ALICE IN PRAGMATICLAND:
REFERENCE, DEIXIS AND THE DELIMITATION OF TEXT WORLDS
IN LEWIS CARROLL'S *ALICE* BOOKS

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0. Introduction

My interest in the work of Lewis Carroll goes back to my childhood, but, more recently, as a linguist, I rediscovered the enormous potential of the Alice books as illustrations of how our language system actually works; this was thanks to Robin Lakoff's (1993) excellent article on the subversive potential of the *Alice* books, which she analyses in general terms from a pragmatic perspective. The reading of this article stimulated my own personal reflections and thoughts on the books, in particular regarding the notion of reference and its connection with acts of naming, classifying, categorising and establishing an orientation within a text world. This article explores how reference is dealt with in the books *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* by focusing on two aspects:

(a) the peculiar way in which acts of assigning sense and reference take place in the two fictional worlds,

(b) how the deictic parameters regarding space, time and person coordinates determine the idiosyncratic nature of *Wonderland* and, especially, of *Looking Glass World*.

The general theoretical assumption underlying the present discussion is that the analysis of language in given texts can provide insights into the workings of our language as a system of communication. This observation is taken by Lakoff (1993) as a point of departure in her article, and it is also a general principle adopted in stylistic analysis in general (see, for example Carter and Nash 1990) and in Systemic Functional Linguistics in particular (see Halliday, 1978, 1994). In this view, which is clearly functionally-oriented and grounded on pragmatics, language is part of socio-cultural behaviour, and, as such, it is both governed by social rules, and at the same time it reflects the way a given community or society works. In this sense, language as a system of classification and categorisation reveals the kinds of mental representations that are coded linguistically in different societies.[1] Language is thus both an instrument of communication and a mirror image of the society which makes use of it.

1. The *Alice* books

If we consider the worlds described in the *Alice* books we have two radically different societies: as Lakoff (1993: 370-71) observes, the dream world of *Wonderland*, a kingdom ruled by the Queen and King of a card pack, is a world of total freedom, where no rules seem to apply and arbitrariness characterises social and linguistic behaviour: however, the world of *Looking Glass*, which is modelled upon a game of chess, is a world governed by a rigid system of rules. The cards and the chess pieces as crucial entities already determine the characteristics of the worlds they inhabit, which, as the reader soon finds out, are more like games than a "real world" as we understand it.

As a result, the exchanges between Alice and the creatures she encounters turn out to be puzzling and apparently nonsensical and absurd. However, a more careful reading of the books reveals the fact that they constitute complex reflections on the philosophical questions of the Victorian Age in Britain. From this perspective, there is very little nonsense in these books. It can be said that the adventures of *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* are not only the stories of a little girl in two different dream worlds, they are also the stories of how human reason confronts traditional problems which have troubled mathematicians, logicians, philosophers and linguists.

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[1] See, for example, Fowler's notion of world view (Fowler (1986: 17).

2. What is reference and how can we do things with it?

Reference is usually defined as a major linguistic function, the function which enables us to establish connections between words or linguistic signs and things in the world, and between different words within a text.[2] Reference is thus a crucial aspect of text structure; it enables us to introduce information in discourse and mantain it without repeating time after time the same words, or to change it without incurring in incoherence. In this article, reference is dealt with as a pragmatic function, that is, as a context-dependent function, but it undoubtedly has a strong semantic and structural basis. However, the pragmatic factor is crucial; this can be seen in the well-known examples provided by textbooks, such as those in (1) and (2):

(1) I will be back tomorrow.
(2) I told her to leave it there.

Unless these utterances are said in a context, it is impossible to a have full understanding of their complete meaning. More precisely, it is not possible for us to identify exactly the time reference of *tomorrow* in example (1), nor the entities referred to by the pronouns *I*, *her*, and *it*, nor the place reference for the adverb *there* in example (2). The failure to establish a specific connection between these words and corresponding periods of time, entities or places in a context is a failure in assigning reference.

A further crucial aspect of reference is that it is speaker-based, which means that referential and especially deictic expressions determine the orientation or point of view of a discourse from the perspective of a specific speaker. Indeed, authors such as Semino (1997) and Werth (1995, 1999) argue that deictic terms are at the basis of the "world-building process", that is, the process whereby a reader or listener constructs a mental representation of a text. Thus, deictis establish the coordinates for the entities and the setting that characterise a given situation.

In the first part of the article, I define reference as part of the assignment of linguistic meaning and discuss certain problems which have troubled philosophers and semanticists, but which have been solved by means of discourse-based approaches. In the second part of the article I concentrate on deixis, a specific type of reference, and I discuss how deixis helps define a text text. The illustrations from the *Alice* books provide excellent examples of how some philosophical and linguistic questions which have to do with reference and deixis are humorously manifested in the strange behaviour of the creatures which Alice encounters. They also constitute good examples of how alternative (or different) worlds are defined and constructed according to parameters which differ from those of our own world. The objective is to illustrate the way in which reference actually determines the creation of patterns of text and discourse and the way it conditions the degree of internal coherence of a text and how this is

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[2]   Lyons (1995: 293) defines reference as "the relation that holds between linguistic expressions and what they should stand for in the world".

perceived by a reader.[3] Consequently, throughout the discussion we will see that reference has a lot to do, not only with how a specific text or discourse may differ from other texts or discourses, but also, crucially, that reference is a subjective function, that is, it helps define a context from the specific point of view of a given speaker.

2.1. The pragmatic nature of acts of referring

In this section I address some basic aspects regarding the definition of reference focusing on its pragmatic nature and on the relationship between the notion of reference and existential assumptions. The way reference is standardly understood to work when we use language in context (i.e. in a present-day, developed, western society) is contrasted with the peculiarities which can be appreciated in the use of reference in the *Alice* books.

We can say, as many authors have done before (see, for example, Thomas 1996) that the interpretation or processing of language in context hinges upon the successful assignment of the sense, reference and force of words. By sense, we usually mean the dictionary meaning or meanings of a word. For example, the word *bank* in English may have two senses or dictionary meanings,

(a) a place where you keep your money
(b) a river bank or shore

The precise meaning of a word in a given utterance is determined contextually, thus if I hear (3), I will assume the speaker will be talking about the place where you keep money:

(3) I went to the bank this morning but it was closed.

In brief, sense is traditionally considered to be inherent to specific words and, consequently, context-independent; however, this is only relative, since successful communication depends on an adequate identification and processing of the sense that is intended in a given context. Reference, however, is by nature context-dependent and is speaker motivated. For example, the word *dog* alone does not refer, but we need *referring expressions*, such as the possessive genitive *John's dog* or the demonstrative *that dog* in order for an NP to refer in a specific context. Indeed, reference is typically grammaticalised in the form of articles (*the* man, *a* book) and pronouns (*he, she, it, this, that, mine...*), or lexicalised in the form of adverbs (*here, there, now*).

The main types of *referring expressions* are:

- definite and indefinite NPs   - proper names   - deictic elements

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[3]   Keith Green's (1995) *New Essays in Deixis* offers a variety of approaches to the topic of deixis which are the result of recent developments in the field.

I wish now to consider some of the characteristics of *referring expressions* and comment on the peculiarities of the worlds described in the *Alice* books according to these observations.

We have seen in examples (1) and (2) that in order to assign reference successfully an utterance needs to be interpreted within a specific context. This means that in many situations a discourse-pragmatic interpretation of an utterance will be favoured even if it contradicts the literal semantic component of the proposition. In traditional semantics, it is assumed that on saying an utterance, a speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition uttered and to the fact he or she believes that the entities referred to exist.[4] However, very often in everyday communication we may say utterances which are not strictly speaking true, but which can be understood on the basis of contextual clues. Thus, somebody may utter:

(4) I like your blouse!

The utterance exemplified in (4) will successfully be understood as referring to the blouse I am wearing at the moment of utterance, even if the speaker may not know that it is not actually *my* blouse, but my sister's, from whom I have borrowed it. An interpretation of this kind favours a context-based inferencing process, rather than the assumption that the literal meaning expressed by the existential presupposition >> *the blouse belongs to me* must be true. Simple as this may seem, it is a process that does not seem to form part of the linguistic conventions of *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass* creatures. In both books we find different examples which reveal unsuccessful reference assignment due to a literal interpretation of the utterance and an inability (or refusal) to interpret the utterance contextually. Thus, the last episode in *Wonderland* is the trial against the knave of hearts, who has stolen the Queen's tarts; the King asks the Mad Hatter to take off his hat:

(5) "Take off your hat", the King said to the hatter.
"It isn't mine," said the Hatter.
  "*Stolen!*" the King exclaimed, turning to the jury, who instantly made a
  memorandum of the fact.
  "I keep them to sell", the Hatter added as an explanation: "I've none of
  my own. I'm a Hatter." (W/147)

Extract (5) illustrates clearly the pragmatic nature of reference and to what extent its successful interpretation depends on the appropriate inferencing on the part of the listener or addressee. As we saw in example (4) above, in ordinary communication we are able to assign reference even if the referring expression may not be, strictly speaking, true. A successful inferencing process would hinge upon the understanding of

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[4] See the traditional definition of semantic and existential presupposition in Levinson (1983, chapter 4) and Lyon's discussion of reference (1977, chapter 7).

the reference of the deictic *your* as conveying what is most relevant in the context, that is, interpretation (6) below[5]:

(6) Take off your hat +> Take off the hat you are wearing.

Instead, the Hatter understands the utterance to express the literal meaning in (7):

(7) Take off your hat >> Take off the hat which belongs to you.

A similar example may be found when Alice meets the Red Queen in *Looking Glass World* and tells her she has lost her way, as illustrated in extract (8):

(8) "I don't know what you mean by *your* way," said the Queen: "all the ways about here belong to *me* - " (LG/206)

As we saw in extract (5), in extract (8) again we find an example of unsuccessful reference assignment linked to a literal interpretation of the meaning of a possessive pronoun. As in (5), it is not the semantic presupposition that must be inferred by the addressee, that is, it is not (9) a. that Alice means, but the relevance-based implicature illustrated in (9b):

(9) a. I have lost my way >> The way belongs to me.
  b. I have lost my way +> I don't know what direction to go.

Reference is also interpreted literally in the case of time deixis, not only of Noun Phrases describing entities. As I explain in section 2.4. below, *Looking Glass* World is defined deictically by a different set of parameters and conventions from what we understand to be the case in our world. Thus, when Alice meets the White Queen she asks her to be her maid and offers her a salary and "jam every other day", which Alice rejects:

(10) "It's very good jam," said the Queen.
"Well, I don't want any *today*, at any rate."
    "You couldn't have it if you *did* want it," the Queen said. "The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday - but never jam *today*."
    "It *must* come sometimes to 'jam today'", Alice objected.
    "No, it can't," said the Queen. "It's jam every *other* day: today isn't any *other* day, you know." (LG/247)

This passage illustrates the indexical nature of deictic terms. Thus, deictics are traditionally described as indexical symbols[6], that is, as terms which have a basic

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[5]   A Gricean approach to this question may lead to an interpretation where the possessive pronoun creates a relevance-based implicature which must be recovered by the addressee.

[6] See, for example, Levinson, (1983, chapter 2), Green, (1995: 12), Semino (1997: 32).

meaning component and a variable one which singles out a referent in a specific context. Thus, the deitic *today*, for example, has a lexical meaning component which stands for "the current day", while the indexical component will single out different instances of days depending on the context of utterance. *Today* is a proximal deictic, since it indicates closeness with the time-reference of the speaker and contrasts with other time expressions such as *tomorrow,* and *yesterday* - distal deictics, in that they indicate distant time references from the point of view of the speaker. The indexical component of the deicitic *today* corresponds to its function as "pointer", or its ability to single out the specific date which corresponds to the expression *today* in a given context. Deictics are thus always relative to their context of utterance. It is this function of the words *today, yesterday* and *tomorrow* that the Queen seems to be ignoring in her exchange with Alice. This point is also made by many owners of shops, bars and restaurants, who have notes put up in their establishments saying that credit is always granted yesterday and tomorrow, but never today.

The context-dependent nature of reference makes it possible to use different referring expressions to refer to a single entity; thus, I may refer to the person sitting opposite me as *my brother, that young man* or *Enrique*. There is a playful reference to this feature in the episode where Alice meets Tweedledum and Tweedledee, whose house is signalled by a sign that says:

(11) To Tweedledum's house/ To the house of Tweedledee

In the sign, both indications refer to the same house.

2.2. The problem of non-referential NPs

A standard question when dealing with reference is that referring expressions such as the ones we have seen so far may also be used non-referentially, that is, without pointing in any specific way at an entity in particular or a place or time in particular. Let's consider a typical example:

(12) Jim wants to meet a contemporary artist.

It we interpret this utterance referentially, the speaker will have a specific person in mind, while in a non-referential interpretation we will mean "any" artist, without specifying one in particular. While many noun phrases and deictics may be ambiguous, as indeed (10) is, negative words are standardly understood as being non-referential. Thus, if we face an utterance like (11) we assume that the negative word *nobody* cannot refer to any particular entity, consequently, it is a non-referential NP:

(13) I saw nobody.

This is not so in Looking Glass world where even negative NPs or pronouns may be interpreted referentially. This may be observed in an episode where Alice meets the White King in Looking Glass world:

(14) "I see nobody on the road," said Alice.
"I only wish *I* had such eyes," the King remarked in a fretful tone."To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it's as much as *I* can do to see real people, by this light!" (LG/279)

In (14) the King interpets *Nobody* to be a specific individual that can be identified by Alice and referred to linguistically. This seems to be a recurrent motif in literary works, rendered famous in the episode in the Odyssey where Ulysses adopts the name *Nobody* to cheat Polyphemus and to escape.

A related example of misinterpretation of a non-referential pronoun is found in an early episode in *Wonderland*, where the Mouse is telling a story:

(15)'...and even Stigand, the patriotric Archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable
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'Found *what*?' said the Duck.
'Found *it*,' the Mouse replied rather crossly, 'of course you know what "it" means.'
'I know what "it" means well enough, when *I* find a thing,' said the Duck: 'It's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?'
The Mouse did not notice this question, but hurriedly went on... (W/47)

The pronoun *it* in the example above obviously does not refer, but is a dummy *it* which perfoms a grammatical function, that of occupying the Object position of an extraposed clausal complement. As in other examples, the passage illustrates the tendency of *Wonderland* creatures to believe that all words must invariably have both reference and sense.

In fact, reference has traditionally been linked to questions about the existence of objects and their ontological status.[7] Traditionally, it is assumed that on uttering an NP, like for example, *the unicorn*, the speaker is committed to the belief that such an entity exists, otherwise, reference will not be possible. This is explained by the fact that NPs trigger existential presuppositions. However, common sense tells us that it is actually possible to refer to imaginary or fictional entities as long as we are aware that they only exist in imaginary or fictional worlds (see Lyons 1977: 181-197). Thus, Lyons (1995: 299) makes the following observation:

one cannot successfully refer to something that does not exist. One can, of course, successfully refer to imaginary, fictional and hypothetical entities; but in so doing, one presupposes that they exist in an imaginary, fictional or hypothetical world. Similarly, one can (and frequently does) refer to dead persons.

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[7]   For a discussion of this topic, see Marsh (1988), Dummett (1981), and Lyons (1977, chapter 7 and 1995 p. 299).

The possibility of assigning reference to non-existent entities can be formalised in a theory of discourse grounded on possible world theory, which can be defined briefly as a theory where each speech event or discourse situation constitutes a possible world or possible state of affairs. In this view, as Ryan (1991) claims, each world is the centre for its inhabitants. That is, the actual or real world is the centre for you and me, but for a character in a book, like Alice, the centre is her own world.

The *Alice* books are interesting examples from this perspective because there is a shift from the actual world of Alice or Alice's world to a dream world, *Wonderland* first and then to *Looking Glass*. This shift from one world to another has a consequent shift in the centre of reference or deictic orientation, a point I come back to in section 2.4., and it may be illustrated by two episodes in *Looking Glass World*, where Alice meets the unicorn and where she meets the Red King:

(16) 'What - is - this?' he [the unicorn] said at last.
　　　'This is a child!' Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice, and spreading out both his hands towards her in Anglo-Saxon attitude. 'We only found it today. It's as large as life, and twice as natural!'
'I always thought they were fabulous monsters!' said the unicorn. 'Is it alive?'
'It can talk', said Haigha solemnly.
The Unicorn looked dreamily at Alice and said: 'Talk, child'.
　　　Alice could not help her lips curling up into a smile as she began: 'Do you know, I always thoguht Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too? I never saw one alive before!'
　　　'Well, now that we *have* seen each other', said the Unicorn, 'if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?'
'Yes, if you like,' said Alice. (LG/287)

This episode playfully reflects on reference and existence. In Looking Glass World, not only do unicorns exist and it is consequently possible to refer to them - and to talk to them! - but, what is more, the world they inhabit is oriented from *their* perspective, so that it is not the existence of unicorns that is questioned, but the existence of children, such as Alice, and the possibility of referring to them and interacting with them.

This relativisation of cultural understanding is taken to an extreme in the episode where Alice meets the Red King, illustrated in (17) below; in this episode, Alice comes across the Red King, who is lying asleep against a tree in the wood:

　　　(17) "He's dreaming now", said Tweedledee: "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"
Alice said: "Nobody can guess that."
　　　"Why, about *you*!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"
"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.
　　　"Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!" (LG/238)

In passage (17), the deictic centre placed from the point of view of Alice is questioned, in such a way that Alice is described as *a sort of thing* in the Red King's dream. But at the same time we have been told that Alice enters Looking Glass world in a dream, which means that the Red King is *a sort of thing* in her own dream. The result is a recursive structure where Alice dreams of the King who dreams of Alice who dreams of the King...a paradoxical structure which lacks a deictic or referential centre and which is typical of the mirror image effects of Looking Glass World[8].

2.3. Sense, reference, naming and categorisation

Naming is the very essence of language, and, as such, it encloses what we understand by the meaning of a word (both reference and sense) and how that meaning conventionally stands for something in the world. The human habit of naming things, as Alice says, is useful for people who name them though it may seem pointless or arbitrary to the creatures themselves. This is reflected in the conversation between Alice and a gnat in Wonderland, where Alice tells the gnat that she is not fond of insects but that she can tell him the names of some of those that inhabit her world. To this the gnat answers:

(18) 'Of course they answer to their names?' the gnat remarked carelessly.
'I never knew them to do it.'
'What's the use of their having names', the gnat said,' if they won't answer to them?'
    'No use to *them*', said Alice; 'but it's useful to the people that name
    them, I suppose. If not, why do people have names?' (LG/222)

The gnat seems to believe that a name has mainly a pragmatic or interactive function - so that people can 'call' things - but not a classificatory function. The gnat goes on to say he does not know the answer to the question 'Why do people have names?', but that further on there is a wood where the creatures have no names. Alice meets a friendly fawn in the wood, and they walk together for a while, until they leave the wood and they both remember their names:

    (19) 'I'm a fawn!' it cried out in a voice of delight. 'And, dear me!
    you're a human child!' A sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful
    brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed.
    (LG/227)

Here there is a distinction between the 'pure' state of creatures, without interpretation or classification, and the understanding, through the knowledge of who is stronger and more aggressive, of the relations between the creatures. This is expressed as a kind of

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8   Curiously, this kind of effect is typical of recent postmodern literature (see McHale 1987); in the case of Lewis Caroll, the interest in paradox probably originates from his background as a mathematician.

pragmatic relation which takes place by means of the act of naming something. Thus, because a creature is called "fawn", it knows immediately that it is weaker than many other creatures and that the others can attack him. What is striking in this passage is that the awareness of what an entity is, either a fawn, or a little girl, comes through language, not through the direct experience of the world. This is an extremely important point, which has been the point of departure for many philosophical writings on how language not only describes reality but how it also controls and, to some extent determines that reality (see Fowler 1986). This view leads quite naturally into issues of language and power and language and ideology, a theme also touched upon in the Alice books, as can be observed from the episode where Alice meets Humpty Dumpty, which I turn to now.[9]

A consistent failure to assign reference and sense to words in context leads necessarily to arbitrariness. What *is* the meaning of a word or sequence of words? How can one ever be sure? The arbitrary nature of language as a convention and the consequent arbitrariness of acts of naming and referring is mentioned explicitly by Humpty Dumpty in his famous conversation with Alice. His peculiar views of language are expressed as soon as Alice introduces herself, as we can observe in extract (12) where Alice answers to Humpty's question about her name:

(20) "My name is Alice, but -"
    "It's a stupid name enough!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently.
    "What does it mean?"
"*Must* a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.
    "Of course it must," Humpty Dumtpy said with a short laugh: "*my* name
    means the shape I am -and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a
    name like yours, you might be any shape, almost." (LG/263)

While in our western society noun phrases and other referring expressions have both sense and reference, proper names are standardly understood as having only reference but not necessarily sense. Humpty Dumpty assumes the contrary to be the case, so that a proper name like *Alice must have* a meaning and may be used to refer to *almost any kind of entity*. Similarly, Humpty Dumpty is fully aware of the arbitrary relation that governs acts of denoting and referring, as he tells Alice in a famous passage reproduced under (13); here Humpty Dumpty replies to Alice who protests about his arbitrary use of the word 'glory':

    (21) "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful
    tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."
    "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so
    many different things."
"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all." (LG/269)

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[9]   The concern for deterministic interpretations of the relation between language and reality is, of course, typical of the twentieth century, in writings such as Whorf's and literary works like Orwell's *1984*.

This passage illustrates not only the arbitrary nature of acts of denoting and referring, but also, as Robin Lakoff points out (1993: 372), to what extent these acts are speaker-dependent and governed by ideological questions. Those who have power have the power to decide on the meaning of words, including what we may refer to. This leads to a reading of the Alice books as potentially subversive, since they reveal the fact that linguistic power is real power.

2.4. Deictic reference and the definition of a text world

In the discussion of examples (16) and (17) above I have mentioned the notions of deictic centre and orientation. I wish now to focus on these aspects and discuss the notion of deixis, a special type of reference. Deictic terms are what I described above as grammaticalisations and lexicalisations of referential information which is processed contextually (see Green 1995: 12). Thus, deixis is a special type of reference which is manifested in specific word classes, such as personal, demonstrative and possessive pronouns, adverbs specifying time and space coordinates and the tense system. It can be said that deictic terms introduce the spatio-temporal coordinates of a discourse situation with regard to a deictic centre or point of reference, which is egocentric, or oriented from the point of view of the speaker. This point is usually described as the *zero point*, or the I-here-and-now, and it also receives the name of *index*. Each index, or orientation centre, distinguishes a possible world or discourse situation from an alternative (see Lyons 1995: 305).

Deixis is considered to be egocentric or an expression of subjectivity because an opposition is usually established between the *I-here-now*, which contextually indicates what is close to the speaker, and distant terms such as those in the table below:

Deictic centre or zero point	Distal terms
I here/this now	you him/her/it there/that then

In the time-tense system, a contrast is established between the now and what precedes and follows it. Also, it is assumed that time develops linearly from past to present over to future, and that this sequence cannot be altered[10]:

yesterday   now   tomorrow
---X--

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[10]   The alteration of the temporal system of course has been traditionally been used as a basis for science-fiction adventures.

Radical alterations in the spatio-temporal system give rise to what traditionally are defined as impossible worlds (see Eco 1989). Ryan (1991) rejects the notion of impossible world in favour of a view of different worlds as alternative and governed by different rules from the rules that govern the actual or real world. Her proposal is briefly outlined at the end of this section in order to account for deviations in the time system in *Looking Glass World*.

The spatio-temporal coordinates, which are expressed by means of deictic terms, define the boundaries of a given world, be it a real or a fictional situation (see Werth 1995, 1999). This view of deixis is particularly interesting if we consider its applications to the understanding of text and discourse structures. Following Werth (1995, 1999), a text world may be defined as a conceptual domain which is organised in hierarchical structures, each level delimited by its own set of deictic and modal parameters. According to Werth (1995: 49) "deixis is in fact part of the modality function of language, i.e. the situating of the information with respect to the current context." As such, deixis as a function may be subdivided into three main types (ibid.):

> Viewpoint
> Probability
> Interaction

Of these three it is viewpoint that corresponds to what we standardly understand by deixis, which in Werth deals mainly with spatio-temporal specifications.

I now consider some examples from the *Alice* books and analyse how examples from situations in the fictional worlds are defined deicitcally and how they are oriented from the perspective of a particular speaker. Extract (18) below describes how Alice feels when she has grown to huge proportions and cannot get out of the White Rabbit's house:

> (22) "It was much pleasanter at home", thought poor Alice, "when one wasn't growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit hole - and yet - and yet - it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life!" (W/58)

In this extract we see a contrast between the situation in which Alice finds herself at present, *this sort of life*, and what used to be her life at home. The deictic centre is situated in Alice's perception of the situation and a shift is described from a distant spatio-temporal situation *was...at home* and the present situation (*this sort of life*). This shift indicates clearly that there has been a change in possible world or discourse world in linguistic terms. The deictic centre itself is made more complex by the fact that Alice talks to herself, creating the impression that the centre is a multiple consciousness, rather than a single one:

(23) "Oh, you foolish Alice!" she answered herself. "How can you learn lessons in here? Why, there's hardly any room for *you*, and no room at all for any lesson books!" (W/59)

The split in the consciousness creates the illusion of an internal distance between different parts of *Alice*, even if physically this is not possible, as both are situated within the same body. The difficulty of identifying the *I* as one single unitary entity is a recurrent motif in the *Alice* books, where Alice's identity is often not recognised by other creatures, who are not able to assign a conceptual category to the child they are facing, and, consequently, are not able to refer to her. Alice herself is well aware of the problems of identity she is going through; this problem is first manifested as a problem in defining the *I*, the centre of consciousness:

(24) 'Dear, dear! How queer everything is today! and yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I remember feeling a little different. But, if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle!" And she began thinking of all the children she knew that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them." (W/37)

While the shift from Alice's real world to Wonderland only implies a change in space and time coordinates in that *Wonderland* is a projection of a dream world, in *Looking Glass World* the shift becomes more complex, as the space-time relations are inverted with respect to the real or actual world. This is so because *Looking Glass World* is supposed to be a mirror image of the real or actual world. Alice finds it very difficult to understand the way space and time are understood in *Looking Glass World*. In extract (20), Alice is running together with the Red Queen, but they do not move at all, no matter how fast they run:

(25) Alice looked round her in great surprise. "Why, I do believe we've been under this tree the whole time! Everything's just as it was!"
"Of course it is," said the Queen. "What would you have it?"
"Well, in *our* country," said Alice panting a Little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else - if you ran very fast for a long time as we've been doing."
"A slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that." (LG/210)

As in the examples discussed above, the deitic terms establish a comparison between an alternate situation or state of affairs (*In our country you'd generally get to somewhere else - if you ran very fast as we've been doing*) and the present situation (*here*). Distance

or remoteness (see Werth, 1999: 239-40) is marked by means of hypotheticality (*if you ran*) and the exclusive use of the third person pronoun *our*.

Similarly, in *Looking Glass World*, the chronological order of events is inverted with respect to the order that is followed in our world. This can be seen in the episode where Alice meets the White Queen:

(26) "What sort of things do you remember best?" Alice ventured to ask.
"Oh, things that happened the week after next," the Queen replied in a careless tone. "For instance, now...there's the King's Messenger. He's in prison now, being punished: and the trial doesn't even begin till next Wednesday: and of course the crime comes last of all." (LG/248)

In fact, the general rule regarding the way time develops in *Looking Glass World* seems to be that events occur in inverted relationships with regard to the progression they follow in the real world. In *Looking Glass World* effects happen first and are then followed by causes. For this reason the messenger is imprisoned before he commits the crime in passage (26) above. This inversion of chronological sequences is illustrated further in other episodes such as the ones reproduced below. In (27) the White Queen is still talking to Alice and suddenlt starts shouting:

(27) 'Oh, oh, oh!' shouted the Queen, shaking her hand about as if she wanted to shake it off. "My finger's bleeding! Oh, oh, oh!' (...)
'What *is* the matter?' [Alice] said, as soon as there was a chance of making herself heard. 'Have you pricked your finger?'
'I haven't pricked it *yet*,' the Queen said, but I soon shall - oh, oh, oh!'
'When do you expect to do it?' Alice asked, feeling very much inclined to laugh.
'When I fasten my shawl again', the poor Queen groaned out. (...) As she said the words the brooch flew open, and the Queen clutched wildly at it and tried to clasp it again. (LG/349)

As is expected, the Queen does not hold the brooch properly and pricks her finger. The cause-effect relation between the pricking and the bleeding is inverted, so that chronologically the bleeding is previous to the pricking.

A similar scene takes place in the episode where Alice meets the Unicorn in *Looking Glass World*. In this passage, the Lion and the Unicorn have asked Alice - to whom they refer as 'The Monster' - to cut up a cake in slices for all to eat. However, Alice is not aware that this action needs to follow *Looking Glass World* laws and not the natural laws she is used to:

(28) Alice seated herself on the bank of a little brook, with the great dish on her knees, and was sawing away diligently with the knife. 'It's very provoking!' she said, in reply to the Lion (...). 'I've cut several slices already, but they always join on again!'
'You don't know how to manage Looking Glass cakes' the Unicorn remarked. 'Hand it round first, and cut it afterwards!'
This sounded nonsense, but Alice very obediently got up, and carried the dish round, and the cake divided itself into three pieces as she did so.
'*Now* cut it up,' said the Lion, as she returned to her place with the empty dish. (LG/290)

As in example (27) above, in extract (28) the relation of cause-effect between cutting and handing out slices is inverted.

The peculiarities of the spatio-temporal system of *Looking Glass World* may be analysed more in depth by considering exactly in what way the alternate world depicted in the fictional world differs from the actual world or real world. Ryan (1991) proposes a complex taxonomy which allows us to identify the different types of accessibility relations between alternate worlds and the actual world, where we, as readers, are situated. For the purposes of the present discussion we may include the following variables (Ryan 1991: 32-33):

a. *Physical compatibility*. A world is accessible from AW if they share the same natural laws.
b. *Taxonomic compatibility*. A world is accessible from AW if both worlds contain the same species and they have the same properties.

If we consider the characteristics of *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass World* according to these variables we may observe that both differ from the real world along these parameters since animals and inanimate objects can talk, and in both worlds we find animate entities such as chess pieces or cards and extinct species, like dodos. Moreover, *Looking Glass World* differs further along the parameter of physical compatibility in that the natural laws that govern time progression are not respected.

2.5. Conclusion

Reference is crucial in order to account for the process of communication and it depends on pragmatic clues for its adequate interpretation. This has been illustrated by means of different passages from the *Alice* books, which are two idiosyncratic worlds where pragmatic principles in general and reference in particular are not understood to work in the way we (or Alice) would expect. An analysis of the defeat of expected uses provides interesting insights regarding the implied reflections on the validity of our language systems as systems of communication. This leads to the conclusion that the

Alice books, rather than 'nonsense' or 'children' literature constitute playful reflections on issues which have been the concern of linguists and philosophers for many years.

To end, an analysis of deictic terms as a special type of reference in the fictional worlds of the *Alice* books may provide insights regarding the importance of such terms in their function of delimiting the text world boundaries and in illustrating the laws that rule spatio-temporal relations. By providing distorted versions or mirror images of our own world, the fictional worlds of *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass* invite the reader to meditate about the characteristics of the world we inhabit and how such characteristics are systematised by means of language.

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