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**Research Paper**

**A cognitive-stylistic study of deixis and deictic shifting  
in Iris Murdoch's *The Bell***

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**Abstract**

In cognitive stylistics, “deixis” is deemed one of the core linguistic elements through which both the physical and ideological stances of the participants in fictional narratives, namely the narrator and the character(-focalizer)s, are demonstrated. This study aims at investigating the cognitive functions of the different kinds of deixis, i.e., perceptual, spatial, temporal, social, textual, and compositional deixis, in *The Bell* (1958), a critically acclaimed novel by the British philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch. Because of its special narrative discourse, in particular the use of variable internal focalization, Murdoch’s novel proves to be a proper case for exploring how deixis impacts upon the (implied) reader’s cognition of the story. Thus, utilizing a descriptive-analytic method, the present research examines the text worlds and mind styles shaped in this novel through various kinds of deixis, among other textual elements, and explores the relationship between these text worlds and the way they inform the reading process. To achieve this goal, this qualitative study draws upon the cognitive deixis theory to examine selected extracts from Dora Greenfield’s and Toby Gashe’s discourses in this novel, as two of the major character-focalizers. The findings suggest that deictic expressions serve a significant function in appreciating the characterization of the fictional personages, their relations, and consequently the narrative’s overall theme, thereby affecting and somehow directing the reading process. This mainly occurs through the reader’s cognitive pushes and pops in and out of the different layers of the narrative discourse as well as projecting the narrator’s and character-focalizers’ text worlds or deictic fields and constantly shifting among them. By foregrounding the role of deixis in narration, this study carries significant implications for cognitive stylistics of prose fictional narratives, providing a deeper appreciation of the relationships between characters and between characters and fictional settings in such texts.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Stylistics (Poetics), Deixis, Deictic Shifting, Text World, Focalization, Iris Murdoch’s *The Bell*

**1. Introduction**

The relation between linguistics and literary analysis has been reciprocal since, on the one hand, reliable data on the structure and functions of verbal language can be derived from literary texts and, on the other, linguistic frameworks offer more systematic and detailed tools for describing the *modus operandi* of language in literature, interpreting the

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thematic structure of literary works, and recognizing their aesthetic value (Verdonk, 2002; Freeman, 2007). Cognitive linguistics, as Tenbrink (2020) asserts, investigates “how the physical world and the human body relate to thought and language” (p. 57). Cognitive stylistics or cognitive poetics, as a major branch of this discipline, explores the interconnection of language and human cognition in literary texts as products of artistic creation (Dancygier, 2012, 2017). Cognitive stylistics has been established in recent years in the wake of the accelerated developments in various domains of cognitive linguistics, including cognitive grammar (see Langacker, 1987), conceptual metaphor theory (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), mental spaces and conceptual blending theory (see Fauconnier, 1994; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) and cognitive discourse analysis (see Sanders, Schilperoord & Spooren, 2001), among other areas.

One of the textual elements examined in cognitive linguistics is “deixis,” a linguistic element that demonstrates the dependency of speech events on the language user’s subjective experience and spatio-temporal context (Green, 2016). Accordingly, the function of deictic expressions is “pointing” to the reference entities within the contextual framework of the verbal communication (Short, 2013). As Galbraith (2009) explains, scholars in philosophy, linguistics, and narrative theory “have variously named this aspect of language *egocentric particulars* (Russell), *shifters* (Jespersen, Jakobson), *indexicals* (Peirce), *token-reflexives* (Reichenbach), *occasional terms* (Husserl), or *deictics* (Bühler),” but by these terms they invariably “designate those words and aspects of language that can only be understood with reference to a NOW, a HERE, and an I” (p. 20). Of all these terms, Karl Bühler’s “deictics” is now established as the standard term in linguistic and stylistic studies.

A basic assumption in cognitive stylistics is that “literary discourse and non-fiction discourse rely on similar meaning-construction processes, such as metaphor and metonymy, inference, reasoning, etc., but the syntactic complexity and the richness of the experiential images is often significantly increased in literature” (Dancygier, 2017, p. 622). Therefore, “cognitive linguistic tools help explain some important aspects of narrative interpretation” (Dancygier, 2017, p. 612). Since the physical, psychological, and ideological positioning of fictional characters is of prime importance in constructing both the story world and the narrative discourse in literature—especially in terms of such narrative-discursive elements as voice, time manipulation, characterization, focalization, and representation of characters’ discourses (see Rimmon-Kenan, 2002)—analyzing deixis in prose fictional narratives can be an integral and intriguing part of any stylistic study of this literary form (Verdonk, 2002). From a cognitive-linguistic vantage point, deictic expressions also play a significant part in constructing the “text worlds” of the agents involved in the speech event—a part that is no less significant in defining the relations among the actual and fictional agents participating in the process of literary production and reception (see Stockwell, 2019).

One of the prominent twentieth-century realist English novels which has a convoluted narrative discourse is *The Bell*, the fourth novel written by the British writer and philosopher Iris Murdoch and first published in 1958. Dealing with the themes of self-flourishing and the relation between individual freedom and religious/male authority, this philosophical-ethical novel is set in a lay religious community in Gloucestershire, where an Abbey and a court are separated by a mysterious lake. There is a bell tower close to the Abbey without any actual bell and, as Paul Greenfield explains to his wife Dora in the novel, the origin of the missing bell goes back to the twelfth century, with a magical and mythical story behind it. A new bell is arriving at the Abbey to be installed in the tower soon but, a series of strange events happen on the day of installation that change the direction of the narration and the fates of the principal characters. The thematic structure of the novel consists of a crisscross of emotional and ethical conflicts experienced by the main characters of the story, including Michael Meade, a priest and the leader of the community, Dora Greenfield, a young woman who has returned to his husband Paul after a six-month separation, Nick and Catherine Fawley, troubled siblings both in love with the same person, as well as James Tayper Pace and Toby Gashe, who are looking for spiritual growth by avoiding the ordinary life outside of the Abbey. Murdoch’s text skillfully reveals the characters’ inner conflicts about their beliefs and/or feelings and in the course of the narrative demonstrates how they eventually manage to come to terms with these crisscrossing tensions.

Deixis is one of the crucial verbal elements in *The Bell* through which the reader can connect to the different voices and consciousnesses depicted in this polyphonic text and identify with the major *dramatis personae*. Thus, how the (implied) reader’s cognitive stance is shaped by the deictic expressions of the text in relation to the characters’ discourses merits a detailed analysis. The present study argues that deixis and deictic shifting are among the principal devices deployed in Murdoch’s narrative to realize internal focalization effectively. Through analyzing the function of deixis in selected passages of this text based on Stockwell’s (2019) reformulation of cognitive deixis theory, the relations among the text worlds of the agents involved in narrative communication and the way they impact upon the reader’s cognition in the process of reading are scrutinized in the present study.

## 2. Review of Literature

To date, Murdoch’s *The Bell* has been studied from different viewpoints. For example, Souvage (1962) deals with how Murdoch presents her moral views through symbols in *The Bell* and (in pre-narratological terms) focuses upon the narrative strategies with which she converts a symbol to a plot within the story, e.g., utilizing multiple points of view and representing Dora’s consciousness through third-person narration. Kaehele and German (1967) explore the characterization of the major personages in the novel and such themes as reality, judgment, and individuality without



assuming any particular theoretical or critical approach. Giffin (2007) discusses the moral dilemmas in the novel from an existentialist perspective. Masong (2008) regards *The Bell* as a religious tragedy in which Murdoch has successfully dramatized her own philosophical ideas, most prominently the substitution of the Good for God in modern times. Wagner-Lawlor (2011) examines it as a utopian work according to Murdoch's definition of the term. Ghaffary (2019) investigates the concepts of love, religion, and homoeroticism and their mutual relations in the two major characters of the novel, namely Michael and Dora, offering an ethical reading based on Gilles Deleuze's Poststructuralist thought. However, the novel has not been analyzed with a linguistic-stylistic approach. There are passing references to the use of internal focalization and free indirect discourse in Ghaffary's (2019) ethical study, yet no fine-grained analysis of linguistic elements such as deixis has been conducted in the previous studies.

On the other hand, so far stylistic analyses of deixis in various literary texts have been performed by Herman (1994), Werth (1995), Verdonk (2002), Semino (2011), and Green (2016), among others (see also the collection edited by Duchan, Bruder & Hewitt, 2009), yet they hardly fall into the category of cognitive stylistics. To fill this gap and also to show the applicability and effectiveness of a cognitive-stylistic scrutiny of such prose fictional narratives as Murdoch's *The Bell*, the present study aims to carry out an in-depth examination of the cognitive function of various types of deictic expressions in this novel to unravel its significant role in constructing the characters' text worlds, narrative focalization (or mind style), and thematic structure of the text.

### 3. Theoretical Framework: Cognitive Deixis Theory

As Stockwell (2019) argues, in cognitive poetics, "cognition" refers to "the mental processes involved in reading" and "poetics" to "the craft of literature" (p. 1). Highlighting the role of context in textual analysis, Stockwell defines cognitive poetics as "a means of describing and delineating different types of knowledge, belief, and feeling in a systematic way, and a model of how to connect these matters of circumstance and use to the language of literature" (p. 6). Therefore, as West (2016) asserts, cognitive stylistic analysis of a literary text is a combination of studying linguistic features of the text as well as considering the process underlying the reader's cognition while they are interpreting the text.

One of the structuring principles in language, from the viewpoint of cognitive linguistics, is the principle of indexicality which refers to our ability "'to point' to things in our scope of attention" assuming ourselves as the center of the universe (Dirven & Verspoor, 2004, p. 5). This egocentricity is reflected in "deictic expressions" that locate time and place with reference to the here and now of the speaking ego. The ego serves as the deictic center for locating things in space and time and with respect to other things. According to J. Saeed (2016), "every language carries an implicit division of the space around the current speaker, a division of time relative to the act of speaking, and, via pronouns, a shorthand naming system for the participants involved in the talk" (p. 190). Thus, as Green (2016) maintains, language is oriented to the speaker's spatio-temporal situation and their cognitive and perceptual position. That is the reason why in linguistic communication "the various elements in the universe of discourse [start] to function" and become meaningful (Green, 2016, p. 401; see also Leech & Short, 2007). It should be noted, however, that the deictic center can be shifted or displaced as soon as the ego assumes a different position, whether physically or mentally—a subject that has been scrutinized under the title of "deictic shift theory" (DST) (Green, 2016).

Therefore, the notion of "the embodiment of perception," as postulated in cognitive psychology, heavily depends on the idea of deixis; accordingly, a cognitive approach can possibly offer "a new and unified answer" to the fundamental "questions about meaning and understanding" (Stockwell, 2019, p. 49). Of course, this also holds true for meaning-construction and understanding it in narrative fictional texts, which make the question even more intriguing and complicated because "[i]n the absence of an actual communicative setting, narratives function [...] as if there were an actual 'teller' of the story," yet conventionally we assume a fictional subjectivity retelling the story "from a deictic perspective different from the one that the reader inhabits" (Dancygier, 2017, pp. 615-616). Thus, utilizing deixis is one of the ways in which writers of literary works motivate readers to imagine or make-believe a fictional world as they are reading the text (Short, 2013). Deixis causes readers to infer who is speaking / narrating in the text and to whom, when, and where, thereby both shaping and constraining the readers' responses to the narrative discourse (Green, 2016).

According to Stockwell (2019), deictic expressions fall into six major classes, namely "perceptual," "spatial," and "temporal" deixis, which respectively refer to the person (I, you, s/he) place (here, there), and time (now, then) of the utterance, in addition to "social (or relational)" deixis, which concerns naming and terms of address, "textual deixis," which "foreground[s] the textuality of the text" and points to "the text itself or the act of production," and "compositional" deixis, i.e., "Stylistic choices [that] encode a deictic relationship between author and literary reader" by "foreground[ing] the texture of the text" and "manifest[ing] the generic type or literary conventions" known to competent readers (p. 54).

Equally significant in literary textual analysis is the idea of "deictic shifting"—a concept closely related to the analysis of point of view or focalization in narrative fiction. Building upon this notion, deictic shift theory attempts to explain how readers move perceptually from one deictic centre to another as they read (for example, from their own deictic centre to that of a character in a novel, and from that character's deictic centre to another's, or to the same character's different deictic centre in a 'flashback' within the novel). (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 286)

McIntyre (2006) believes that "deictic shift theory [...] is a potentially useful model for investigating how particular



viewpoints are realized in texts” (p. 92). As actual readers of the narrative text, we hold our own deictic center as the reading process begins, which is formed by our own position in terms of space, time, and mental processes; however, not before long we realize that we have mentally been shifted to a new deictic center within the fictional world of the narrative and its various sub-worlds (Leech & Short, 2007). These worlds are termed “text worlds” by Werth (1995). Determining when our perception as readers switches into those of the fictional characters or from one character’s perception to another’s consists in recognizing textual signs that are called “edgeworks.” As Segal (2009) explains, “Edgework includes identifying the cognitive domain in which the storyworld is to be experienced” (p. 74). Therefore, the reader identifies the boundaries between deictic fields in a given text through edgeworks. According to Stockwell (2019), spatial, temporal, and perceptual deixis are the most important edgeworks that guide the reader’s cognition toward various deictic fields.

Applying Text World Theory (TWT) to fictional narratives, Werth (1995) argues that building the character’s text world and the reader’s mental (re)construction of the story world are possible due to the world-building elements and function-advancing components employed in the text. According to him, in the process of reading a text and inferring the story world, the reader’s frame knowledge and deictic information are the elements that cause them to take their own interpretation for granted. These devices are called “world-building elements” of the text world. Werth also refers to “function-advancing components” as the statements or propositions that (re)present the characters’ actions, ideas, and situations and then lead the story onward. Werth (1995) believes that “[b]y reading or listening to someone else’s language, we can be transported mentally to situations experienced by other people, or even to entirely imaginary situations” (p. 184). In order to know how this process takes place in the mind, Werth holds, the reader should attend to the deictic elements (time, place, character, and objects) used in the narrative and the situation built up.

#### 4. Methodology

Adopting a descriptive-analytic method, the present qualitative, library-based research examines the text worlds constructed in Murdoch’s *The Bell* through various kinds of deixis, among other textual elements, and explores the relationship between these text worlds and the way they inform the reading process based on Stockwell’s (2019) reformulation of cognitive deixis theory and categorization of deixis types, as explicated in the previous section. As pointed out before, certain aspects of this novel make it an appropriate case for studying the cognitive function of deixis in prose fictional narratives, especially its distinct narrative discourse. First, internal focalization is a characteristic feature of *The Bell*, and it is variable throughout the novel as the center of consciousness constantly shifts among several character-focalizers in different chapters. Given that deixis is one of the main devices used in focalizing characters internally in fictional narratives (Galbraith, 2009), Murdoch’s novel can be a proper case for exploring the significance of deictics in narrative fiction in comparison to novels with only one fixed internal focalizer.

Since it is practically impossible to analyze the entire text of a lengthy novel sentence by sentence in a stylistic study (see Verdonk, 2002), to narrow down its scope and delimit the corpus, the present study focused upon Dora Greenfield’s and Toby Gashe’s text worlds and their deictic shifts as two of the major character-focalizers in the novel who undergo significant personal transformations in the course of the narrative. Next, a purposive sampling method was employed to identify and select extracts that provide a rich resource for exploring the function of deictic expressions. Due to limitations of scope in the current paper, three extracts from the novel were found sufficient to scrutinize the function of deixis in this narrative text. The three excerpts were chosen purposefully from the first, seventeenth, and twenty-fourth chapters of the novel, respectively, based on the researchers’ prior knowledge of the use of deictics in the text. The selected passages can be considered as representative samples of deictic functions and text-world constructions in Murdoch’s novel as they represent various ways or forms in which the different types of deixis (according to Stockwell’s (2019) model of deictics in literary discourse) can be adopted to effectuate the crisscross of text worlds, textualize variable internal focalization, and direct the (implied) reader’s cognition in the process of reading modern English prose fictional narratives.

The first of the three excerpts selected in this study is taken from the first chapter of the novel, with the aim of analyzing its deictic shifts and edgeworks and their role in guiding the (implied) reader’s mind toward projection onto different discourse worlds. The second extract is chosen from the seventeenth chapter of Murdoch’s novel to indicate how the internal focalizer within the narrative can be identified based on deictics and explore the effects of those deictic elements on transferring the focalizer’s actions to the reader’s cognition. The third and last extract is selected from the twenty-fourth chapter of the novel to identify and justify the different text worlds and their interplay in terms of time and place. The analysis of this extract intends to show how the reader switches from their own time and place in the actual world (the real setting of the reading process) into different times and places in the fictional universe of the narrative. As this extract contains different discourse worlds, concentrating on deictic expressions indicates how projection is possible for the reader both temporally and spatially.

#### 5. Discussion

In Murdoch’s *The Bell*, the reader deals with many characters in different times and locations, yet the focus of the present study is mostly Dora’s encounters with the other characters. As there is no specific narratee within the discourse





of the novel, the actual or real reader is invited to assume this position—a deictic shift termed “push” in cognitive poetics (see Stockwell, 2019, p. 56). After Dora's decision to return to her husband Paul in the Imber Abbey, Noel Spens, one of their friends, takes her to the train station. Noel is not satisfied with Dora's return and while they are in the station tries to preach at her about how she should behave in this situation. The following extract from the first chapter of the novel relates the first time Dora initiates a conversation with another character directly (in the extracts, sentences are numbered and deictic expressions are underlined for ease of reference). In any cognitive field within the narrative, all the deictic expressions revolve around a deictic center, which in turn directs the reader's attention and cognition, thereby providing a foundation for their interpretation of the story events. Before this conversation, the reader follows the omniscient and omnipresent narrator's deictic field as he describes Dora's lifetime and its vicissitudes up to the present moment in narration time. In the cognitive-stylistic analysis of the extract, the possible interpretations that may be formed in the reader's mind are investigated to demonstrate the significance of deixis in narrative comprehension:

- [1] It was a relentlessly hot day. [2] They arrived in good time for the 4.56 but the train was already in the station and fairly full. [3] Noel found her a corner seat on the corridor side and lifted her large case onto the rack, placing on top of it the paper bag containing Paul's Italian straw sun hat. [4] Dora dropped her smaller canvas bag on the seat and on to the platform with Noel. [5] They looked at each other.  
 [6] “Don't stay,” said Dora.  
 [7] “Your teeth are chattering,” said Noel. [8] “At least I assume that's what they're doing. [9] I've never witnessed this phenomenon before.”  
 [10] “Oh, shut up!” said Dora.  
 [11] “Cheer up, darling,” said Noel. [12] “You look the picture of misery. [13] After all, if you hate it you can come away. [14] You're a free agent.”  
 [15] “Am I?” said Dora. [16] “All right, all right, I've got a handkerchief. [17] Now please go.” (Murdoch, 1999, p. 15)

In the above extract, a total of 46 deictic expressions are employed. Toward the beginning of the extract, as one can gather from sentence 1, the narrator as an intradiegetic agent is the deictic center of the text. By the pronoun “it,” the narrator refers to the day Dora is leaving her apartment in London for Imber Abbey. Then, in sentence 2, the text world switches to Dora's and Noel's through the perceptual deixis “they” when their act of arriving at the Paddington station is described. This is also a spatial deictic shift since before that they were in Noel's car moving toward the station. The reader, who is now situated in the characters' cognitive domain owing to the edgework operating in 2, is able to identify “the 4.56” as the train to Gloucestershire that Dora intends to board. Thus, the narrator contents himself with this perceptual deixis as well as “the train,” which are referred to as already known world-building elements in the text world. The definite article in “the station” also functions as a perceptual deixis because now it is adequately contextualized as the location of this story event.

In 3, the narrator does not tell the reader directly that the participants of the diegetic text world have boarded the train, yet by reading the spatial-perceptual deictic expression “a corner seat on the corridor side” the reader's mind is shifted to the internal space of the carriage. The proper name “Noel” here serves as both a perceptual deixis and an edgework since it is the boundary of a new deictic field, directing the reader to a new text world. As a result of a cognitive process referred to as “deictic projection” by Stockwell (2019, p. 52), to understand the narrative the reader projects another deictic center embedded within the narrator's deictic field, i.e., Noel's, thereby being twice removed from the reality of their own text world in their real-life situation (in a sense reminiscent of Plato's idea of art as a mimetic discourse). Thus, the reader follows three spatial deixes: “a corner seat on the corridor side,” “onto the rack,” and “placing on top”—all oriented to Noel's deictic field. There are other perceptual deixes in this part that may render narrative comprehension more complicated. For instance, “her large case,” which refers to Dora as the owner, by itself is the reference point for the pronoun “it”; however, at this point, the reader has to follow the sentence to know “what” Noel is placing “on top” of “it.” The definite article in “the paper bag” as a perceptual deixis points out to the reader that it belongs to Dora and causes them to infer that the bag is on “her large case.” The reader does not know any more about its content until the narrator presents it by “Paul's,” a perceptual deixis functioning as a reference point to an “Italian straw sun hat.” Accordingly, to grasp the narrative situation the reader needs to recognize all the deictic expressions as, firstly, the narrator is referring to three different characters simultaneously (“Noel” who is replacing “Dora's” belongings, some of which belong to “Paul”) and, secondly, spatial and perceptual deixes are interconnected and form a continuum.

The third projection for the reader occurs again through a perceptual shift into Dora's text world in 4. Since the reader is already anchored to this character's position as both the grammatical subject of the sentence and the subject of perception within the narrative situation, cognitively they happen to associate the spatial deixes “on the seat” and “on to the platform” with her location. In 5, the perceptual deixis “they” acts as an edgework for the reader, shifting their cognition to the narrator's perception of the characters' behavior as Dora and Noel logically cannot use this personal pronoun to refer to themselves.

The fourth deictic projection for the reader is into Dora's and Noel's shared text world as the narrator reports their dialogue in simple present tense (6-17), which is both a textual deixis and a temporal deictic shift to their text worlds

and an act of internal focalization on the narrator's part. In this section, the reader receives the characters' "direct discourse" (DD), which is the most mimetic form of narration and signals the highest degree of internal focalization, i.e., minimum distance between the character-focalizer as the deictic center and the reader (Ghaffary & Nojournian, 2013). This projection is also accompanied by a textual shift indicated by breaking the paragraphs to show the turns alternately taken by the two interlocutors. Likewise, the tagging clause "said Dora" deployed in 6 by the extradiegetic voice of the omniscient narrator after "Don't stay" is another instance of textual deixis utilized to reveal the identity of the utterer to the reader.

As the conversation progresses, the reader is increasingly anchored to the character-focalizers' cognitive domain and, consequently, to their deictic field. For example, in 8-9, the textual deixis helps the reader realize that Noel is the addresser and Dora is the addressee. In 8, "that" refers to the propositional content of Noel's previous statement in 7, and "this" in 9 refers to the physical reaction Noel is now observing in Dora. The perceptual deixis "they" in this sentence refers to the Imber community, where Dora is going to live for a while. Understanding this deixis requires an adequate amount of background knowledge about the elements building the story world since the community has already been introduced to the reader in the previous sections of the narrative. Noel calling Dora "darling" in 11, as a social (relational) deixis, demonstrates their social / communicative attitudes and emotional intimacy. Moreover, "said Noel" is a perceptual and textual deixis suggesting that Noel is the speaker; therefore, the perceptual deixis "you" here refers to Dora as Noel's addressee. However, "I" in 15 means Dora as it is both the subject of enunciation and the enunciating subject. Sentence 17 places Dora as the deictic center of the text, requiring that the reader be cognitively anchored to Dora's consciousness so as to comprehend the temporal deixis "now," which refers to the moment of speaking in the station. In the same sentence, the motion verb "go" as a spatial deixis denotes a movement away from the deictic center occupied by Dora as the internal focalizer of the narrative at this point.

In the next excerpt, selected from the seventeenth chapter of the novel, a young boy named Toby Gashe and Dora are internally focalized by the narrator, where Dora is complicit with Toby in extracting the ancient bell from the mysterious lake next to the Imber Abbey—an act that dramatically changes all the central characters' destinies. The chapter offers a detailed description of their secret plan and their impetuous endeavor to disrupt the conventional system governing the community. To analyze the possible process of the reader's cognition, it is fundamental to assume the focalizer's consciousness within the story world because, as Bal (2017) states, "if the focalizer coincides with the character, that character will have an advantage over the other characters. The reader watches with the character's eyes and will, in principle, be inclined to accept the vision presented by that character" (p. 135). In the following extract, the narrator relates the narrative events / states through the lens of Toby's experience, and the reader receives this report via the narratee who is supposedly situated within the story world. As we shall see below, understanding the deictics is integral to perceiving the focalizer's viewpoint in this passage:

[1] The water was cold and its chilly touch shocked Toby, making him aware for a moment how completely he was entranced. [2] He gasped, but plunged on till his feet left the stones and he was swimming, holding the hook in one hand. [3] He now knew by heart the geography of the lake floor beyond the ramp. [4] He felt he could almost see the bell. [5] With the rhythmical sound of the tractor in his ears he dived. [6] The hawser was heavy and helped to take him to the bottom, and his hand immediately encountered the mouth of the bell. [7] Trailing the hook on the lake floor, the hawser running loosely through his fingers, he began to fumble towards the other end of the bell to find its great eye. [8] As he did so a sudden consciousness of what he was doing came over him. (Murdoch, 1999, pp. 217-218)

All in all, 57 deictic expressions are used in this extract. The definite article as a perceptual deixis at the beginning of 1 is evidence for the reader that the narrator's description is represented from an intradiegetic character's angle of vision, who later in the same sentence turns out to be Toby, to whom the water of the lake feels cold and chilly. The narrator reveals the subject of perception by two perceptual deixes, namely mentioning his proper name ("Toby") and reporting what he perceived with a verb of mental state or emotion ("shocked"). This suggests that he is internally focalized in this episode of the narrative, such that narrative comprehension here consists in adopting his position, assuming his perspective, and projecting his text world as the center of consciousness and deictic center of the text. Other deictics in 1 continue to accentuate how Toby is mesmerized by the sublimity of the lake and its cold, deep water, at once implicitly indicating his location by the lake and the transience of his psychological state: "making aware" (perceptual), "him" / "he" (perceptual), "for a moment" (temporal), and "entranced" (perceptual). This is how the narrator constructs / represents the specific mental experience of this participant in the fictional text world and the way nature as a sublime force affects him. In particular, the perceptual deixes cause the reader to empathize with this quasi-romantic character-focalizer and vicariously perceive the vastness, awesomeness, and mystery of the spectacular lake. Within the context of the narrative discourse, this may also serve as a foreshadowing of what is to come or even a dramatic irony since at this point the participants are not yet aware of the possible consequences of their plan while the reader, who has identified with them, can speculate on the possible outcomes of this impulsive plan because as a result of variable internal focalizations in the previous chapters the reader possesses a broader knowledge of the story world.

In 2-8, the narrator's report of Toby's changing location in the water and his trajectory toward the deep-buried bell is accompanied by an account of the perceptions and cognitions of this internal focalizer as he dives further down in the

lake to find the bell. The text is deictically structured in a way that the reader happens to identify with him and virtually undergo the same experiences as a crucial stage in comprehending the narrative. From 2 on, the reader establishes Toby as the reference point of the perceptual deictics “he” (2-5, 7, 8), “his” (2, 5-7), and “him” (6, 8). In 2, the narrator depicts Toby’s physical condition mainly through action verbs such as “gasped,” “plunged,” “swimming,” and “holding.” The verbs “swimming” and “holding” are deictically significant because using the present continuous tense here construes Toby’s actions as proximate in terms of time with no interval between them. Additionally, “the stones” and “the hook” function as perceptual deixes as they refer to specific world-building elements that are now also familiar to the extradiegetic reader who has projected Toby’s text world and shifted to his cognitive domain.

Juxtaposing the present temporal deixis “now” with the past-tense verb “knew,” as a perceptual deixis, at the beginning of 3 demonstrates Toby’s current position, causing the reader’s empathy with the focalizer and facilitating the process of deictic / cognitive projection. This unique admixture of a present adverb of time (proximate deixis) and an imperfect past verb (non-proximate deixis), as Fowler (1989) postulates, is peculiar to the discourse of narrative fiction, especially when it employs “free indirect discourse” (FID) through internal focalization in a text narrated by an extradiegetic third-person voice (see also Ghaffary & Nojournian, 2013). In 4, again the perceptual deixis “he” maintains Toby’s deictic field and the perception verbs “felt” and “see” further describe his experience in the lake, causing the reader to orient themselves to Toby’s consciousness. At this moment in narrative time, naturally Dora who is waiting for Toby outside the water cannot be cognizant of Toby’s mental processes deep down the water while the reader gains access to the latter’s mind and in a certain sense experiences what he is experiencing at the bottom of the lake owing to the deictic shift from their own real text world to the omnipresent narrator’s fictional metanarrative text world and through it to Toby’s text world, which can be dubbed a “hyponarrative,” to adapt Bal’s (2007) terminology (p. 275). Here, Toby’s discourse counts as a hyponarrative because at his point in the narrative text the extradiegetic narrator yields the floor to this particular character, who is internally focalized and, thus, becomes the center of consciousness and cognition. According to Herman (2002),

To say that an event or object or participant is focalized in a certain manner is to say that it is perspectively indexed, structured so that it has to be interpreted as refracted through a specific viewpoint and anchored in a particular set of contextual coordinates. (pp. 302-303)

As Macrae (2012) explains, “These ‘contextual coordinates’ are the ‘here, now, I’ of the perceiving participant, the ‘deictic centre’, or locus of orientation, of the focalizer” (p. 43). Therefore, when the narrator retells what Toby feels or thinks upon finding and touching the old bell (4-8), it is as if the reader were also seeing and touching the enigmatic mud-clad bell.

This process of double projection (or cognitive push) and identification with the character-focalizer is realized in 4 to 8 by various instances of **perceptual deixis** (“he” [4, 5, 7, 8], “felt” [4], “see” [4], “the bell” [4], “the rhythmical sound” [5], “the tractor” [5], “his ears” [5], “the hawser” [6], “heavy” [6], “him” [6, 8], “his hand” [6], “the mouth of the bell” [6], “the hook” [7], “the hawser” [7], “his fingers” [7], “fumble” [7], “the other end of the bell” [7], “its great eye” [7], “a sudden consciousness” [8], and “came over him” [8]), **spatial deixis** (“dived” [5], “to the bottom” [6], “on the lake floor” [7], “running” [7], “through his fingers” [7], and “towards” [7]), **temporal deixis** (“immediately” [6] and “sudden” [8]), and **compositional deixis** (the implied author’s reliance upon the reader’s literary competence and knowledge of narrative-fictional conventions including willing suspension of disbelief or make-believing the non-real elements of the fictional text worlds in the process of reading as if they were real). (Due to the constraints of limited space in this essay and to avoid duplication, these deictic expressions are not analyzed separately.)

In the last excerpt, which is taken from the twenty-fourth chapter of the novel, the reader is invited by the narrative to experience a further cognitive push, namely a deictic shift from the current world of the narrative discourse (Dora’s text world as the internal focalizer) to the text world built within the letter read by Dora in this episode (and quoted verbatim by the omniscient narrator). The letter is in fact a love letter Dora had written to her would-be husband Paul when they were engaged. Now, after their marriage has failed after a couple of years and Dora intends to leave Paul, he hands her the old love letters in the hope of persuading her to give their relation a second thought. The following extract describes how Dora notices the letter and starts to read it and, then, the content of the brief letter is cited directly by the narrator. Consequently, to relate to it cognitively, the reader has to push into the past world of the letter and project Dora’s secondary deictic field as the writer of the old letter:

[1] Her hand encountered the envelope which Paul had given her. [2] She drew it out fearfully. [3] It would have to be something unpleasant. [4] She opened it. [5] It contained two brief letters, both written by herself. [6] The first one, which she saw dated from the early days of their engagement, read as follows: [7] *Dear dear Paul, it was so wonderful last night* and such absolute pain to leave you. [8] I lay awake fretting for you. [9] I can’t wait for tonight, so am dropping this in at the library. [10] It’s agony to go away from you, and so wonderful to think that soon soon we shall be much more together. [11] Wanting to be with you always, dearest Paul, ever ever ever your loving Dora. (Murdoch, 1999, p. 286)

Overall, 58 deictic expressions can be observed in the above passage. Based on Verdonk (2002), “the first question that inevitably arises as soon as we start reading a novel [...] is who the narrator is, whose voice we are supposed to be hearing, and therefore whose version of events” (p. 31). In this part of Murdoch’s novel, before reading the letter, the

reader is situated in the narrator's deictic field and sees the story world from the narrator's viewpoint. In 1, the narrator uses two different forms of the past tense as temporal deixes: first "encountered," which is the preterit or simple past indicating an event occurring in a past time, and second the past perfect "had given," which points to a period prior to the time designated by the preterit. Thus, the reader realizes that they need to project into a span of time in the past before the narration time, that is, before Dora's reading the letter, which is itself a past event from narrator's perspective. As Duchan, Bruder, and Hewitt (2009) remark, knowing who the character is and when and where the event is taking place are the most important issues of deixis. Knowing these contextual cues is important in narrative comprehension because, to borrow Verdonk's (2013) words, "human beings are cognitively primed to relate space, time, and persons in the world around them to their own subjective position, that is, to view them from their own point of view" (p. 150). The definite article in "the envelope" and the proper noun "Paul" together with the possessive pronoun "her," as perceptual deictics, provide all the contextual information that the reader needs to make sense of the narrative world at this point. In 2, the perceptual deixis "fearfully" reveals Dora's emotional state at the moment of opening the letter, triggering in the reader sympathy and negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, and suspense in accordance with the character-focalizer's mood.

In 3, the temporal deixis "would" converts the sentence from narrative report to free indirect discourse (FID), which is characterized by vocal ambiguity or polyvocality (see Ghaffary & Nojournian, 2013), giving way to an ambivalence in interpretation: is the expectation of an unpleasant experience Dora's feeling or the narrator's judgment (as if even the narrator were waiting to know the content of the letter)? In any case, the sentence keeps the reader in waiting and perhaps on the alert, just as Dora is. The cause of this vocal ambiguity is the meeting of the narrator's and the internal focalizer's cognitive / deictic domains. However, this convergence of voices does not last long as in 4 the narrative discourse shifts back to narrative report.

As Segal (2009) explains, "the magic of fiction is that a person, in the blink of an eye, can shift from being cognitively in one world to being cognitively in another" (p. 74). In the extract under consideration, this occurs when the reading of the letter by Dora (and its direct quotation by the narrator) begins, as a result of which the reader is pushed into the world of the letter by virtue of textual, social, perceptual, temporal, and spatial deixes. The textual deixes include the colon at the end of 6, the extra space marking the boundary between the narrator's discourse and the reproduced letter (between 6 and 7), and the extra margins and smaller font of the text of the letter in 7 to 11 (the convention of block quotation). All these deictics suggest that the reader is reading the old letter as though they were in Dora's mind.

Addressing Paul at the beginning of the letter, which is a social or relational deixis, and the use of comma after his name, as a textual deixis, indicate that the addressee of the letter was Paul (the reference of all the "you"s in the letter). The social deictic phrase "Dear *dear* Paul," along with the italics that render the second instance of "dear" a compositional deixis, foreground Dora's love for Paul and reconstruct a past world in which they were happily in love. In traditional rhetoric, such an emphatic repetition or amplification of a linguistic element is termed "epizeuxis" or "palilogia" (see Lanham, 1991).

In 9, the temporal deixis shifts into the present tense, yet the reader knows that they are cognitively in the text world established within Dora's letter, so that the present tense refers the moment Dora was writing the letter in the distant past. Consequently, "last night" (7) and "tonight" (9) also refer to the time of the text world wherein the letter was written and can be interpreted only in reference to the here-and-now (i.e., there-and-then) of Dora as the first-person writer of the letter. As the letter unfolds, the process of meaning construction is completed mentally by the spatial deixis "at the library" (9), revealing information to the reader about the world where the lovers contacted each other. From 10, Dora's perception changes from the first person singular "I" to the first person inclusive plural "we," including Dora the addressor and Paul the addressee of the letter, creating a hypothetical future world with the temporal deixis "shall" (10), where the two can be together "soon soon" (10), the latter being both a temporal and a compositional deixis (because of the rhetorical repetition). The perceptual deictic "you" in the last sentence of the letter (11) is re-emphasized with the more saliently relational address form "dearest Paul," indexing their close social relationship. The repeated temporal-compositional deictic expression "ever ever ever" serves as another indication of Dora's infinite love for Paul at that time. In the text of the novel, after the above extract, when the narrator finishes quoting Dora's old love letter (more precisely, when Dora finishes reading it), the reader switches from the letter's text world back to the narrator's text world where at the moment of narration Dora is the internal focalizer. In cognitive poetics, this moving back to an ulterior level of narrative discourse or to a higher deictic field is termed "pop" (as opposed to "push") (Stockwell, 2019, p. 56). This suggests how the different layers of internal focalization and individual text worlds intersect in the narrative discourse of this novel via an effective adoption of various deictics and edgeworks by the text's narrator / implied author. In consequence, Dora's past discourse, her present self, the overarching narrator's mental processes, and the actual reader's cognition of all this merge together to yield a narrative text and a narrative cognition which are peculiar to such narrative-conscious authors as Murdoch.

As the above analyses show, all the deixis types Stockwell (2019) enumerates have been employed in the various extracts selected from Murdoch's *The Bell*, but perceptual, spatial, and temporal deixis are used more frequently than the other types of deixis (social, textual, and compositional). As cognitive deictic theory suggests, spatial, temporal,



perceptual, and social deixis are essential elements of discourse because they point to the basic constituents in building text worlds (time, place, people, and their relations), by which the reader / listener becomes able to construct a coherent mental space and make sense of the text in an appropriate context. In literary discourse, textual and compositional deixis also gain profound significance as they substantially contribute to the construction of an effective form to convey the overall theme of the text. Therefore, analyzing the different types of deixis and their narrative functions can reveal the (implied) reader's cognitive journey in the process of reading such discursively convoluted modern English prose fictional narratives as Murdoch's *The Bell*—a journey from realizing their real-world stance to immersing themselves in the extradiegetic narrator's metanarrative as well as the internal focalizers' hyponarratives within the novel's fictional universe. Such transitions are facilitated by an effective employment of deixis, among other textual elements or narrative techniques, allowing the reader to identify with the fictional characters and follow their singular storylines.

## 6. Conclusion

This study adopted a cognitive-stylistic approach to demonstrate the significance of deixis and deictic shifting in narrative comprehension with special reference to Murdoch's *The Bell* as an exemplar of prose narrative fiction characterized by variable internal focalization. To achieve this objective, three representative extracts from the novel were purposefully selected and closely analyzed according to [Stockwell's](#) (2019) classification of deictics in literary discourse. The results showed that deixis and deictic shifts play a significant part in realizing internal focalization in the discourse of this narrative and constructing its narrator's as well as different character-focalizers' text worlds.

As the cognitive analysis indicated, to comprehend the fictional universe of the novel, identify with its protagonists, and follow the storyline, the reader needs to undergo a cognitive push from their own real world, first, to the omniscient narrator's fictional text world and deictic domain as the metanarrative and, then, to the internal focalizers' text worlds and deictic domains as the hyponarratives (Dora's in the first and third extracts and Toby's in the second). It was argued that in the third extract the reader has to project a further hyponarrative as the internal focalizer (Dora) starts reading an old love letter of her own written a few years before the narration time to her would-be husband Paul; that is, in that part, Dora's past discourse (the letter quoted verbatim by the narrator) is internally focalized by her present self, which is itself internally focalized by the narrator. After the embedded internal focalization ends, the reader experiences a cognitive pop, moving back to the narrator's text world and his deictic field. It was discussed that all this happens, among other narrative-discursive elements, through different types of deictics and deictic shifting, including perceptual, spatial, temporal, social, textual, and compositional deixis. Accordingly, deixis is an essential textual element in this novel that helps the reader vicariously undergo the same cognitive processes that the narrator and character-focalizers undergo.

The findings of this study can carry significant implications for literary stylistics, especially the stylistic analysis of prose fictional narratives, and the analysis of readerly experiences and the linguistic resources authors strategically use to help readers experience what their narrators / characters experience, thereby immersing the readers in their fictional worlds. The findings of the present study can also be significant for and researching reading comprehension in TEFL, especially teaching by using narrative-fictional texts, as it draws attention to the way the reader's cognition of the narrative agents' discourses and consequently the text's overall themes is profoundly shaped by deixis in the reading process.

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