction between the literal meaning of words and their pragmatic meaning, what these words convey in their context (1994, p.31).

Pragmatics is about our recognition of what is intended as being the unarticulated meaning behind the actual words (Yule, 1996). Being meaning-focused (Kreidler, 1998), pragmatics is the science of language use and language users (Mey, 1994). Being contextually dependent, pragmatic meaning is pivotal in studying interactional meaning (Wierzbicka, 1991).

All definitions of pragmatics revolve around the notion of context. The simplest meaning of a context is what comes before/after a linguistic item; the words surrounding that item. Context, however, is much more than that as interpreting a certain intended meaning requires much more than just the associated interpretation of some surrounding words. Context refers to all conditions that have an impact on a communicative event and affect its generation. In this sense, context refers to participants, their positions, ideologies and the spatio-temporal conditions involved. This contextual information is needed in language decoding (Bunt, 2000).

Pragmatics has a wide scope including the study of politeness theory, the theory of implicature, speech acts, presuppositions, references and in/definiteness. Deixis, concerning the deictic or indexical expressions in language, and vagueness are the two pragmatic topics that form the analytical tools in this study.

## **Deictic Expressions (Deixis)**

Some words like “he” or “you” have a fixed meaning but diverse reference according to the situational context. These words are considered to be contextually-dependent references and are called deictic expressions (Carron, 1992). Levinson (1995, p.10) defined deictic expressions as being “Words or phrases that require contextual information to convey any meaning”. Meanwhile, Pedria Velasco (2016) illustrated in her studies that that deictic configuration advances “the construction of text worlds that the reader navigates, thus allowing for an interpretation...from within that perspective” (p.115). Deictic expressions are any linguistic elements that serve the function of pointing through the medium of language (Yule, 1996). Deixis is the property of some words to refer to certain features- of the interlocutors, their location and timing- in a specific situation (Crystal, 2008). Deixis, according to Horn and Ward (2004), is at the heart of pragmatics.

Levinson (1983) discusses deixis from both philosophical and descriptive points of view. The former addresses the truthfulness of an expression. The latter, the focus of this paper, presents illustrative categories of deixis. These categories included person, place and time.

### **Person Deixis**

Person deixis refers to the participants in a certain verbal event. First person has to do with the speaker's reference to him/herself, second person with the speaker's address to an addressee(s), and third person refers to neither the utterance speaker nor the addressee(s). Huang (2004) considers person deixis in English as being expressed either by personal pronouns or by vocatives. Vocatives are noun phrases which express titles, proper names and kinship terms. Yule (1996) explains that personal deictic expressions are three-dimensional as they include first, second and third person whether singular or plural, possessive or reflexive. Fromkin et al (2003) add that reflexive and possessive pronouns are also to be considered under this category. They also consider expressions such as this /that and these /those when followed by a noun to be deictic because their interpretation also requires understanding of the contextual utterance.

### **Time Deixis**

Time deixis, or temporal deixis, refers to the relation between the time of speaking and the speech act expressed. The following classification of time deixis is based on Levinson (1983). Tense in English is marked by:

1. Morphological inflections such as (-ed) referring to the past, (-s) referring to simple present third person.
2. The use of modals such as “will, shall”, or the use of the phrasal verb “be going to”.
3. Deictic time adverbs: now, then, soon, recently, lately.
4. Deictic words: today, tomorrow, yesterday.
5. Time adverbials: last Monday (last + a fixed point of time), next Monday (next + a fixed point of time), This afternoon (this + a fixed point of time).
6. A preposition + a period of time such as at midnight, at noon, on time, in the morning.

## **Place Deixis**

Place deixis, or spatial deixis, is about the relation between speakers/addressees of an utterance and its space or location. Location can be marked by the use of adverbs such as “here” (proximal) and “there” (distal), demonstratives as “this” (proximal), “that” (distal), “these” (proximal) and “those” (distal), and prepositions as “in, on, at”.

Levinson (1983) also discusses discourse deixis and social deixis. The former refers to the manner a piece of discourse is related to the surrounding textual elements. The latter, discourse deixis, refers to the way social identities are encoded in discourse. This research is concerned with personal, temporal and spatial deictic expressions as pragmatic tools which specify the personal identities involved and the relative temporal/ spatial setting. Being a grammatical category referring to specific situational features (Crystal, 1992), deictic expressions are a pragmatic apparatus designating the circumstances and elements of a verbal act (Levinson, 2004). This process is context-dependent as it relies on identifying the addressor/addressees and their contextual features to explicate the deixis (Kearns, 2000). Deictic expressions cannot be decoded without an evident understanding of the context and its related features such as the participants, their roles, the setting and the timing of the speech event.

## **Vague Category Markers/ General Extenders**

Vagueness is contrary to preciseness. Accordingly, being vague entails an evasion of deixis because using deictic expressions depends on the accurate identification of the entities replaced by deixis. Vague language displays an avoidance of definiteness and a preference for generalizations. Using hedges is a method of being vague (Channell, 1983).

Evinson, McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2007) list a classification of vague category markers which we have adopted as the framework according to which we investigate vagueness in Schiff’s discourse.

Another taxonomy of general extenders is presented by Sabet and Zhang (2015). Their classification included subjectivizers, possibility indicators, vague quantifiers, vague intensifiers and placeholders. Subjectivizers are indicated by “I think, I believe, I know”. Possibility indicators refer to words such as “may, might, possible”. Vague quantifiers are words like “some, many, few, majority”. Vague intensifiers are like “too, so, very”. Placeholders are exemplified by “someone, thing, anybody”. This taxonomy is the point of reference of the analysis of general extenders applied here.

## **Some Related Studies**

Green (1992) examined deixis in some selected lyric poems of Vaughan, Wordsworth, Pound and Ashbery. The study concluded that deixis reflects the subjectivity of the poetic persona and, moreover, there are deictic elements that are constant across stylistic borders. Diessel (2012) presented a discussion concerning the use of deixis and its meaning, the psychological foundation of deictic expressions and deixis in world languages. The research states that person deixis is similar to demonstratives and serves a major function in human interaction. Dewi (2013) analyzed deictic expressions in “The Child in the Grave” by Hans Christian Andersen. The results show pronoun references to be the most frequently-used category. Other types of deixis, however, such as time, space, discourse and social deixis also occur. Quinto (2014) illustrated deictic expressions in a presidential speech in the Philippines. The paper concludes that personal, temporal, spatial and social deixis all helped to convince the public. Williams (2019) explains the role of deixis as deictic reference and lists the types of such references. The

conclusion states that deictic expressions deserve more focus from a linguistic perspective (Ewata, 2023).

As for Vagueness, on the other hand, Cutting (2007) edited “Vague Language Explored” which collects many articles discussing vague language in differing fields and settings with an emphasis on the social functions of vagueness.

Alkhatanai (2017) explores the social role of vague language. His paper concludes that vague language exists in almost all cultures and that vague language is used on purpose to avoid being definite and authoritative. Malyuga & McCarthy (2018) investigate vague category markers in English and Russian business discourse. They conclude that both languages make use of vague category markers and these markers function to protect the speaker from decisive opinions and comments. Lee & Zhang (2018) conduct a comparative study, researching the use of “some” in educational settings. They also explain the pragmatic function of “some” as a vague marker to denote mitigation and provide the right amount of information.

These studies are some examples of the use of deixis and vagueness as pragmatic tools in various settings. It is noticeable that developing an approach to investigate both tools in such an institutional setting as the American Congress/Senate - in such a critical case as impeaching the president of the United States in an attempt to remove him - is absent. The discourse delivered by Adam Schiff is here pragmatically analyzed as to two features, being definite via deixis or fuzzy via vagueness, to shed light on the strategies Schiff used to convince Americans the political charges against Trump were justified.

## METHODOLOGY

A transcript of Adam Schiff's opening argument is available online at (<https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/impeachment-trial-day-2-transcript-adam-schiff-opening-argument-speech-transcript>). One for his closing argument is available at (<https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/adam-schiff-closing-argument-transcript-thursday-impeachment-trial>). Both transcripts were downloaded and saved in separate files. Each file was analyzed manually so that instances of deictic expressions and vague category markers could be detected and explained. A qualitative analysis of Schiff's meanings in context whenever he selected a deictic expression or a vague marker provides an explanation.

Schiff's arguments were selected as the database of this investigation because they epitomize the Democrats' verbal fight to remove Trump. Removing a president requires unimpeachable facts presented in a well-defined context. Hence, Schiff's arguments which were aimed at removing Trump became the target of this pragmatic analysis.

The framework of analysis is based on the pragmatic apparatus of deictic expressions and vague category markers. Deixis signifies definite discourse. Vague markers mark undefined discourse. Consequently, examining deixis and vague markers and their distribution may indicate the degree of preciseness signaled by discourse.

Based on Levinson (1983), Huang (2004), Fromkin et al. (2003), and Yule (1996), the categories for classifying person deixis are summarized in the following table:

**Table 1:** *Person Deixis in English*

Category	Singular Pronouns	Plural Pronouns
First Person Pronoun (the current speaker)	I (Nominative) me (Accusative)	we (Nominative) us (Accusative)
Second Person Pronoun (the addressee)	you (Nominative) you (Accusative)	you (Nominative) you (Accusative)

*continued*

Third Person Pronoun (Neither the speaker nor the addressee)	he (Nominative/Masculine) she (Nominative/Feminine) him (Accusative/Masculine) her (Accusative/Feminine) it (Nominative/Accusative/Neuter)	they (Nominative) them (Accusative)
Possessive pronouns	mine, yours, his, hers, its	ours, yours, theirs
Reflexive Pronouns	myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself	ourselves, yourselves, themselves
Possessive adjectives	my, your, his, her, its	our, your, their
Vocatives: Addressees	(you) Sir, Mr., Dr., Jane	
Vocatives: Calls/Summons	Hi cousin, Prof. John, mother.	
Expressions	this/that + noun	these/those+noun

Based on Levinson (1983), the following table is prepared to summarize time deixis:

**Table 2: Time Deixis in English**

Tense Morphology	Past marked by Verb +(-ed), Present marked by Verb +(-s)
Tense (marked by modality)	Future marked by will, shall
Tense (marked in the verb phrases)	Future marked by (be +going to)
Deictic time adverbs	now, then, soon, recently, lately
Deictic Words	today, tomorrow, yesterday
Time adverbials	last, next, this + a fixed point of time
Spatial prepositions+ a time period	in, on, at+ a period of time

Based on Levinson (1983), the following table is prepared to summarize place deixis:

**Table 3: Place Deixis in English**

Adverbs	here (proximal)/there (distal)
Demonstratives	this/these (proximal), that/those (distal)
Spatial Prepositions	in, on, at + a location point

The following table, adopted from Evinson, McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2007), presents the categories of vague language examined in this paper:

**Table 4: Vague category markers in Evinson, McCarthy And O’Keeffe (2007)**

Vague Category Markers:
and/or [something/anything/everything] (like that)
(and/or) (X) stuff (like that/X)
and (all) (of) that
(and/or) thing(s) (like that/X)
(all) [this/that/these/those] [kind(s)/sort(s)/type(s)] of X
(or) whatever
and so on (and so forth)
et cetera (et cetera)
Xs like that
and all the rest of it
(and) this that and the other

Sabet and Zhang’s taxonomy (2015) of general extenders is summarized in the following table:

**Table 5:** Sabet and Zhang's (2015) General Extenders

Vague Category Markers	Examples
Subjectivizers	I think
Possibility Indicators	may
Vague Quantifiers	some
Vague Intensifiers	very
Placeholders	someone

Based on the classifications of deictic expressions and vague category markers presented in the previous tables, the pragmatics of Schiff's opening and closing discourses in Trump's trial are examined in the next section.

## FINDINGS

### Schiff's opening argument

#### Deictic expressions

Schiff opens his argument by quoting Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton is a lawyer, a politician and one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. Schiff uses the quote "When a man unprincipled in private life, desperate in his fortune, bold in his temper..." to solicit the conviction that a man like Donald Trump is a true example of the threat that Hamilton warned against so long ago. Via the demonstrative "these words", Schiff precisely identifies the location and time of the original quote "were written by Alexander Hamilton in a letter to President George Washington at the height of the panic of 1792". The demonstrative, time and place deixis specify a past event and serve two purposes: arousing listeners' attention and inducing a comparison between the past crisis and the present.

Comparing the past to the present is made evident by Schiff's use of past tense morphology accompanied by the deictic time adverb in "the framers worried then", which is followed by present tense morphology with a deictic adverb indicating present time "as we worry today". Schiff utilizes person deixis to create two poles: one is "our young nation, our democracy, our founders, we"; the other pole is about Trump "a leader...to pursue his own interests, abusing the awesome power of his office for his own personal or political gain". In doing so, Trump is excluded from the in-group of true Americans. Schiff uses third-person deixis followed by negative descriptions in his reference to Trump. On the contrary, first-person deictic expressions are selected when referring to other Americans including Schiff, the Democrats and the Founders. Person deixis, in this concern, sets the scene for Schiff's argument in which he intends to expose Trump.

After that, Schiff uses deictic expressions to narrate the recent events with all their details:

*We are here today in this hallowed chamber undertaking this solemn action [...] because Donald J. Trump, [...] solicited foreign interference in our democratic elections abusing the power of his office ...*

Person deictic expressions such as "we, he (Donald J. Trump), our democratic elections" present the participants sharing the event. Schiff's reference to Trump's impeachment by the proximal demonstrative "this action" delivers the meaning that the trial is actually under way. The temporal deictic expression "today" refers to the relation between the event, Trump's impeachment, and the time of speaking. Place deixis, "here, in this hallowed



chamber”, is about the relation between the participants and the significance of the space. Again, person deixis connects Trump with bad traits as “abusing the power of his office to seek help from abroad to improve his reelection prospects at home” and “his own misconduct”. Schiff describes Trump’s act as “this corrupt scheme”, in which the use of the proximal demonstrative brings Trump’s action closer to Americans. It is noticeable that Schiff uses present tense morphology whenever he mentions “we”, referring to the Democrats and Americans. Conversely, whenever he mentions the charges against Trump, past tense morphology is employed. Schiff adds authenticity to his argument through shifting tense according to the event narrated.

Schiff’s version of Trump’s action always refers to Trump with third person deixis, followed by negative depictions, excluding Trump from the rest of Americans:

*President Trump [...] to secure foreign help with his reelection [...] used official state powers available only to him [...] to advantage himself [...] His scheme [...] help him win reelection in 2020 [...] President Trump used [...] authority at his disposal as commander in chief to cover up his wrongdoing.*

Whenever first-person deixis is mentioned, Schiff talks about Americans and democracy, “our election”. Whenever third person deixis is indicated, Schiff recalls Trump and the charges against him, “his misconduct”. First person deixis “we, our” is contrasted with third person deixis “he, his”. Schiff usually presents Trump as an outsider, who is not included in the plural person deixis “we”. He, being an intruder, is shown to be a threat to Americans: “to undermine our free and fair elections and to put our national security at risk...our democracy”. Schiff employs future tense morphology marked by “will” and the deictic time adverb “permanently” to define the continuing duration of Trump’s negative effects on America.

The proximal demonstrative in “this egregious misconduct” points out that Trump’s charge is still close and affecting all Americans. Consequently, Schiff justifies the current trial saying “we are here today... For precisely this reason”. Schiff sets the elements of his version once more via deixis. Participants are denoted by person deixis “we”, authenticity is expressed by present tense morphology “are”, location is manifest by the spatial/proximal adverb “here” and time is clarified by the deictic word “today”. When Schiff says “For precisely this reason”, he utilizes a proximal demonstrative to connect what is said before to what follows. Schiff’s reason is stated by third person deixis associating Trump with bad features: “*In corruptly using his office [...] into his own wrongdoing* “. It is noticeable that Schiff shows harmony in his choice of expressions, “here, today, this”, that denote the closeness of Trump’s deed.

Schiff is precise and self-confident. He knows the steps to be taken. So, he explains his version of the coming incidents via skillful use of temporal deixis “Over the coming days” and “During our presentation”, which conveys to listeners that the trial will stretch over days. Participants involved in Schiff’s narrated events are the Americans “we” on the one hand, and Trump who is referred to by “his unprecedented and wholesale obstruction” on the other hand. Again, Trump is presented as a dangerous stranger, as signified by third person deixis followed by negative adjectives. The future marked by “will” is apt for Schiff’s outlining of the happenings to come: “you will see documentary records, ... You will learn, ... you will see dozens of new documents”.

Schiff details precisely the story which led to Trump’s impeachment. The storyline participants are “Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, President Donald J. Trump, Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, former Vice-President Joe Biden”. These figures are included in a narrative that is located by the spatial preposition “in” America. The time

frame is signified by spatial prepositions denoting temporal deixis “On September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the next day, on September 25<sup>th</sup>”. The relevant activity has to do with Trump’s use of “his high office to press the leader of a foreign country to do his political dirty work”. The third person deixis “his” associates Trump with dirt.

Once Trump is associated with dirt, Schiff shifts deixis to first person expressions so that he may emphasize the contrast between “we” and “he”. In his narration of the consequences of Trump’s deed, Schiff employs first person deixis to refer to the good party, the Americans who are harmed by Trump:

*(Trump undermined) integrity of our free and fair elections [...] our most sacred right as citizens: our right to freely choose our leaders. And he threatened our national security [...] the President sacrificed not only the security of our European allies, but also our nation’s core national security interests.*

Reference to Trump’s deed continues to be via proximal demonstratives “this pressure campaign”, “this scheme”, “These facts”, which confirm the close threat formed by Trump. Schiff’s preference for proximal deictic expressions when explaining Trump’s charges is appropriate. These expressions make Americans feel and fear the danger nearby. Schiff skillfully employs third person deixis to narrate Trump’s charge: “he abused ... his power for personal gain, ... in his reelection”. Third person deixis is continuously employed to refer to Trump and negative descriptions. This time Schiff employs a proximal demonstrative to confirm, again, the close danger and the due reaction: “*if this conduct is not impeachable, then nothing is*”. Present tense morphology serves Schiff’s reliability.

Schiff creates a storyline with its entire elements. Temporal deixis specifies the exact date “three days in July, the 24<sup>th</sup>, the 25<sup>th</sup>, and the 26<sup>th</sup>”. The main participants include Trump, “his own reelection”, a foreign country from which he solicits assistance, and Special Counsel Mueller. Within this major story, Schiff narrates three stories pertaining to each day. Time deixis specifies the first story’s temporal setting “On the 24<sup>th</sup>”. Person deixis identifies major participants “our 2016 election”, “the Trump campaign” and “it” which refers to Russian interference. The spatial preposition “in” identifies the location of the story in America: “in our 2016 election”. Past tense morphology identifies the event’s relation to the previous election.

The timing of the second story is indicated by “The 25<sup>th</sup> is the day of the call”. Main participants are “the call, Trump, the Ukrainian president, former Vice President Biden”. Location is indirectly set by referring to “the day of the call”, which takes place in America and simultaneously in Ukraine. Person deictic expressions “his welcoming, help him” refer to Trump. Tense morphology shifts to present, in reference to the event relatedness to the current time.

The third story timeline is indicated by the deictic time adverb “then” followed by a spatial preposition accompanying a specific time “the third day in a row in July”. Person deictic expressions include “his request, it, he wanted” which refer to Trump as being the main participant. Tense shifts to past simple.

Three days in July. In many ways, those three days in July tell so much of this story. This course of conduct alone should astound all of us who value the sanctity of our elections and who understand that the vast powers of the presidency are reserved only for actions which benefit the country as a whole, rather than the political fortunes of any one individual. President Trump’s effort to use an official head of state phone call to solicit the announcement of investigations helpful to his reelection is not only conduct

unbecoming a president, but is conduct of one who believes that the powers of his high office are political tools to be wielded against his opponents, including by asking a foreign government to investigate a United States citizen and for a corrupt purpose. That alone is grounds for removal from office of the 45<sup>th</sup> president, but these three days in July were neither the beginning, nor the end, of this scheme.

Schiff provides a conclusion to his story, as shown in the quote above. “Three days in July” signifies the general timeframe. Location is understood by the proximal demonstratives “this story” and “this course of conduct”, which implicate the closeness of the story and Trump’s threat thereabout in America. Person deixis “us”, “our election,” and “his high office”, “his opponents” refresh the memory about the polarization established between the good, i.e., “us” and the bad, i.e., “him”. The proximal demonstrative “these three days in July” indicate the nearer danger imposed by Trump. Schiff’s use of present tense morphology to confirm his fact-based version adds credibility to his words.

Schiff repeats Trump’s charges over and over. Deixis, again, serves the context of emphasizing Trump’s ill-doings. Person deixis - such as “it”, “Trump” himself, “his abrupt decision”, “he”, and “his reelection campaign” - illustrates Trump’s accusation with clear references. Temporal deixis “in 2019” is about the exact time Trump held back aid to exert pressure on Ukraine. Place is understood because Trump means that America is the concerned location. Reference to the American aid by “these funds” means that the concerned funds are within the reach of all Americans because it is the money of the Americans. Reference to Trump’s act “this obstruction” signifies the crisis nearby.

Schiff’s use of first-person deixis to refer to both himself and the Americans presupposes his steady belief that he belongs to the in-group of Americans sharing the same present and future aspirations: “our presidents”, “our election”, “I hope that we”, and “we are going to say”. He isolates Trump as not belonging to the in-group of the Americans and, at the same time, highlights his own perspective of Trump considering himself “above the law”. Schiff moves to produce a horrifying storyline which all Americans will suffer from in case Trump is exculpated:

If we don’t stand up to this peril today, we will write the history of our decline with our own hand... of this descent from democracy will be a weakened trust in the integrity of our elections.

Person deixis, in the previous extract, continues to adopt the plural first-person “we” and “our” and, hence, confirms the common spirit gathering all Americans. “Today” is a deictic word presupposing the need for an urgent decision. The proximal demonstrative “this” threatens the Americans that “peril” and “descent” are immediate dangers. To recreate the two poles between “we” and “him”, Schiff foregrounds Trump’s isolation via third-person deixis “Trump’s abuse of powers of his office”. Schiff attempts to invoke the power of all Americans saying “we have guard rails built into our democratic system. We have campaign finance laws”. In doing so, he constructs an in-group of himself and all other Americans and argues that this group is morally obliged to unite and take action against Trump.

Schiff strives to arouse fear and worry in his audience when he says that freedom may not continue. He sets a time contrast between “this year”, “today” and “the next year” to motivate people to support his plea for fear of losing democracy. He employs first person plural deixis “we” and temporal deixis “right now” to affirm urgent in-group collaboration:

We’re fighting for it right now. There’s no guarantee that this democracy that has served us so well will continue to prosper. We will struggle to protect this idea, and even as we do, we will struggle to protect our security

Schiff continues to emphasize the trouble Americans are in, saying:

*If we allow the President of United States to pursue his political and personal interests rather than the national interests, we send a message to our European allies that our commitment to a Europe free and whole is for sale to the highest bidder*

Again, first person plural deictic expressions “we, our” confront “his [...] interests”. This polarization is, again, contextually emphasized through the contrastive use of “our” versus “his”:

*...he does not, under our laws and under our constitution, have a right to use the powers of his office to corruptly solicit foreign aid, [...] in his reelection [...] to undermine our elections [...] His obstruction strikes at the heart of our constitution. It [...] our founders [...] our system [...] our democracy.*

Schiff, via person deixis, keeps his endeavor to present Trump as a separate entity: “What we confront here”. Proximal adverb “here” and plural pronoun “we” require that Americans should work together because they are so close to the danger posed by the intruder “he” or Trump: “he sees himself as above the law. His actions destabilize ... our democracy and our freedom”.

Schiff knows that the Republicans will support Trump. That is why he employs person deixis to embarrass them:

*... we all, Democrats and Republicans alike, must ask ourselves whether our loyalty is to our party or whether it is to our constitution [...] But if we fail to act, the damage to our democratic elections, to our national security, to our system of checks and balances, will be long lasting and potentially irreversible. As you will hear in the coming days, President Trump [...] His conduct has violated his oath of office and his constitutional duty ...*

Plural person deixis in “we”, “our”, and “ourselves” refers, this time, to both the Democrats and the Republicans. The personal pronoun “his” displaces Trump away from his own party. Present simple tense is the best indicator of authenticity.

Schiff addresses the Republicans warning them against backing Trump saying “then he truly is above the law ..., but our future is not assured”. Person deixis serves the intended division between “he” and “our”. Time indicator is “then”, in reference to any attempt to back Trump. The locative deixis “above” places Trump in a position superior to the people, which is against democracy. Schiff concludes his opening argument using first person plural deixis, referring to the Democrats and the Republicans together, to present a way out “impartial consideration ... against the president is how we keep our republic. That concludes our introduction”. It is noticed that “our introduction” is used instead of “my introduction”. Schiff seems to consider his words to pertain to all Americans.

## Vague Category Markers

Vague category markers are not obviously noticed. This means that Schiff is making mainly well-defined references to indicate accurately his intended message. Examples of vagueness include the following categories:

1. Possibility indicators: “a leader might come to power”, “the framers might have responded”, “maybe because of their brilliance”, “may have had”, and “I guess maybe the president really is above the law”.
2. Vague quantifiers: “some very painful”, “Trump intentionally bypassed many US government career officials”, “some of you on this committee”, “there’s a lot of talk about Biden’s son”, “Those three days, ... reveal a lot”, “In many ways, those three days in July tell so much”, and “Let’s look at some of the evidence”.
3. Placeholders: “to do anything he wanted”, “That should tell us something.”, “somehow, for some reason Ukraine did”, “That (Trump-Zelensky’s phone call) should tell us something, and “server somewhere in Ukraine”.
4. Subjectiviers: “I think”, “I suggest to you”, and “I guess ... the president really is above the law”.
5. Vague intensifiers “... president really is above the law”, “whatever you can do”, and “(Trump’s action) It’s kind of cheating”.

Schiff uses vague markers in a limited way. He resorts to vagueness to serve the purpose of offering the right amount of information. Nearly all the examples of general extenders in his opening argument are included. These few examples prove that Schiff has a specific cause based on fixed facts. This limited use of general extenders is suitable in such a critical situation as Trump’s impeachment trial.

## Schiff’s closing argument

### Deictic expressions

Schiff, when he closed his argument, was reported by the press to have delivered an emotional statement. The analysis of his opening argument has shown that he attends to logic and reason through his precise use of deixis with definite references to persons, time and location. This section investigates his closing statement in order to decide whether Schiff continues to address his audience’s logic and reason or has moved to address their emotions.

*But even now, our ally can’t get his foot in the door. Even now, our ally can’t get his foot in the door. This brings me the last point I want to make tonight, which is, when we’re done, we believe that we will have made the case overwhelmingly of the President’s guilt. That is, he’s done what he’s charged with. He withheld the money. He withheld the meeting. He used it to coerce Ukraine to do these political investigations. He covered it up. He obstructed us. He’s trying to obstruct you and he’s violated the Constitution. But I want to address one other thing tonight. Okay. He’s guilty. Okay. He’s guilty. Does he really need to be removed? Does he really need to be removed? We have an election coming up. Does he really need to be removed? He’s guilty. Is there really any doubt about this?*

Schiff initiates his statement referring to the expected outcome of the trial still under way. The Democrats alone are unable to remove Trump: “even now, our ally can’t get his foot in the door”. The previous remark has a temporal setting and person deixis denoting the polarization in American society between the Democrats and the Republicans, “our ally”. Schiff proceeds with employing third-person deixis in referring to Trump: “*He withheld the money. He withheld the meeting. He used it to coerce Ukraine to do these political investigations. He covered it up. He obstructed us*”.

As in the opening statement, Schiff continues to construct two groups the Americans vs Trump via using plural first-person deixis to refer to the Democrats or the Americans in general and third-person deixis to refer to Trump. The use of proximal demonstratives, “this” and “these”, to modify Trump’s acts enhances the closeness and impact of Trump’s negative acts on the people. Past tense morphology is employed to signify the completion of each aspect of Trump’s misconduct. Moreover, Schiff shifts tense morphology to the present so that he may spell out Trump’s continuing efforts to veil facts “*He’s trying to obstruct you and he’s violated the Constitution*”. Related to present tense use is Schiff’s use of proximal deictic expressions which keep the crime always present in the mind “about this (Trump’s guilt)”, “the facts here”, “here with this President”. This part of Schiff’s statement motivates reasonable thinking by presenting the facts that condemn Trump.

Schiff says that Trump’s actions “make him dangerous to us, to our country”. Again, person deixis indicates two divisions: “him” versus “us” and “our country”. Trump is shown to be alone in his guilt. He is shown to face the in-group of all Americans. This meaning echoes Schiff’s opening statement. Schiff describes Trump as being “dangerous” to the United States and the Americans for misusing his power. This description pertains to sentiment more than to logic. Schiff’s use of the present tense activates the image of the actual danger posed by Trump. This part is totally emotional.

Another emotional description is Schiff’s depiction that America will suffer from “damage” if Trump stays till the election: “Now, you may be asking how much damage can he really do in the next several months until the election”. Two deictic expressions set two times “now” and “in the next several months”. The former refers to the trial time; the latter to the coming election. Schiff intends to display an extended period of time to arouse people’s fear of Trump’s deeds during that long period.

“*[O]ur election*” and “*our national interest*” are reported via person deixis to be in confrontation with “*his own personal interest*”. Though the clash between Americans’ and Trump’s interests is a logical description, depicting Trump as being a close danger is another emotional communication: “makes him dangerous to this country”. A notable feature of Schiff’s closing discourse is repetition. He repeats the same words, the same deixis with the same referential meanings:

*You know you can’t. You know you can’t count on him. None of us can. None of us can... You know you can’t count on him... You know you can’t count on him... The American people deserve a President they can count on to put their interests first, to put their interests first.*

Over repetitions and emotional descriptions are not suitable for formal or critical statements.

Schiff ends with an emotional plea for Trump’s impeachment trial. Deictic expressions identify the location “here”, the persons involved “us”, “this country” and “he”. Time deixis is very interesting as it illustrates the future “You can trust he will do

what's right for Donald Trump... He'll do it for the next several months. He'll do it in the election", the present "He'll do it now", and the past "He's done it before". Temporal deictic expressions are employed to cover the past, the present and the future in an attempt to make the people fear the present and their future life in case Trump stays. This is, again, an emotional style. Schiff concludes with the purely emotional warning that if Trump stays in power "we are lost". The person deixis "we" followed by the present tense morphology predicts the authentic danger threatening all Americans.

### **Vague Category Markers**

Schiff hardly employs vagueness. Limited examples of general extenders are detected and these include:

1. Vague intensifiers: "really", "pretty obvious", and "somewhat"
2. Vague quantifiers: "a lot of damage"
3. Possibility indicators: "maybe"

## **DISCUSSION**

Purely formal settings impose a certain communicative discourse pertaining to rational facts (Crystal, 1992). In the case of Trump's impeachment, the polarization in discourse via positive self/in-group representation and negative other/out-group representation seems to be the core of Schiff's discourse in Trump's trial (Bunt, 2000). Schiff concentrated on logic and reason through his precise use of deixis with definite references to persons, time and location, while the vague category markers employed were vague intensifiers (really, pretty obvious, somewhat), vague quantifiers (a lot of damage) and possibility indicators (maybe).

Schiff has deviated from the standards of reasonable argumentative discourse in his attempt to influence people's emotions via overstated negative descriptions. Using overblown discourse in his closing statement to characterize Trump, Schiff misjudged what impeaching a president involves. Though Schiff employs time deixis to signify the current crisis, place deixis to confirm the proximity of Trump's misconduct and person deixis to signal Trump as an outsider, repeating these expressions time and again seems to be inadequate in such a formal setting (Kearns, 2000). Though Schiff's use of deictic expressions exceeds that of general extenders, his very preciseness is negatively affected by his recurring discourses (Levinson, 2004). Had purely objective evidence been presented in a more reasonable discourse; Schiff and the Democrats might have succeeded in convicting Trump.

## **CONCLUSION**

Throughout his opening argument, Schiff successfully employs deictic expressions to serve more than one purpose. First, Schiff uses deixis to establish two poles: one is referred to by first person deixis "we, our" signifying an in-group relation. Trump is located at the other pole, referred to by third person deixis "he, his" so that he may be excluded from the in-group relation. First person deixis is always followed by positive descriptions; third person deixis is always connected with negative traits. Accordingly, Schiff uses person deixis with precision to position Trump as an outsider associated with unpleasant effects. Second, Schiff uses proximal demonstratives "this, these" and proximal adverbs "here" to suggest the threat due to Trump's misconduct is close. This is a justification for the trial. Third, Schiff creates a deixis-based

storyline narrating Trump's charges. Participants, spatial and temporal features of the story are well-defined. Fourth, he employs person deixis "we", "ourselves", and "our" to include the Republicans with the Democrats in an attempt to make the Republicans feel more responsible for the constitution than for their party's interests.

The limited number of general extenders in Schiff's opening discourse results from his mostly employing precise expressions and identified references in order to appeal to Americans' reason. His logical presentation aims to convince all Americans that Trump is not qualified to hold responsibility for the nation.

In his concluding argument, Schiff uses deictic expressions associated with emotional descriptions to activate an exaggerated image of Trump's effects on Americans in the case of his remaining in office. In consequence, deictic expressions referring to Trump are followed by moving depictions of Trump's being a "danger" and causing "damage" which will lead to the Americans being "lost". Emotional language and exaggerated illustrations however were not required in such a critically formal situation as Trump's trial.

Schiff's closing argument is shorter than his opening. The number of general extenders is very limited. This may be due to his greater focus on deixis so that he may offer an accurate presentation.

Both arguments have deictic expressions as their main pragmatic device serving the purpose of preciseness, a thing which is proper in presidential trials. Both arguments present, consequently, vague category markers in a limited way. This practice would be appropriate to any formal setting. Both arguments are filled with repeated details referring to Trump's charges. Where Schiff's opening argument depends on reason, using deixis to offer specific facts, his closing one seems designed to affect people's sentiments via the use of deixis followed by emotional descriptions. That is why, to us, his opening argument is more adequate because Trump's impeachment trial was an event requiring logical persuasion through reasoning more than exaggerated language. Over-repetition, emotional language and exaggerated description are inappropriate in a trial.

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