

Deixis in the Lyrics of "Happier" by Olivia Rodrigo

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of deixis in Olivia Rodrigo's song "Happier." It examines how deixis constructs emotional meaning and narrative coherence through linguistic elements. The focus is on identifying and analyzing five types of deixis: person, temporal, spatial, social, and discourse. This analysis interprets how language operates pragmatically within the song. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research applies Levinson's framework for a detailed textual analysis. The song was selected purposively due to its emotional depth and linguistic richness. The findings reveal that person deixis is the most dominant type. It reflects the narrator's shifting emotional position toward her ex-partner and his new relationship. Temporal deixis marks the emotional timeline of the breakup. Meanwhile, spatial deixis subtly conveys psychological distance. Social deixis uncovers power dynamics and feelings of inferiority. Discourse deixis helps maintain the coherence of the emotional narrative. Each type of deixis contributes to building a layered and affective discourse that enhances the song's emotional resonance. The study concludes that deixis functions not only as a grammatical tool but also as an expressive and narrative device in popular music. The song "Happier" exemplifies how deixis can encode emotional complexity. This makes it a useful medium for both linguistic analysis and language learning. The research recommends further studies on deixis in multiple songs to gain broader insights into its stylistic and pragmatic functions.

Keywords: *Deixis, Discourse Analysis, Emotion, Pragmatics, Song Lyrics*

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INTRODUCTION

Deixis is a fundamental linguistic phenomenon in pragmatics that refers to expressions requiring contextual information to convey meaning (Levinson, 1983). These context-dependent elements include pronouns (I, you), spatial markers (here, there), temporal references (now, yesterday), and discourse connectives (this, that). As a core component of pragmatic study, deixis reveals how language users anchor meaning to specific communicative situations, making it essential for understanding the relationship between linguistic forms and their contextual interpretation.

The analysis of deixis holds particular significance in song lyrics as a form of artistic discourse. Songwriters employ deictic elements to construct emotional narratives and establish connections with listeners (Handayani, 2022). This study examines deixis in Olivia Rodrigo's "Happier" from her debut album "Sour", selected for its rich deployment of deictic markers that articulate complex interpersonal dynamics. The song's narrative of romantic disillusionment makes it particularly suitable for demonstrating how deixis operates in emotional storytelling.

Levinson's (2006) taxonomy of deixis provides our analytical framework, comprising five types: (1) person deixis (I, you, she); (2) spatial deixis (here, there); (3) temporal deixis (now, then); (4) social deixis (honorifics); and (5) discourse deixis (this, that). In musical texts, these categories work synergistically to position narrators temporally, spatially, and socially while maintaining discourse coherence (Xiang et al., 2024). "Happier" exemplifies this through

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its strategic use of first-person ("I"), second-person ("you"), and third-person ("she") references that create an emotional triangle.

Pedagogically, analyzing deictic patterns in popular music offers practical benefits for language education. Song lyrics serve as authentic materials that demonstrate pragmatic competence - the ability to use language appropriately in context (Indriani & Widianingsih, 2023). Through deixis analysis, learners develop interpretative skills for understanding how linguistic choices reflect speaker perspective, relational dynamics, and narrative progression in real-world communication.

Previous research on Rodrigo's lyrics has predominantly focused on isolated aspects of deixis. While Puspahaty and Musta'innah (2024) conducted album-wide analysis, and Aulina et al. (2023) examined person deixis in "Driver's License", no study has provided an integrated analysis of all five deixis types within a single song. This gap motivates our comprehensive examination of "Happier", which traces how multiple deixis categories interact to construct its emotional narrative.

Our methodological approach employs qualitative descriptive analysis (Hennink et al., 2020) to examine the song's lyrical text as naturalistic discourse data. This approach aligns with Creswell and Creswell's (2019) emphasis on qualitative methods for uncovering layered meanings in textual analysis. The study focuses on how deixis markers: (1) establish narrative perspective; (2) structure emotional progression; and (3) maintain discourse cohesion throughout the song.

The analysis reveals three key findings about deixis in "Happier". First, person deixis ("I/you/she") constructs an emotional triad positioning the speaker between her past relationship and current rival. Second, spatial and temporal markers ("here", "a month ago") chart psychological rather than physical distances. Third, discourse deixis maintains narrative continuity while social deixis reveals implicit power dynamics (Macrae, 2020). These findings demonstrate deixis as both linguistic mechanism and artistic device in songwriting.

This study contributes to linguistic scholarship by: (1) providing a holistic analysis of interrelated deixis types; (2) demonstrating their narrative functions in popular music; and (3) offering pedagogical applications for language teaching. For researchers, it establishes a model for integrated deixis analysis. For educators, it shows how song lyrics can teach pragmatic competence. For artists, it reveals deixis as a tool for emotional storytelling (Saputra & Apsari, 2021).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the types and roles of deixis in the song lyrics of "Happier" by Olivia Rodrigo. The population of the study includes song lyrics with rich pragmatic features, while the sample is purposively selected to focus on "Happier" due to its emotional depth and linguistic intricacy.

The analysis follows a systematic approach consisting of several key steps: (1) Transcription: The lyrics of "Happier" were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy in the analysis. This step involved careful attention to the text to capture all linguistic elements relevant to deixis. (2) Coding: The transcribed lyrics were then subjected to coding, where specific instances of deixis were identified and labeled according to Levinson's (2006) framework. This included categorizing deixis into five types: person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. (3) Classification of Deixis: Following coding, the identified deixis markers were classified into their respective categories. This classification allowed for a clearer understanding of how each type of deixis functions within the lyrics to convey emotional and contextual meanings. (4) Thematic Analysis: A thematic approach was employed to identify patterns and interpret the contextual and emotional meanings conveyed through deixis. This involved examining how different types of deixis interact and contribute to the overall narrative and emotional landscape of the song.

As Creswell and Creswell (2019) emphasize, qualitative methods allow for an in-depth exploration of textual elements within their contextual settings. The findings are

interpreted using analytical tools consistent with qualitative research guidelines described by Pandey and Pandey (2021) and Hennink et al. (2020), ensuring rigor and credibility in the research process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For each type of deixis identified in the lyrics of "Happier." The most prevalent type is person deixis, with 15 occurrences, indicating a strong focus on the narrator's emotional perspective and personal experience. Temporal deixis follows with 8 occurrences, highlighting the importance of time in the narrative progression. Spatial deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis appear less frequently, but they still contribute to the overall emotional and contextual richness of the song.

"I'm selfish, I know, I can't let you go". This lyric employs first-person deixis through the repeated use of *I*, representing the speaker's internal voice and emotional struggle. According to Levinson (2006), person deixis involves references to speech participants. The pronoun *I* indicates the first-person singular, referring directly to the speaker and revealing her self-awareness, guilt, and inability to detach from the past. This aligns with Herdiyanti (2020), who noted that first-person deixis in breakup songs often reflects vulnerability and emotional turmoil.

"I hope you're happy, but not like how you were with me" The second-person pronoun *you* functions as a direct address to the ex-partner, intensifying the confrontational tone. *You*, as second-person deixis, includes the addressee and draws the listener into the speaker's intimate world. Levinson (2006) categorizes this usage as essential in defining the roles within the communicative act. It also aligns with the function of *you* as either singular or plural depending on the context, and here it clearly addresses a specific individual—the ex-lover. This form creates immediacy and emotional tension (Agustina & Hendar, 2022).

"But she's so sweet, she's so pretty".

The third-person singular pronoun *she* refers to the new partner. Levinson (2006) explains that third-person deixis refers to individuals who are not part of the immediate conversation. The use of *she* introduces contrast, comparison, and emotional distancing between the speaker and the new lover. This usage resonates with Aulina et al. (2023), who found that third-person deixis often triggers feelings of jealousy, inferiority, and detachment.

"Like cuttin' her down will make you miss my wretched heart"

Although explicit spatial deixis such as *here* or *there* is minimal, this lyric implies spatial contrast between the speaker's emotional position and the ex-partner's current relationship. Levinson (2006) defines spatial deixis as expressions that localize participants or events in space. The metaphor of "cutting her down" implies an emotional boundary and highlights the speaker's sense of being left out or excluded. Rokhmah and Santoso (2022) argue that spatial deixis in lyrics often signifies metaphorical rather than literal distance, reflecting psychological separation rather than physical location.

"We broke up a month ago"

The phrase *a month ago* anchors the narrative temporally, indicating when the breakup occurred. Levinson (2006) defines temporal deixis as expressions situating events along a time axis, such as past, present, or future. This reference to a specific time in the past conveys the speaker's emotional timeline and sets the stage for interpreting subsequent feelings. Van Thao (2020) notes that such deixis helps listeners reconstruct the emotional journey from the event to its aftermath.

"Now I'm pickin' her apart".

The word *now* functions as a temporal deictic marker indicating the present moment. It juxtaposes the speaker's current emotional response against the memory of the relationship, establishing continuity. Yuan (2023) argues that *now* enhances the listener's perception of emotional immediacy and transition. The speaker's inability to move on, despite the passage of time, is reinforced by this deictic contrast between past and present.

"Remember when I believed you meant it when you said it first to me?"

The deictic expression *when* refers to a prior moment, prompting reflection on past promises.

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This exemplifies what Levinson (2006) terms deictic projection, where the speaker mentally revisits an earlier event. It enhances the song's nostalgic tone and aligns with Handayani (2022), who notes that Rodrigo frequently employs such temporal deixis to articulate emotional regression and memory.

"Say you love her, baby".

The vocative *baby* functions as a form of social deixis, conveying familiarity, intimacy, and irony. Levinson (2006) explains that social deixis marks social relationships and relative status between interlocutors. In this context, *baby* is layered with emotional ambivalence—used sarcastically, it mocks the speaker's diminished social position. Mahmudova (2021) states that social deixis in songs often indicates power imbalance and unreciprocated emotional investment.

"She probably gives you butterflies".

This lyric continues to develop the emotional hierarchy established by social deixis. The reference to the new partner (*she*) paired with the phrase *gives you butterflies* suggests admiration tainted by envy. Macrae (2020) argues that such deixis illustrates attempts to reclaim narrative authority while simultaneously reinforcing feelings of displacement and inadequacy.

"Remember when I believed you meant it when you said it first to me?"

This line also contains discourse deixis, connecting past dialogue to the current emotional context. Levinson (2006) defines discourse deixis as references to other parts of the text or speech. The phrase *remember when* signals a backward shift in discourse, allowing the speaker to recall and reevaluate a significant communicative event. Indriani and Widianingsih (2023) emphasize that discourse deixis is vital in establishing thematic continuity and emotional coherence in narrative lyrics.

"But I guess you look happier"

The discourse marker *but* introduces a contradiction or contrast to prior claims or beliefs. This aligns with Levinson's (2006) view that discourse deixis structures the internal logic of a conversation or narrative. The lyric transitions from emotional acceptance to a tone of suppressed resentment, mirroring the unresolved tension in the speaker's emotional state. Saputra and Apsari (2021) highlight that such markers guide the listener's interpretation and reinforce narrative progression.

Table 2. Deixis Types and Representative Lyric Examples

Deixis	Type	of	Lyric Example	Function
	Person		"I'm selfish, I know"; "But she's so sweet"	Expresses self-perception, interpersonal tension, and emotional contrast
	Spatial		"Like cuttin' her down..."	Implies metaphorical and emotional distance
	Temporal		"We broke up a month ago"; "Now I'm pickin' her apart"	Establishes emotional timeline and transformation
	Social		"Say you love her, baby"; "She probably gives you butterflies"	Highlights social hierarchy, ironic intimacy, and jealousy
	Discourse		"Remember when..."; "But I guess you look happier"	Links past discourse with present reflection and internal contradiction

Through a detailed deixis analysis using selected lyric segments, the study demonstrates how linguistic choices reflect the narrator's inner turmoil, relational positioning, and emotional evolution. Each deixis type is not isolated but interconnected, contributing to the song's overall narrative and affective impact. These findings align with research by Agustina and Hendar (2022), Damayanti (2023), and Novsianti and Vendityaningtyas (2024), confirming that deixis serves as a narrative mechanism that enhances interpretability and emotional engagement. Within the broader context of pragmatics and discourse analysis, "Happier" exemplifies how popular music can be both a site of emotional expression and a rich object of linguistic inquiry.

The analysis of *deixis* in Olivia Rodrigo's song *Happier* emphasizes the critical role of linguistic referencing in articulating emotional intensity and narrative structure within song lyrics. Deixis serves as a pragmatic tool that anchors utterances to specific elements of context, including speaker, listener, time, space, and discourse. Levinson (2006) describes deixis as a central phenomenon in pragmatics, enabling the interpretation of utterances by situating them relative to the participants, time, and place of the speech event. In the context of song lyrics, deixis constructs personal perspective, emotional tension, and relational positioning between the narrator and the subjects of the narrative. The lyrics in *Happier* demonstrate consistent use of person deixis, with additional traces of spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis, reflecting a layered emotional experience rooted in the speaker's memory, longing, and interpersonal conflict. Macrae (2020) identifies deixis in literary texts as an important stylistic device that enables authors and lyricists to manipulate narrative focus and audience empathy. Handayani (2022), in her analysis of Olivia Rodrigo's *Sour* album, also affirms that deixis is a key indicator of adolescent emotional dynamics as portrayed through lyrical narratives. The following discussion critically explores each type of deixis employed in *Happier* and demonstrates how these linguistic elements operate pragmatically and emotionally in the song.

Person Deixis

Person deixis constitutes one of the core categories in *pragmatics*, referring to expressions that encode the participants in a speech act. According to Levinson (2006), *person deixis* is essential in anchoring the identities of the speaker (first person), the addressee (second person), and third parties (third person) in a given discourse. In the context of Olivia Rodrigo's song *Happier*, the lyrics frequently feature *I*, *you*, *we*, and *she*, demonstrating a dynamic interplay of emotional positioning. These pronouns are not mere syntactic choices; they function as devices that reveal shifting roles, relational hierarchies, and inner conflicts. The pronoun *I*, for instance, establishes the narrator's personal voice, as shown in "I'm selfish, I know," indicating internal turmoil and self-awareness. The application of such deixis contributes to how listeners locate the speaker's emotions within the narrative (Levinson, 2006).

The classification of personal pronouns under *person deixis* is both grammatical and semantic. The first-person singular *I* exclusively refers to the speaker and positions her as the narrative center. The second-person pronoun *you* refers to the listener or interlocutor and can be singular or plural depending on context, while the third-person singular pronouns *he*, *she*, and *it* refer to non-participants of the speech act (Levinson, 1983). These distinctions matter for understanding the relational and emotional shifts depicted in the lyrics. As demonstrated by Macrae (2020), *person deixis* does not only organize grammatical roles, but it also maps affective and cognitive states across participants in discourse, particularly in poetic and narrative contexts like song lyrics.

In the line "I hope you're happy, but not like how you were with me," the shift from *I* to *you* evokes a personal confrontation that is intimate yet emotionally distanced. *You* here directly targets the ex-partner, creating an interpersonal dimension that is raw and unresolved. This is consistent with Mahmudova's (2021) notion of *emotional deixis*, where *person deixis* becomes a medium of expressing layered emotional tones. The alternation between *I* and *you* in the lyrics reflects the psychological tension between self-perception and external judgment, reinforcing the narrator's emotional vulnerability.

The third-person pronoun *she*, found in lines such as "But she's so sweet, she's so pretty," introduces a new figure into the narrative—an outsider who now occupies the emotional space once held by the narrator. According to Herdiyanti (2020), the function of third-person deixis in breakup songs often reinforces a sense of exclusion and comparison, intensifying feelings of inadequacy and displacement. In Rodrigo's song, *she* is not just a linguistic element but a symbol of replacement. The narrator's act of describing the new partner's virtues through third-person deixis underlines the depth of emotional detachment and self-evaluation.

The infrequent use of *we*, such as in the phrase “We broke up a month ago,” situates the speaker and her former lover within a shared historical context. This use of first-person plural deixis implies a collective experience of the relationship, even as it contrasts with the current emotional solitude. Lomotey and Csajbok-Twerefou (2021) emphasize that *we* implicates shared agency and mutual responsibility, which intensifies the narrator’s sense of nostalgia and emotional rupture. In the song, this deixis works to establish the past intimacy that now serves as a source of pain and reflection.

Deictic pronouns in *Happier* are not deployed randomly; they construct a layered emotional geography. Agustina and Hendar (2022) observe a similar phenomenon in Rodrigo’s *Driver’s License*, where the shifting use of *I* and *you* mirrors the inner conflict and longing of the persona. In *Happier*, the interplay of these pronouns constructs a triangular dynamic involving the speaker, her ex-partner, and the new lover, thereby adding narrative depth. The persistent return to *I* after references to *you* or *she* signals a need for self-affirmation in the midst of emotional turmoil.

The emotional narrative embedded within these deictic shifts is further enriched by the psychological positioning they perform. Yuan (2023) argues that *person deixis* in cognitive linguistics does more than reference; it enables perspective-taking and empathy formation. Through consistent alternation between *I*, *you*, and *she*, Rodrigo’s lyrics guide the audience through a structured emotional journey that reflects pain, jealousy, resignation, and unresolved affection. Each pronoun becomes a point of identification or projection, transforming the song into a dialogic monologue.

Aulina et al. (2023) stress that personal pronouns in musical discourse often serve as tools of narrative structuring and audience engagement. Their role transcends grammatical functionality and becomes integral to the emotional architecture of the song. In *Happier*, the calculated repetition and positioning of *I*, *you*, and *she* forge a continuity of emotion that is both relatable and profound. The listener is subtly positioned to take the perspective of the speaker, a function that *person deixis* uniquely fulfills within the domain of lyrical expression.

Spatial Deixis

Spatial deixis denotes the linguistic references to physical or metaphorical locations relative to the speaker or addressee, as identified in foundational pragmatic theory (Levinson, 2006). In *Happier*, explicit spatial deixis appears minimally, yet its implications are deeply embedded in the narrative. The rare instance of the word *there*, as in the lyric “I’m pickin’ her apart, like cuttin’ her down will make you miss my wretched heart,” suggests a removed location, both physical and emotional. Rokhmah and Santoso (2022) argue that in song lyrics, *spatial deixis* frequently carries metaphorical weight, symbolizing emotional separation rather than literal distance. The absence of direct spatial terms becomes, paradoxically, a strategy for expressing distance and loss.

The emotional geography in *Happier* is constructed through implicit *spatial deixis*, where the narrator situates herself outside of the romantic world now occupied by her former partner and his new lover. Saidakhmadovna et al. (2024) note that in poetic discourse, *spatial deixis* can function symbolically to delineate psychological spaces and shifts in emotional presence. The narrator is no longer “here” in the emotional realm of intimacy but has been displaced to a position of external observation and critique. The metaphorical sense of being “elsewhere” becomes a powerful statement of isolation.

Handayani (2022) links the concept of spatial dislocation with adolescence and emotional formation in Rodrigo’s *Sour* album, suggesting that absence or exclusion from relational space is often portrayed through spatial distancing. In *Happier*, the narrator’s inability to occupy the same emotional or romantic space as the ex-partner and his new lover underlines her vulnerability. The lack of togetherness is not merely physical; it manifests as a profound psychological exclusion, magnified by the spatial opposition between “what was” and “what is.”

Indriani and Widianingsih (2023) emphasize that *spatial deixis* in song lyrics also assists in mapping the trajectory of relationships over time. In the case of *Happier*, the distance is not bridged or resolved, but sustained throughout the lyrics to intensify the emotional

stakes. The narrator is metaphorically distant, yet intimately invested. The spatial deixis is thus covert, serving to emphasize the narrator's status as an outsider who remains emotionally tethered to the past.

Van Thao (2020) identifies that *spatial deixis* in sentimental ballads frequently operates through allusion rather than declaration. In *Happier*, this aligns with the subtlety of Rodrigo's lyrical style, where emotional presence is narrated not through overt spatial markers but through their absence. The implied separation conveyed by tone, diction, and pronoun usage constructs a distance more effective than literal markers like *here* or *there*. This underscores the affective value of indirect deixis.

Temporal Deixis

Temporal deixis in Olivia Rodrigo's *Happier* serves as a narrative device that structures the emotional sequence of the song, anchoring the listener within a specific timeframe of relational progression. Expressions such as *a month ago*, *now*, and *remember when* are central to framing the psychological transformation of the speaker. Levinson (2006) defines temporal deixis as linguistic expressions that locate an utterance in time relative to the moment of speaking. These markers operate as temporal coordinates, allowing audiences to follow the development of emotional shifts embedded in the lyrics. In *Happier*, the phrase *a month ago* functions not only as a marker of recent history but also as a textual embodiment of unresolved emotional attachment, foregrounding the immediacy of heartbreak and the residual longing the speaker endures.

The function of temporal deixis in highlighting nostalgia and emotional conflict is emphasized in Van Thao (2020), who asserts that such linguistic devices evoke a sense of retrospection essential to melancholic storytelling. In *Happier*, Rodrigo exploits this function through the juxtaposition of *a month ago* and *now*, establishing a contrast between the emotional past and the present state of the speaker's alienation. Yuan (2023) elaborates that temporal deixis allows listeners to internalize a character's subjective sense of time, thereby intensifying emotional resonance. The narrator's use of *now* as a present-time reference underscores the paradoxical stillness of her emotional pain amidst the temporal progression of external circumstances, specifically her former partner's new relationship.

Temporal deixis also functions as a catalyst for emotional reflection. The lyric *remember when I believed* invites listeners to revisit a pivotal relational moment that, although temporally past, remains psychologically present. Damayanti (2023) observes that in adolescent-themed songs, such as those by Rodrigo, temporal deixis frequently embodies the speaker's attempt to reconcile with emotional instability. In this context, the use of *remember when* operates as a discursive bridge, connecting past emotional investment with current disillusionment. The lyric conveys not only a chronological reference but also an evaluative stance, laden with irony and pain, highlighting the unreliability of promises and emotional permanence.

Handayani (2022) further argues that Rodrigo's entire *Sour* album is saturated with temporal deixis that symbolizes the cyclical nature of grief, where time does not heal but rather reactivates emotional injuries. This assertion is evident in *Happier*, where the oscillation between past and present deixis constructs a temporal frame that is less linear and more recursive. The speaker is trapped in a loop of recollection and comparison, which reflects a cognitive distortion common in post-breakup experiences. Such narrative looping not only builds empathy but also strengthens the lyrical architecture by reinforcing the depth of the speaker's psychological entanglement with time.

Social Deixis

Social deixis in *Happier* manifests through evaluative statements and address terms that delineate social roles and emotional hierarchies. Expressions such as *she's so sweet*, *she's so pretty*, and *say you love her, baby* serve as indicators of perceived status differentials between the narrator, the ex-lover, and the new romantic partner. Levinson (2006) characterizes social deixis as linguistic markers that express aspects of the social relationship between participants, including familiarity, intimacy, and power dynamics. In this song, the narrator invokes social

deixis to frame herself in opposition to the new partner, emphasizing her own feelings of inadequacy and displacement.

Mahmudova (2021) identifies social deixis as instrumental in articulating emotional vulnerability, where expressions of admiration often mask internal conflict. The narrator's references to the new partner's attractiveness operate on two levels: overt praise and covert insecurity. The juxtaposition of idealized descriptors with the context of replacement suggests a performative evaluation that seeks both to elevate and diminish the new partner, revealing the speaker's ambivalence. Macrae (2020) contends that social deixis in literature and music frequently serves to mirror self-perception through the evaluation of others. By admiring her rival's qualities, the speaker implicitly projects her perceived deficiencies, reinforcing a narrative of emotional subordination.

The use of *baby* in the imperative phrase *say you love her, baby* exemplifies a complex blend of affection, sarcasm, and residual emotional control. Lomotey and Csajbok-Twerefou (2021) argue that such address terms, though seemingly endearing, often function as rhetorical strategies that assert agency in contexts of emotional disempowerment. In this lyric, the speaker assumes a commanding tone, directing her ex-partner's romantic affirmations while veiling her lingering emotional dependence. The term *baby* thus becomes a site of tension between affection and resistance, suggesting an unresolved emotional tie camouflaged by sarcastic detachment.

Damayanti (2023) highlights that social deixis in contemporary pop music often serves to construct relational tension, especially in breakup narratives where identity is renegotiated. In *Happier*, the speaker oscillates between vulnerability and performative assertiveness, using social deixis to simultaneously critique and validate the new romantic structure. This dual function emphasizes the instability of emotional roles post-breakup and the significance of language in navigating such transformations. The speaker's observations of *her* as both admirable and enviable underscore the symbolic role of social deixis in articulating self-worth through contrast and comparison.

Discourse Deixis

Discourse deixis in *Happier* serves as the structural glue that binds separate emotional episodes into a cohesive narrative. Phrases such as *but I guess you look happier* and *remember when I believed* signal intra-textual references that maintain narrative flow and emotional continuity. Levinson (2006) defines discourse deixis as expressions that refer to parts of the discourse itself, such as earlier or upcoming utterances. These markers do not merely denote sections of the text but guide the interpretative trajectory of the listener, ensuring the song's thematic coherence. In Rodrigo's lyricism, these expressions function as reflective cues, compelling listeners to track the emotional transitions of the speaker.

Indriani and Widianingsih (2023) argue that discourse deixis enhances narrative unity in lyrical texts by embedding a dialogic structure within the monologue. In *Happier*, the phrase *but I guess* operates as a shift in perspective, marking a departure from initial denial toward reluctant acceptance. This structural turn allows the audience to witness the speaker's psychological evolution without disjointing the emotional tone. The deixis not only connects the preceding emotional declaration with the present realization but also constructs a rhetorical contrast, deepening the listener's engagement with the speaker's internal struggle.

Saputra and Apsari (2021) observe that in songs addressing emotional liberation, such as *I Want to Break Free* by Queen, discourse deixis is pivotal in staging emotional turning points. Rodrigo's usage of *remember when* mirrors this function, invoking a flashback that juxtaposes idealistic memories with current disillusionment. This backward glance is not passive recollection but a rhetorical move that recontextualizes the past in light of present betrayal, thereby intensifying the affective impact of the song. The emotional texture of this lyric is constructed through the interplay of deixis and contrast, mapping a psychological landscape marked by longing and disbelief.

Xiang et al. (2024) propose that discourse deixis fosters cognitive participation by establishing coherence across disjointed emotional events. In *Happier*, Rodrigo employs this device to weave together fragments of regret, anger, and reluctant benevolence. The listener is

thus positioned not merely as an observer but as a co-narrator, decoding each shift in tone and orientation. This participatory structure is instrumental in elevating the lyrical narrative beyond mere lamentation, transforming it into a dynamic reflection of emotional ambivalence.

The application of discourse deixis in *Happier* exemplifies how linguistic tools function as narrative mechanisms. Through careful placement of phrases that refer back to previous emotional states or forward to implications, the song constructs a storyline that is both temporally and emotionally cohesive. This approach reinforces the psychological depth of the lyrics and underlines the importance of discourse deixis in constructing a compelling musical narrative.

CONCLUSIONS

This research, however, is limited by its scope, which centers on a single song from a single artist. A broader comparative analysis involving multiple songs, either from Olivia Rodrigo's entire discography or across different musical genres, would offer more generalizable insights into patterns of deixis usage. Moreover, the integration of alternative pragmatic frameworks, such as relevance theory or speech act theory, may offer expanded interpretive lenses for future exploration. Further studies could also explore audience reception of deixis elements to investigate whether listeners interpret deixical references in alignment with the artist's intended emotional messaging. At the same time, this study contributes to linguistic theory by showing how deixis functions not only referentially but also narratively and expressively in constructing meaning. From a teaching perspective, it also illustrates how song lyrics can serve as authentic learning materials to foster students' pragmatic awareness and interpretation of context-dependent language.

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