



DEIXIS ANALYSIS ON THE SONG LYRICS OF MEGHAN TRAINOR

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Abstract

This research examines the use of deixis in the song lyrics of Meghan Trainor's album Thank You (2016). The study aims to identify the various types of deixis and to analyze their pragmatic functions within the lyrical context. To achieve these objectives, the researcher employed a descriptive qualitative method, focusing on the linguistic nuances and contextual meanings of the deictic expressions found across the album.

The results of the study reveal a high frequency of deictic occurrences. Regarding the types of deixis, the analysis identified a total of 826 data points. Among these, person deixis emerged as the most dominant type, primarily through the use of first and second-person pronouns to establish a direct connection between the singer and the audience. Furthermore, in terms of the functions of deixis, the study identified 619 data points, with the most dominant function being identifying participants in discourse. This indicates that the lyrics are heavily centered on defining the roles of "I" (the speaker) and "You" (the addressee) to build a relatable narrative.

The conclusion of this research highlights that Meghan Trainor utilizes deixis as a strategic pragmatic tool to construct identity and foster interpersonal negotiation within her musical discourse. By grounding the lyrics in specific personal, spatial, and temporal contexts, the songwriter effectively invites listeners into an imagined dialogic relationship. These findings underscore the importance of deixis in shaping the emotional resonance and communicative clarity of contemporary pop music.

Key words: Pragmatics, deixis, song lyrics

INTRODUCTION

Song is one means of delivering an effective message. Songs can capture and evoke emotional patterns such as hope, longing, joy, and even frenzy. The song is a series of notes combined with a harmonious rhythm and complemented by each line, forming a beautiful harmony. Songwriter can produce song lyrics according to the inspiration he gets, either through sight, hearing, or what he experiences.

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The lyrics of the song are the result of the expression or feeling of the creator which becomes a metaphor for the lyrics of the song. As stated by Littlejohn (1996 p.64) that the lyrics in the song is a sign or sign based on all communication. The choice of words in the lyrics of the song contains meaning and emotion which is used as a tool for communication. In expressing their experiences, poets or songwriters play words and language to create attraction and uniqueness to the lyrics.

According to Levinson (1983), deixis concerns the way in which language encode or grammaticalize features of the context of utterance of speech event. It is a branch of pragmatics that studies changes in the meaning of words or sentences caused by changes in context. Yule (1996) states any linguistic form used to accomplish this "pointing" is called a deictic expression. Furthermore, Cruse (2000) highlights that deixis refers to the use of terms in which the speaker's physical, temporal, and social placement is the sole way to identify the referent.

The reason why researchers choose deixis in song lyrics is because researchers want to know more about deixis in song lyrics that are often heard by the public. And then the researcher wants to know what types of deixis are found in Meghan Trainor's song, then what functions of deixis that used in Meghan Trainor's song lyrics. The song lyrics that will be used in the research is Meghan Trainor's "Thank You" album. Meghan Trainor's is one of the talented singers. To better understand how these linguistic markers operate in Meghan Trainor's songs, the study first categorizes deixis into several distinct types. The definitions and characteristics of these types are elaborated in the following discussion

Deixis plays a significant part in pragmatics research. It aids in the interpretation of a sentence's meaning based on its context. Levinson (1983:68-94) backs this up by classifying deixis into five categories: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis. person deixis, According to Yule (1996:10), person deixis clearly operates on a basic three part division, exemplified by pronouns for first person (I), second person (You), and third person (she, he, it). Person deixis involves the speaker (I) and the addressee (You). In conversation, each person constantly changes from being I to being you. The choice of one of these forms instead of another, because of the surrounding social circumstances is sometimes described as social deixis.

Place deixis, According to Levinson (1983), place or space deixis concerns the specification of locations relative to anchorage in the speech event. Cruse (2000:320) states that spatial or place deixis manifests itself principally in the form of locative adverbs such as 'here' and 'there' and demonstratives such as 'this' and 'that'. English has a relatively impoverished spatial deictic system usually labeled proximal and distal. The proximal term "here" means a region relatively close to the speaker, while "there" means relatively distant from the speaker. Furthermore, the words which show things or people near from the addressee are "this" and "here", while when they are far from the addressee are "that" and "there".

Time Deixis can also be called as temporal deixis. According to Cruse (2000:321), temporal deixis functions to locate points or intervals on the time axis, using the moments of utterance as a reference point. There are three major divisions of the time axis: (1) before the moment of utterance, (2) at the time of

utterance, (3) after the time of the utterance. The most basic temporal deictics in English are "now" and "then". Furthermore, temporal deixis is directly tied to the adverb of time, including time signals like now, shortly, recently, then, yesterday, and this year, and it is frequently encountered in the use of tenses. Social Deixis, According to Levinson (1983:89 in Fillmore), social deixis concerns that aspect of sentences which reflect or establish or are determined by certain realities of the social situation in which the speech act occurs. It encodes the social identities of participants or the social relationship between them. The usage of social deixis brings the use of polite pronouns and title of address, such as the choice of honorifics or polite or intimate or insulting speech level. Examples of marking social relationships in linguistic expression include nicknames, informal names, and title of respect, such as Mr. for man, Mrs. for women, president Jokowi dodo, or Prof. Dr. Sutomo.

Discourse deixis concerns the use of expressions within some expressions that utterance refers to some portion of the discourse that contains that utterance (including the utterance itself), as stated by Levinson (2000:85). It may conclude a number of other ways in which an utterance signals its relationship to surrounding text, such as utterance initial "anyway", which indicates that the utterance is not addressed to the immediately preceding discourse but to one or more steps back. People can utilize temporal deixis like "next" and "last" to refer to segments of the speech in discourse deixis. In English, there are a few deictic idioms that include discourse deixis, specifically including "this" and "that".

After identifying the various types of deixis found in the lyrics, it is equally important to examine their roles. Therefore, the following section will elaborate on the functions of these deictic expressions in shaping the communicative meaning of the songs. Deixis operates as a discursive resource for constructing identity, emotional engagement, and subjectivity, while asserting experiential authority and legitimizing the speaker's stance. As noted in the study, it establishes an imagined dialogic relationship between the speaker and the listener, transforming monologic lyrics into participatory discourse and serving as a link between the audience's subjective reality and the lyric's fictional universe. Grounded in the theories proposed by Levinson and Huang, deixis functions as a meaning-making strategy within a coherent musical discourse, offering deep insights into how linguistic pointers structure the communicative space. This fosters a feeling of closeness between the performer and the listener, where spatial and temporal deixis often refer to an imaginary or emotional context rather than a physical space, allowing intended messages to be conveyed more effectively.

The following are several functions of deixis according to Levinson. First, Anchoring utterances to the speech situation. Deixis functions to link language to the immediate context of utterance, known as the deictic center (or origo), typically consisting of: the speaker, the time of speaking, and the place of speaking. Second, Identifying participants in discourse (person deixis). Deixis functions to identify and distinguish discourse participants, assigning roles such as speaker, addressee, and others. This enables: role negotiation, turn-taking, social alignment.

Third, Locating events in space (spatial deixis). Spatial deixis functions to situate entities and actions relative to the deictic center, typically using distance contrasts (proximal vs. distal). This supports: reference tracking, physical orientation, shared spatial understanding. Fourth, Locating events in time (temporal deixis). Temporal deixis functions to place events in relation to the moment of utterance, rather than in absolute time. Fifth, Managing discourse structure (discourse deixis). Deixis functions to refer to parts of the unfolding discourse itself, rather than external entities. Sixth, Encoding social relationships (social deixis). Deixis functions to encode social status, distance, and relationships between participants. And the last, Reducing cognitive load in communication. Levinson emphasizes that deixis enables economy of expression, allowing speakers to rely on shared contextual knowledge rather than explicit description.

The study of deixis in song lyrics has been a prominent topic in pragmatics; however, most previous researches have predominantly focused on romantic ballads and limited their scope to merely identifying the types of deixis. This leaves a significant research gap in exploring the functions of deixis within the empowerment pop genre, specifically in Meghan Trainor's *Thank You* album. Unlike previous studies, this research fills that gap by analyzing how deictic expressions are strategically used to build a strong persona and create a direct engagement with the audience, which is a unique characteristic of this album. By investigating both the categorization and the discursive purposes of these linguistic markers, this study provides a deeper understanding of how language creates a bridge between the artist's message and the listener's experience. Consequently, this research is driven by the following question:

- 1) What are the types of the deixis used in the song lyrics of Meghan Trainor's album "Thank You".
- 2) What functions of deixis word are used in the song lyrics of Meghan Trainor's album "Thank You".

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to provide a systematic and in-depth analysis of linguistic phenomena within a specific context. According to Creswell, qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In this study, the method is used to identify, classify, and describe the types and functions of deixis found in song lyrics. Unlike quantitative research that focuses on statistical generalizations, this qualitative approach allows for a nuanced interpretation of how Meghan Trainor's lyrics strategically utilize deictic expressions to build a persona of empowerment and engage with her audience.

The primary source of data for this study is the lyrics from Meghan Trainor's album entitled *Thank You*. The data consist of words, phrases, and sentences that contain deictic elements, specifically focusing on person, time, place, social, and discourse deixis. To ensure the accuracy of the data, the researcher gathered the lyrics from official sources and cross-referenced them with the audio recordings of the songs. The selection of this album as the data source is based on its unique

characteristics in the empowerment pop genre, which provides a rich variety of deictic markers that function differently compared to conventional romantic ballads.

The data collection and analysis process followed several systematic steps based on Levinson's framework of pragmatics. First, the researcher conducted intensive reading and listening to the selected tracks to identify potential deictic expressions. Second, the identified data were categorized into the five types of deixis using a coding system. Third, the researcher analyzed the function of each deictic category by examining the context of the lyrics and how they establish a relationship between the speaker and the listener. Finally, the findings were interpreted to draw a comprehensive conclusion regarding how deixis serves as a discursive resource for constructing identity and emotional engagement within the album.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

This study aims to identify the types of deixis found in the lyrics of Meghan Trainor's album "Thank You." Based on the results of data analysis conducted on twelve songs in the album, a total of 826 instances of deixis were found. The researcher conducted findings such as five types of deixis in Meghan Trainor's album "Thank you".

Table 4. The frequency of Deixis Types in Meghan Trainor's Album "Thank You"

Types of deixis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Person deixis	717	86,80 %
Time deixis	17	2,06 %
Place deixis	13	1,57 %
Social deixis	76	9,20 %
Discourse deixis	3	0,37 %
Total	826	100 %

Types of Deixis on the song lyric's of Meghan Trainor's album "Thank You"

a) Person Deixis

Datum 8

"Watch me do, watch me."

In this sentence the word “me” is classified as person deixis specifically first-person deixis. The term “me” relates directly to the speaker (the singer herself) and can only be completely understood if the speaker is identified at the time of utterance. The reference changes depending on who performs or cites the lyrics, which is a defining feature of deixis. The imperative verb “watch” is likewise implicitly depending on the speaker listener connection, connecting the line to the speaker’s perspective as the deixis center.

b) Time Deixis

Datum 46

“I thank God every day”

In this sentence the word “every day” is classified as time deixis. The word “every day” serves as temporal (time) deixis because it places the action in connection to time, suggesting a recurrent time frame that is tied to the speaker's current context.

c) Social Deixis

Datum 102

“Telling me I’m not like other girls”

In this sentence the word “you” is classified as social deixis by implying a social comparison and relational placement of the speaker with others. While there is no clear social title (such as sir or madam), the term “other girls” refers to a social group and positions the speaker within it. This provides a deictic contrast that distinguishes the speaker from the addressee's perception of a larger societal category of women.

d) Place Deixis

Datum 42

“who’s that sexy thing I see over there”

The term “over there” in the statement “Who's that sexy thing I see over there?” exemplifies Place Deixis, sometimes called Spatial Deixis. Place deixis, according to Levinson's idea, is the specification of locales in relation to the speech event's points of reference. “Over there” refers to a place that is distant from the speaker's deictic center and is classified as a distal deictic phrase. Meghan Trainor uses place deixis to treat her reflection

as a separate object that is situated apart from her own self when she is gazing at it in a mirror in the setting of this song.

e) Discourse Deixis

Datum 47

“That I woke up feeling this way (uh ha)”

In the lyric "That I woke up feelin' this way" from Meghan Trainor's song "Me Too," discourse deixis—more especially, the word "this"—is the main kind of deixis. Discourse deixis, as defined in linguistics, is the use of terms inside an utterance to allude to either previously mentioned or upcoming discourse elements. In this poetic context, "this way" serves as a reference to the full description of her mood, confidence, and "gold" style that is stated throughout the song, both before and after. Instead of repeating every single aspect of her self-assurance, it serves as a shorthand to capture the particular, high-energy mental state she is describing.

Based on the results of the data analysis presented in the frequency table, the Person category is the most dominant element with a frequency of 717 findings or covering 86.80% of the total data. This is followed by the Social category with a frequency of 76 findings (9.20%). Meanwhile, the other three categories show much smaller contributions, namely the Time category with 17 findings (2.06%), the Place category with 13 findings (1.57%), and the Discourse category as the element with the lowest frequency, with only 3 findings (0.37%). Cumulatively, the total data analyzed amounted to 826 points with a percentage distribution reaching 100%.

After identifying the distribution of deictic types, it is crucial to analyze how these categories operate functionally within the lyrics. The frequency of these types is closely related to their specific roles in establishing context and meaning, which are categorized into several deictic functions as shown in the following table.

Based on the results of data analysis of the deictic functions found in Meghan Trainor's album "Thank You," the researcher summarized the frequency distribution and percentage of each function in Table 5 below:

Table 5. The frequency of Deixis Function in Meghan Trainor's Album "Thank You"

Function of deixis	Frequency	Percentage
Anchoring utterances to the speech situation	20	3,23%
Identifying participants in discourse (person deixis)	492	79,48%
Locating events in space (spatial deixis)	13	2,10%
Locating events in time (time deixis)	17	2,75%
Managing discourse structure (discourse deixis)	3	0,48%
Encoding social relationships (social deixis)	74	11,96
Reducing cognitive load in communication	0	0
Total	619	100%

Function of Deixis on the song lyric's of Meghan Trainor's album "Thank You"

a) Identifying participants in discourse (person deixis)

Datum 8

"Watch me do, watch me"

Referring to Stephen C. Levinson's framework in pragmatics, the phrase "Watch me do, watch me" directly falls into the category of identifying participants in discourse. This is the main function of personal deixis. The pronoun 'me' serves to directly identify the speaker (first participant) in the speech situation. Without the word "me," the listeners would not know who they should be watching.

b) Locating events in time (Time Deixis)

Datum 379

“everytime you see me”

The phrase “everytime you see me” falls under the function of Locating Events in Time according to Levinson's theory. Main Function: Locating Events in Time (Time Deixis). This phrase uses a time marker to determine when an action or state occurs. “Everytime” refers to a recurring frequency within a certain time frame. It directly places the event in a temporal context. It describes when the action in question occurs: every time or whenever the action of seeing occurs. Levinson emphasizes that time deixis (such as now, then, tomorrow, every time) is a tool for anchoring utterances to specific or recurring time situations. In this case, the phrase describes the frequency of an event's occurrence.

c) Encoding social relationship (Social Deixis)

Datum 102

“Telling me I'm not like other girls”

The phrase “Telling me I'm not like other girls” falls under the function of Encoding Social Relationships (Social Deixis) according to Levinson. Primary Function: Social Deixis. This function relates to how language is used to mark social relationships, social distance, or hierarchy between the speaker and the listener (or a third party being referred to). “Other girls”: This phrase does not simply refer to a group of people physically, but places the speaker in a certain social category that is different from the norms or expectations referred to by the group of “other girls”. This indicates the use of social comparison to define the speaker's position, image, or relationship within the social discourse. This sentence falls under the function of Encoding Social Relationships because the use of the phrase “other girls” serves to make a social comparison, which aims to position the speaker's identity or relationship within the specific social structure being discussed.

d) Locating events in space (Place Deixis)

Datum 42

“who's that sexy thing I see over there?”

The phrase “who's that sexy thing I see over there?” falls under the function of Locating Events in Space (Spatial Deixis) according to Levinson. Primary Function: Placing Events/Objects in Space (Spatial Deixis). This function aims to associate objects or participants with their physical position relative to the speaker. “That”: This word functions as a pointer that places the object (“sexy thing”) at a distance from the speaker. “Over there”: This phrase specifically functions as a place deixis that indicates the physical coordinates of the object in space. This sentence falls under Locating Events in Space due to the use of the words “that” and “over

there,” which specifically place the object being discussed in specific physical coordinates, anchoring it to the spatial context of the speech situation.

e) Managing discourse structure (Discourse Deixis)

Datum 47

“That I woke up feelin this way (uh ha)”

The phrase “that I woke up feeling this way (uh ha)” falls under the function of Managing Discourse Structure (Discourse Deixis) according to Levinson, especially when linked to the broader context of the conversation. Main Function: Managing Discourse Structure (Discourse Deixis).

This function refers to the use of expressions to refer to parts of the discourse itself (either already spoken or to be spoken), helping to organize the flow of conversation or song lyrics. “That”: In the context of song lyrics or conversation, the word “that” often does not refer to a physical object, but rather to a proposition or idea that has been mentioned earlier in the discourse. It serves as a bridge connecting this sentence to the previous context. “Uh ha”: This is a filler or discourse marker that serves to manage the flow of speech, maintain the listener's attention, or emphasize agreement in the structure of the conversation. This sentence falls under Managing Discourse Structure mainly because of the use of the word “that,” which refers back to a previous idea, as well as the presence of discourse markers such as “uh ha” that regulate the flow of speech.

f) Anchoring utterances to the speech situation

Datum 173

“I think you deserve the world and everything in it”

This sentence falls under the function of deixis, which anchors utterances to the speech situation because the presence of first and second person pronouns requires us to understand the context of who is speaking to whom in order for the meaning to be complete. Without this anchoring, the sentence is merely an abstract statement that loses its “anchor” to reality.

Based on the data presented in Table 5, there are a total of 619 deictic uses categorized into six distinct functions, with person deixis emerging as the most dominant category at 79.48% (492 data). This high frequency indicates that the discourse primarily focuses on identifying the participants or figures involved in the communication. In contrast, social deixis ranks second with 11.96% (74 data), highlighting the linguistic markers used to signal social relationships or status levels. Other functions, such as anchoring utterances to the speech

situation (3.23%), time deixis (2.75%), and spatial deixis (2.10%), appear significantly less often. Notably, discourse deixis is the least frequent function found at only 0.48% (3 data), while the function of reducing cognitive load was entirely absent from the dataset.

2. Discussion

This discussion provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of deixis types and their pragmatic functions in the lyrics of Meghan Trainor's *Thank You* album (2016). Departing from mere qualitative description, this study situates empirical findings within an analytical dialogue with both classical and contemporary pragmatic theories (Levinson, 2006; Huang, 2017). The album is approached as a coherent and unified musical discourse, whereby recurrent deixis patterns are interpreted as deliberate pragmatic strategies rather than coincidental linguistic occurrences.

The findings reveal an absolute dominance of personal deixis, which accounts for 86.80% (717 data points). This usage is primarily intended to identify participants in the discourse, such as the singer as "I" and the listener as "You," a function that dominates with 79.48% frequency. This suggests that Meghan Trainor constructs a human-centered narrative where interpersonal relationships are at the core of every message. Additionally, the emergence of social deixis (9.20%) reflects the encoding of social distinctions and emotional closeness between characters, grounding the lyrics in real communication.

The low frequency of place deixis (1.57%) and time deixis (2.06%) shows that the album is more "emotion-centric" than "situation-centric." This indicates that the lyrics prioritize universal emotional connections over specific situational grounding, reinforcing the characteristic of modern pop music where feelings are not limited by a specific "where" or "when." Pragmatically, such discourse is "context-light" with respect to situational grounding but "context-rich" in emotional and interpersonal dimensions, emphasizing the speaker's internal states rather than external physical surroundings.

The study's novelty is threefold: it treats the album as a coherent musical discourse, integrates concepts of ego-centric deixis and stance, and combines quantitative distribution with qualitative pragmatic interpretation. This study diverges from prior research on deixis in song lyrics, which predominantly adopted descriptive approaches focused on classifying types. Collectively, these innovations extend the current understanding of how deixis functions in the construction of meaning and identity within contemporary popular cultural texts, positioning the speaker as the focal point of meaning construction.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A. CONCLUSION

Overall, the study concludes that deixis in Thank You functions as a pragmatic strategy for identity construction, emotional expression, and interpersonal negotiation. The findings demonstrate that person deixis is the most dominant type across the album, positioning the speaker as the deictic center of meaning construction.

Pragmatically, first-person deixis functions to construct subjectivity and assert experiential authority, while second-person deixis establishes an imagined dialogic relationship between the speaker and the listener. Furthermore, by treating the album as an integrated musical discourse, this research contributes theoretically to pragmatics and methodologically to discourse-based analyses of popular music.

B. SUGGESTION

Based on the conclusion of this study, the researcher provides several suggestions for future studies. First, for other researchers interested in pragmatics, it is suggested to conduct more extensive research regarding the types of deixis by using different theories or more diverse data sources beyond song lyrics to enrich the linguistic perspective. Second, it is suggested that future researchers delve deeper into the pragmatic functions of deixis, specifically how deictic expressions can manipulate the listener's emotional engagement and construct complex identities in various types of discourse. Finally, it is expected that this research can serve as a useful reference for students or researchers who want to analyze the application and implementation of deixis in contemporary popular music.

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