Levinson (1983) identified five major types of deictic markers: person, place, time, discourse, and social.

1. **Person Deixis** refers to grammatical markers of participant roles in speech events. First person is the speaker’s reference to self; second is the speaker’s reference to addressee(s), and third person is reference to others who are neither speaker nor addressee (Hatch, 1994). A common error made by interpreters is the failure to identify referent shifts.

2. **Place/Spatial Deixis** refers to how languages show the relationship between space and the location of the participants in the discourse. In English, this distinction is realized in demonstratives (this versus that) or in adverbs (here versus there), or in phrases (in front, in back, at our place, out back).

   The ‘here’ versus ‘there’ distinctions also reflect social organization.

   Example: “across the tracks”, “the other side of town”, “moving uptown”

Learning to locate yourself and objects in space that are not visible depends on at least three types of abilities:

- Cognitive (developing a ‘spatial map’ that includes familiar pathways in your environment and the relationship of these paths to those that are unknown)
- Interactive (taking account of the listener’s knowledge of these (spatial relations)
- Linguistic (how these are mapped on language)

3. **Temporal Deixis** refers to time relative to the time of speaking. Now versus then, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Confusion occurs when units are not clearly indicated as being definite calendar times or definite in relation to the moment in which we are located. Other temporal deixis functions include:

   - Giving verisimilitude to our stories: Once upon a time
   - When locating the time of an action precisely will give it more credibility: Saturday night, May 25 at 6 PM someone knocked at the door.
   - When a specific referent is not needed: ‘remember when’

4. **Discourse Deixis** refers to keeping track of reference in the unfolding discourse. We use a variety of deictic markers to point the way to various parts of the discourse. The frequency of all deictic terms varies across types of text. The more formal the discourse, the more markers are needed to keep the text coherent.

   Discourse deixis keeps the text connected on a textual level. It involves ways of tying segments of the text together through tie-backs and transition markers.

   - Example: “Earlier in the Module we discussed three strategies you can use to improve your transcription samples. I want to refer back to the second strategy we discussed.”
   - Example: “Now that we have completed our discussion of transcription strategies, I would like to”
shift to a discussion of transcription symbols. First, turn to page 21 of the Green Book and look at the standard symbols used to transcribe ASL.”

5. **Social Deixis** is used to code social relationships between speakers and addressee or audiences. Included in this category are honorifics, titles, vocatives and pronouns.
   - Example: Your Honor, Mr. President, Madame Chairperson, my husband, teacher, preacher, you, your, etc.

Since reference/deixis play such an important semantic role in messages, it is important for interpreters to know the types and functions of various reference/deixis features. It is Levinson’s categories that you will apply as you analyze ASL texts in the unit activity. In preparation, think about how you would use space to convey each of Levinson’s categories of reference and deixis. For example, how is honorific reference conveyed in ASL? What are some examples of discourse deixis in ASL? How does eye-gaze use in ASL (e.g. movement of eyes up or down) in conjunction with directional verbs impact the use of social and person deixis in ASL? How is space used in ASL to convey temporal elements—such as the past, the future, the present, a series of things that happened over a period of time? Considering examples from your own experience will provide you with excellent rehearsal for the activity.

**Part A:** Below is a link to a spoken English presentation—supported by a PPT—about deixis that provides further illustration of this language feature. It is 15 minutes in length and offers valuable elaboration.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LK-lc0wL8

Now, consider the same text again—this will likely require you to view it again…**AT LEAST THE FIRST TEN MINUTES.** This time, isolate and categorize the examples of referencing and deixis. How did the speaker apply referencing and deixis during this presentation? Can you categorize the types of deixis that were used? How might you represent the use of deixis in ASL? Where do opportunities for constructed action and/or constructed dialogue exist? Are there other opportunities for depiction in this text? Share your observations with a mentor or other student.

How do your findings compare with the list of examples below? **NOTE:** these examples are not listed in the order they occurred, but rather they are categorized by the type of deixis reference they represent. The list is not necessarily all inclusive either.

1. **PERSON DEIXIS:**
   - I, me
   - You-singular, you-plural
   - He/him, she/her
   - It
   - They/them
   - We/us
   - My audience

2. **PLACE/SPATIAL DEIXIS:**
• Here, there
• This, that, these, those
• Above, below
• Went into, came into
• Yonder, over there

3. TEMPORAL DEIXIS:
• Before
• After
• Then
• Now

4. DISCOURSE DEIXIS:
• This
• That

5. SOCIAL DEIXIS:
• Only discussed designations in French and German that represent formal references to individuals and their status versus informal, conversational references

Next, consider these various examples and how you would express each of them in ASL. Once you have identified options, practice interpreting the text, integrating the deixis in an appropriate manner. Once you believe you have a good representation, record yourself interpreting the text. Conduct a self-assessment and also ask a mentor or other student to provide an assessment. How effective were you in conveying the various reference/deixis functions? What would you do differently next time? Incorporating your own feedback, as well as that from a mentor and/or other student, re-do the interpretation making the changes you believe will strengthen your performance.

Part B: Apply the following steps to analyze the English texts linked at the end of the description.

1. View the text for comprehension

2. View the text again to isolate, identify and categorize the various referent/deixis markers that occur in the text.

3. Consider and determine English equivalents for the various ASL referent/deixis markers.

4. Using the cross-linguistic equivalents you determined, practice interpreting the text in entirety.

5. When you are satisfied with your practice, record yourself interpreting the text.


7. Have a mentor or fellow student conduct a review and provide feedback.
8. Using your own assessment and the mentor or peer feedback you received, re-do your interpretation.

Repeat these steps with each of the texts, as well as others to which you have access. Regular attention to this process will strengthen your competence in this aspect of spatial structuring/voice interpreting.

**English Texts**

1. English Text: “Beginning Your Presentation in English” – 7:33 minutes  
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rASl1BcYjbs&list=PLLbb6BaLtOFtJxjSSUFFGQC0P121f_h2

2. English Text: “How to Start a Presentation with a Story” – 2:52 minutes  
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCWQq9v3k4

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CI0I4DzoVLk

**Additional Resources:**

**ASL Storytime**, from the Department of Sign Language and Interpretation at Gallaudet University. The series has 8 tapes, each containing 6-8 stories that a broad variety of ASL features. Available on YouTube.  
Volume 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLxddLDxbOw  
Volume 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAGx5CXgmTU  
Volume 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqx4wCZoCMU  

**NOTE**: These stories are good for practice of many ASL features so use them with other instructional sheets in addition to this one!

**NCIEC TerpTalks** - A series of ASL and English texts available online for practice interpreting. There is no charge for accessing these materials, although you may be required to register to access. Topics are diverse as are speakers. Go to http://www.interpretereducation.org/tim/terptalks/browse/

**Interpreter Practice Materials** Tapes from Sign Media- 1-800-475-4756 or www.signmedia.com. Set of 33 tapes - 12 simultaneous texts, 12 consecutive texts, 7 one to one situations, and 2 small group. Six ASL tapes and six English texts. Excellent for individual, study group, or classroom skill development exercises. May be available for use from your local interpreter education program or through your public library. If the library does not have them, request that they purchase them for community use.