


A Deixis Analysis in Song Lyrics of Anti-Hero by Taylor Swift

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i2.2168>

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A B S T R A C T

Deixis is a significant pragmatic feature in song lyrics as it constructs perspective and contextual meaning between the songwriter and listeners. Although previous studies have examined deixis in various songs, limited research has focused on how different types of deixis represent internal conflict and self-reflection in Taylor Swift's "Anti-Hero." Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of deixis found in the song lyrics Anti Hero by Taylor Swift and to describe the contextual meaning of that deixis. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method using Levinson's (1983) deixis framework. The data were taken from the official lyrics published on Genius and analyzed through identification, classification, and contextual interpretation. The findings show that the lyrics contain person, temporal, spatial, discourse, and social deixis, which contribute to the construction of meaning in the song. The study concludes that deixis functions as a pragmatic resource that shapes emotional expression and self-reflective narrative in "Anti-Hero."

Keywords: *Deixis, Song Lyrics, Anti Hero, Taylor Swift*

Article History:

Received 01st February 2026

Accepted 01st March 2026

Published 03rd March 2026



INTRODUCTION

One essential instrument that people use to express their thoughts, feelings, and social connections is language. Additionally, it is the main way that people communicate with each other in daily life, enabling them to exchange thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Consequently, communication becomes a central aspect of human interaction, with songs representing one of the most prominent forms of linguistic and cultural expression (Yalase & Aisyah, 2022). These functions show that language is closely tied to human social life and serves as an essential medium for conveying meaning across various contexts.

According to Recanati (2016), pragmatics views meaning as situation-dependent and states that phrases like "I you," "here," "now," and "this" only have meaning when understood in the context of their respective situations. Levinson, (1983) further emphasizes that linguistic interpretation depends on participants, time, place, and other contextual cues that shape how utterances are understood. This view highlights that language cannot be separated from the context in which it is produced. In artistic texts such as song lyrics, these contextual markers play a crucial role in shaping the narrative voice, emotional tone, and communicative stance between the songwriter and the audience. Thus, the pragmatic dimension of language becomes essential for understanding how meaning is constructed and how listeners interpret messages conveyed through music.

Deixis is a central concept in pragmatics that refers to linguistic expressions whose meanings depend on the context of utterance. According to Levinson, (1983), deixis functions to link language with situational factors such as the speaker, time, place, and discourse, enabling meaning to be interpreted relative to its communicative context. Deictic expressions, including personal pronouns, temporal references, and spatial indicators, cannot be accurately interpreted without contextual information (Osumbade et al., 2021). In song lyrics, deixis plays a crucial role in constructing contextual meaning by guiding listeners to identify the speaker, temporal orientation, and discourse positioning. Through deixis, song lyrics convey personal

perspectives and emotional nuances, making deixis an essential analytical tool for interpreting meaning in musical texts.

Song lyrics are a form of literary expression that convey meaning, emotion, and personal experience through language. As written texts, song lyrics function as a medium through which songwriters express thoughts, feelings, and social realities (Gibbs & Colston, 2012). The choice of words, imagery, and narrative voice contributes to listeners' interpretation of meaning. Unlike ordinary spoken language, song lyrics are often crafted to evoke emotional responses and personal reflection, making them a rich source for linguistic and literary analysis. Therefore, song lyrics can be examined as textual data that represent meaningful communication rather than merely musical accompaniment.

Song lyrics are particularly suitable for pragmatic analysis because they present language as situated, intentional, and emotionally charged discourse. Unlike purely informational texts, lyrics are constructed to express subjective experiences, negotiate identity, and simulate interaction between the singer and the audience. The frequent use of first-person narration, direct address, and temporal or spatial references creates a deictic center that anchors meaning to a specific perspective. In this way, song lyrics function similarly to spoken discourse, where interpretation depends on contextual cues and speaker positioning. The emotional intensity and narrative voice embedded in lyrics make them rich pragmatic data, as meaning is not only conveyed through lexical choice but also through how expressions are contextually framed and interpreted.

As a form of cultural expression, songs function not only as entertainment but also as media that convey emotional and ideological messages (Robins, 2015). In order to create a shared emotional space between the artist and the audience, song lyrics frequently mirror the songwriter's own experiences and encourage listeners to interact with the story (Obenza, 2024). Because it places the singer within the text and directs listeners' interpretations of the message, deixis becomes a crucial linguistic element in this communicative space. For instance, Salvator et al., (2023) found this deixis in song lyrics contributes to building intimacy by simulating conversational closeness between the singer and the listener. Additionally, Putu et al., (2023) showed that major types of deixis help organize narrative flow and emotional emphasis in musical texts. Furthermore, Harahap, (2024) demonstrated that deixis expresses self-identity and emotional proximity, reinforcing the listener's engagement with the songwriter's perspective.

Taylor Swift's "Anti-Hero" has drawn a lot of attention among today's popular songs because of its reflective depiction of emotional weakness, identity struggle, and insecurity (Dwi et al., 2024). The song resonates with listeners from a variety of backgrounds and offers rich material for analyzing how language choices encode human challenges through its open use of first-person expressions and self-reflective comments. Studies such as Petaponi et al., (2024) affirm that "Anti Hero" contains layered meanings that merit deeper pragmatic and discourse analysis, particularly regarding how the singer constructs narrative authenticity.

Many studies concentrate on interpersonal themes or general patterns of deictic use, even if earlier research has examined deixis in a variety of song lyrics. One study by Ilma & Sabat, (2023) shows that deixis in popular songs primarily serves to construct relational meaning between the narrator and the listener. In a related finding, Rohmawati, (2025) observes that rather than highlighting deeper psychological aspects, deictic phrases in song lyrics typically accentuate interpersonal viewpoints. Songs that emphasize introspection and internal turmoil have received little attention. The paucity of research on how deixis reveals identity negotiation and personal vulnerability demonstrates this gap. Therefore, the present research seeks to analyze the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's "Anti Hero" by employing Levinson, (1983) and Yule, (1996) framework to reveal how deictic phrases communicate self-reflection, create meaning, and foster relationships between the composer and his listeners.

Review of Literature

Pragmatics examines how meaning is constructed through the relationship between language and context. Yule, (1996) explains that pragmatic interpretation depends on social and situational factors surrounding an utterance, while Levinson, (1983) emphasizes that

contextual cues such as singer, addressee, time, and place are essential to interpret meaning beyond literal expressions. In this perspective, language is not viewed as isolated structures but as communicative actions shaped by singers' intentions and contextual backgrounds. This pragmatic orientation provides a foundational framework for analyzing how meaning in song lyrics is created through the interaction between linguistic forms and contextual interpretation.

Deixis is a central phenomenon in pragmatics that refers to expressions whose meanings depend on the situational context of the utterance. Levinson, (1983) divides deixis into five main categories: person deixis, which uses markers like "I," "you," and "they" to identify participant roles; time deixis, which uses expressions like "now and then" to indicate temporal orientation; place deixis, which uses "here and there" to indicate spatial relations; discourse deixis, which uses markers like "this" and "that" to refer to elements within a text; and social deixis, which uses titles and honorifics to indicate social status or relationships. These categories show how deixis helps to construct identity, viewpoint, and relational positioning and how vocalists embed meaning within certain communication contexts. Deictic phrases have grammatical, emotional, and stylistic roles in creative texts like song lyrics that enhance audience involvement and determine narrative voice.

Song lyrics are a special kind of discourse that blends creative imagination with the goal of communication. Deixis is frequently used in lyrics to establish narrative perspective, foster emotional intimacy, and place listeners inside the songwriter's head. Stockwel, (2014) assert that deictic choices in poetic and musical texts guide readers or listeners to interpret events through the narrator's viewpoint. Similarly, Mick, (2018) highlights that deixis contributes to the stylistic construction of immediacy, intimacy, and narrative coherence. In popular music, person deixis frequently constructs a conversational tone between the artist and the audience, simulating direct communication. Time and place deixis also contribute to mood, emotional flow, and psychological settings, allowing listeners to experience the unfolding narrative as if they participate in the communicative event.

Numerous academics have studied the ways in which deixis in song lyrics aids in the development of identity and emotional bonding. For example, Faradiba Sari Harahap, (2024) showed that the person deixis in "Who I Am" helps express self-identity and emotional closeness, and similarly, Salvator et al., (2023) discovered that "Stuck in the Middle" uses temporal and personal deixis to depict emotional events in a more intimate manner. Additionally, Sahusilawane, (2023) claims that Taylor Swift's song's deixis links listeners' interpretations with personal stories. However, research specifically examining the deixis of "Anti Hero" remains limited, as existing studies only discuss Swift's broader discography rather than the song's deeper themes of self-reflection and identity struggle Nisa, (2024).

Several studies examine deixis in Anti Hero, a song that distinctively depicts vulnerability, self-blame, and introspective identity building, even if earlier studies emphasized the function of deixis in forming meaning and emotional resonance in song lyrics. Furthermore, some research analyzes how Swift's deictic choices establish a dialogic space that invites listener empathy using a pragmatic discourse paradigm. The qualitative descriptive analysis of deixis in "Anti Hero" that this study offers, therefore, closes the gap and offers fresh perspectives on how linguistic markers create meaning, identity, and emotional involvement in modern popular music.

Based on the theoretical framework and previous studies discussed above, this study is guided by the following research questions:

What types of deixis are found in the song lyrics of Anti-Hero by Taylor Swift?

What contextual meanings are conveyed through the use of deixis in the song lyrics of Anti-Hero?

This study aims to identify the types of deixis found in the song lyrics of "Anti-Hero" by Taylor Swift and to describe their contextual meanings based on a pragmatic framework. By applying Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis, this research seeks to explain how deictic expressions function in constructing perspective, emotional positioning, and narrative voice

A Deixis Analysis in Song Lyrics of Anti-Hero by Taylor Swift

within the song. The study focuses not only on categorizing deictic forms but also on interpreting how these linguistic elements contribute to the overall meaning of the discourse.

Theoretically, this study contributes to pragmatic and discourse studies by applying deixis theory to contemporary popular music, particularly Taylor Swift's "Anti-Hero." It enriches existing research by providing a focused analysis of both types and contextual meanings of deixis within a single song. Practically, the findings offer insight into how contextual meaning is constructed in song lyrics, which may benefit students, researchers, and educators in linguistics and literature studies. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that song lyrics can serve as valuable data for pragmatic analysis, especially in exploring how identity and emotional expression are linguistically framed.

METHOD

Through a pragmatic viewpoint, this study examines how deixis is used in Taylor Swift's song "Anti Hero" using a qualitative descriptive approach. This method is suitable since it does not measure variables or test hypotheses, but rather concentrates on analyzing language forms in their natural context. The researcher can consistently recognize and elucidate deictic phrases thanks to the descriptive approach. This method aligns with the purpose of analyzing how linguistic elements construct meaning within discourse. It also corresponds to Levinson, (1983) deixis framework, which guides the categorization of deictic forms.

The data for this study consist of the official lyrics of "Anti Hero", which were retrieved from the authorized lyrics website Genius <https://genius.com/Taylor-swift-anti-hero-lyrics>. The lyrics were selected because they present a strong thematic focus on self-reflection and identity, making them relevant to the study's deixis aims. The researcher listened to the music several times while simultaneously reading the lyrics to guarantee thorough acquaintance with the text's linguistic elements. All potential deictic expressions were then highlighted and initially coded based on Levinson, (1983) classification of social deixis, discourse, time, location, and person. This methodical process created a strong basis for further interpretive research and guaranteed accuracy in recognizing deictic indicators within their narrative context. The data was arranged and analyzed using a single analytical tool in the form of a structured rubric. Key elements necessary for deixis analysis are included in the rubric, including lyrics location, Lyrics Example, Deixis Form, Type of Deixis and Contextual Meaning. These components were adapted to ensure systematic identification and interpretation John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, (2022) guidelines for qualitative instruments. The researcher was able to proceed logically from surface-level identification to pragmatic interpretation due to the organized rubric. Additionally, this structure made guaranteed that all phases of data analysis were consistent and rigorous.

Data analysis was conducted through several systematic stages. First, the researcher carefully read the lyrics while listening to the song to ensure familiarity with the linguistic context. Second, all potential deictic expressions were identified and highlighted throughout the text. Third, each identified expression was classified based on Levinson's (1983) five categories of deixis: person, temporal, spatial, discourse, and social deixis. Fourth, the classified data were organized into the analytical rubric to ensure consistent categorization. Finally, each deictic expression was interpreted pragmatically by examining its contextual meaning within the song, considering the speaker's perspective, temporal and spatial references, discourse structure, and implied social relationships. This step by step procedure ensured systematic and rigorous analysis aligned with the research objectives.

In this study, a classification table was used as the research instrument to categorize and describe the data. The table functioned to record deictic expressions found in the song lyrics and to classify them based on the types of deixis proposed by Levinson, (1983), including person, temporal, spatial, and discourse deixis. Each identified deictic expression was placed into the table along with its contextual meaning to ensure clarity and analytical consistency. The use of a classification table facilitates accurate categorization and supports the contextual meanings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that the lyrics of *Anti-Hero* contain four categories of deixis proposed Levinson, (1983), namely person, temporal, spatial, and discourse deixis. A total of 26 deictic expressions were identified in the song. Person deixis appears most frequently with 14 occurrences, while temporal, spatial, and discourse deixis each occur 4 times. The frequency distribution indicates that the song strongly centers on personal perspective and self-reflective narration. Each type of deixis contributes differently to the construction of contextual meaning. Person deixis foregrounds the narrator's identity and internal conflict, temporal deixis organizes emotional experience across shifting time references, spatial deixis symbolizes psychological positioning, and discourse deixis maintains narrative cohesion and evaluative emphasis.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Deixis Types in "Anti-Hero"

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentage
Person Deixis	14	54%
Temporal Deixis	4	15%
Spatial Deixis	4	15%
Discourse Deixis	4	15%
Total	26	100%

Person Deixis

Person deixis functions in *Anti-Hero*, shaping Taylor Swift's self-reflective narrative voice. The frequent use of first-person forms such as I, me, and my positions the narrator as the primary deictic center, foregrounding personal responsibility, emotional exposure, and internal conflict. According to Levinson, (1983; 2006), person deixis anchors the speaker's identity within discourse, a function clearly illustrated in lines such as "I have this thing where I get older, but just never wiser" and "I'm the problem, it's me." These forms do not merely serve grammatical reference but operate stylistically to intensify self-blame and introspection, supporting Lyons, (1977) view that deixis maps cognitive and affective orientation.

Second, person deixis (you, your) appears selectively, most notably in "One day, I'll watch as you're leaving" and "your favorite city," positioning the addressee as an imagined relational counterpart rather than a concrete interlocutor. This usage aligns with Yuan, (2023), who argues that second-person deixis in song lyrics often constructs a projected listener role that heightens emotional immediacy. Third-person forms such as she, them, and us further expand the narrative perspective, particularly in the bridge section, where they externalize the narrator's anxieties and imagined judgments. As noted by Aulina et al., (2023), such shifts between first-, second-, and third-person deixis create an emotional architecture in which pronouns function as narrative pivots. Overall, person deixis in *Anti-Hero* operates as a psychological anchor that continuously returns the discourse to self-evaluation and identity negotiation, consistent with findings by Agustina & Hendar, (2022) and Damayanti, (2022).

Discourse Deixis

Discourse deixis in *Anti-Hero* serves to connect, summarize, and evaluate the unfolding narrative, enabling coherence across fragmented emotional expressions. Deictic items such as it in "I'm the problem, it's me" and "It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero" function as discourse pointers that encapsulate preceding propositions. Levinson, (2006) defines discourse deixis as references to parts of the discourse itself, and in this song, such references allow the narrator to reframe earlier confessions into evaluative conclusions. Rather than introducing new content, discourse deixis condenses emotional meaning and guides listener interpretation.

This evaluative function aligns with Indriani et al., (2023), who emphasize that discourse deixis strengthens thematic continuity in narrative texts. The repetition of discourse-deictic it requires listeners to retrieve prior lyrical context, supporting Xiang et al., (2024) claim that discourse deixis increases cognitive engagement. By cyclically returning to summarizing statements, Swift reinforces a pattern of self-judgment and emotional looping. Thus, discourse deixis operates as a structural mechanism that maintains narrative cohesion and amplifies the

song's introspective tone, as similarly observed in Damayanti, (2022) analysis of deixis in contemporary pop lyrics.

Temporal Deixis

Temporal deixis in *Anti-Hero* reflects psychological rather than chronological temporality, mapping emotional instability onto shifting temporal references. Expressions such as *midnights*, *my afternoons*, *one day*, *sometimes*, and *for the last time* situate experiences relative to the moment of utterance, consistent with Levinson, (2006) definition of temporal deixis. However, these markers do not function as objective time indicators; instead, they symbolize disrupted routines and emotional disorientation. The line "*Midnights become my afternoons*" illustrates a reversal of normative temporal order, aligning with Lyons, (1977) argument that temporal deixis in lyrics often encodes mental states rather than literal time.

Other temporal expressions, such as "*At teatime*" and "*sometimes*," further reflect fluctuating emotional rhythms. Mahmudova, (2023) describes this phenomenon as emotional temporality, where time deixis indexes instability and recurring self-reflection. The future-oriented phrase "*one day*" introduces anticipatory anxiety rather than certainty, supporting Stockwell, (2002) view that lyrical time frequently represents imagined psychological projection. Through these patterns, time deixis in *Anti-Hero* functions as an affective framework that structures emotional progression and reinforces the cyclical nature of the narrator's internal conflict, consistent with findings by Damayanti, (2022) and Xiang et al., (2024).

Spatial Deixis

Spatial deixis appears less frequently in *Anti-Hero*, yet it carries significant symbolic and emotional weight. The line "*She's laughing up at us from Hell*" employs spatial markers (*up*, *from Hell*) to construct a metaphorical spatial hierarchy rather than a literal physical location. According to Fillmore, (1971), spatial deixis may extend beyond physical space to represent evaluative and psychological positioning, a function evident in this lyric. The upward orientation suggests moral or emotional superiority, while the infernal imagery intensifies the narrator's sense of judgment and self-condemnation.

This use of metaphorical spatial deixis aligns with Eva et al., (2022) who argue that spatial references in poetic discourse often encode emotional distance and power relations. The contrast between the narrator and the imagined figure "*above*" reflects internalized fear of ridicule and exclusion. Manalu & Sirait, (2024) further note that spatial deixis in song lyrics frequently delineates emotional boundaries rather than geographic ones. Although spatial deixis occurs minimally in the data, its strategic placement amplifies the song's psychological tension and reinforces themes of insecurity and moral self-evaluation.

The lyric "*I have this thing where I get older, but just never wiser*" contains person deixis realized through the first-person pronoun (*I*), which directly refers to the speaker and positions her as the central participant in the discourse. According to Levinson, (2006), person deixis serves to identify the speaker's role within a communicative event, and in this lyric, it anchors the utterance to a highly subjective perspective. The repeated self-reference constructs a sense of self-evaluation, as the speaker simultaneously presents herself as the experiencer and the evaluator of her own life progression. The contrast between getting older and never wiser further intensifies emotional vulnerability by framing personal growth as an unresolved struggle rather than a linear achievement. This use of first-person deixis invites listeners to interpret the lyric as a personal confession, reinforcing the self-reflective tone of the song. Consistent with Sitorus et al., (2025), the employment of first-person deixis in self-reflective discourse encodes heightened self-awareness and emotional insecurity, thereby deepening the contextual meaning of the lyric.

In the lyric "*Midnights become my afternoons*," person deixis is realized through the possessive pronoun *my*, which links the altered temporal experience directly to the speaker. According to Levinson, (2006), possessive forms are categorized as person deixis because they encode the relationship between the speaker and the entities or experiences being referred to. In this context, the use of *my* assigns personal ownership to the disrupted perception of time, framing it as an experience that belongs exclusively to the narrator rather than an objective

A Deixis Analysis in Song Lyrics of Anti-Hero by Taylor Swift

temporal shift. Pragmatically, this possessive deixis reinforces the speaker's subjective interpretation of reality, where emotional distress reshapes ordinary temporal boundaries. The transformation of midnights into afternoons symbolizes a blurred distinction between rest and activity, suggesting psychological imbalance and emotional exhaustion. This interpretation aligns with Risanty et al., (2025), who argues that possessive deixis in self-oriented discourse often marks emotional attachment and internalized disruption, thereby strengthening the contextual meaning of personal struggle within the lyric.

The line "When my depression works the graveyard shift, all of the people" also employs person deixis through the possessive pronoun (my), which directly associates the mental condition with the speaker's identity. In line with Levinson, (2006) view that possessive forms function as person deixis by encoding the speaker's relationship to experiences or states, the use of my frames depression not as an external or temporary condition but as an internalized and personalized aspect of the self. Pragmatically, this deictic choice intensifies the sense of psychological ownership, positioning the speaker as someone who lives with and negotiates depression as part of her everyday reality. The metaphor of the graveyard shift further reinforces emotional exhaustion and continuous mental labor, suggesting that the struggle persists even during times traditionally associated with rest. This interpretation aligns with Rohmah, (2023) who argues that possessive deixis in introspective narratives strengthens emotional intensity by embedding psychological experiences firmly within the speaker's self-concept, thereby deepening the contextual meaning of vulnerability and self-awareness in the lyric.

In the line "I've ghosted, stand there in the room," spatial deixis is realized through the expressions there and the room, which refer to location from the speaker's point of view. According to Levinson, (2006), spatial deixis functions to locate entities relative to the position of the speaker, anchoring meaning to perceived space rather than objective coordinates. In this lyric, the spatial references do not merely denote physical location but operate metaphorically to express emotional distance and unresolved presence. The act of ghosting combined with standing there suggests a paradoxical state of being simultaneously absent and present, reflecting psychological disconnection rather than actual spatial separation. Pragmatically, this use of spatial deixis constructs a sense of lingering emotional tension, where the speaker remains mentally attached to a space associated with unresolved feelings. This interpretation aligns with Eva et al., (2022), who argue that spatial deixis in song lyrics frequently symbolizes psychological space, allowing physical locations to function as representations of inner emotional states and relational distance.

The lyric "I should not be left to my own devices" contains person deixis realized through the first-person pronoun I and the possessive form my, both of which position the speaker as the central referent of the utterance. In line with Levinson, (2006) explanation that person deixis encodes the speaker's role and relationship to experiences, these deictic forms anchor the statement firmly to the speaker's subjective self. Pragmatically, the use of first-person deixis functions as an explicit act of self-admission, in which the speaker acknowledges personal instability and a perceived lack of self-control. The phrase my own devices further intensifies this admission by suggesting that autonomy leads to self-destructive tendencies rather than empowerment. Through this self-referential framing, the lyric reinforces the confessional tone of the song and deepens its introspective quality. This interpretation aligns with Yuan, (2023), who argues that first-person deixis in confessional discourse frequently foregrounds self-evaluation, allowing speakers to critically assess their own behavior and emotional vulnerability.

In the lyric "I end up in crisis," person deixis is realized through the first-person pronoun I, which explicitly identifies the speaker as the sole experiencer of the event. Consistent with Levinson, (1983), view that first-person deixis strengthens the subjective nature of experiential narratives, the use of I anchors the crisis firmly within the speaker's personal domain rather than attributing it to external circumstances. Pragmatically, this deictic choice emphasizes a recurring pattern of emotional failure, as the phrase end up suggests inevitability and repetition rather than a singular incident. By framing the crisis as a self-contained experience,

A Deixis Analysis in Song Lyrics of Anti-Hero by Taylor Swift

the speaker reinforces a sense of self-blame and internal accountability, further deepening the confessional tone of the lyric. This self-referential construction aligns with the broader narrative of the song, in which repeated first-person deixis functions to portray ongoing psychological struggle and emotional vulnerability.

The lyric “One day, I’ll watch as you’re leaving” combines temporal and person deixis through the expression one day and the pronouns I and you. The temporal deixis one day places the event in an indefinite future, suggesting anticipation without certainty, which aligns with Yule, (1996) explanation that temporal deixis often relies on the speaker’s subjective orientation to time rather than fixed chronology. At the same time, the use of I and you establish clear interpersonal roles, positioning the speaker as the observer and the addressee as the one who departs. Pragmatically, this deictic combination conveys an expectation of separation that has not yet occurred but is emotionally anticipated. The speaker’s focus on a future moment of departure reflects emotional insecurity and a heightened awareness of potential loss. This interpretation supports Mahmudova, (2023) argument that future-oriented temporal deixis in personal narratives frequently encodes anxiety, as the speaker projects present emotional fears onto an imagined future event.

The expression “For the last time” demonstrates temporal deixis by marking a definitive boundary in time and signaling the endpoint of an event or emotional process. As explained by Yule, (1996), temporal deixis functions to contextualize events in relation to a reference point, and in this case, the reference point is finality rather than sequence. The phrase does not merely indicate when something happens, but emphasizes that it will not occur again, framing the moment as irreversible. Pragmatically, this temporal deixis conveys emotional exhaustion and a sense of closure that is reached after prolonged struggle, suggesting resignation rather than resolution. The speaker’s reliance on temporal finality reflects an acceptance of emotional limits, where repetition and uncertainty are replaced by an ending that can no longer be renegotiated. This interpretation aligns with Damayanti, (2022), who observes that expressions of temporal finality in emotional narratives often signal resignation and the psychological need to bring an ongoing internal conflict to a close.

The lyric “It’s me, hi” employs person deixis through the object pronoun me, which explicitly identifies the speaker within the discourse. Rather than merely naming the speaker, this deictic choice functions as a deliberate act of self-presentation, positioning the narrator openly and immediately in relation to the audience. According to Levinson, (2006), self-referential deixis can operate as an entry point in narrative texts, signaling the speaker’s readiness to engage with the listener. Pragmatically, this form of person deixis conveys ironic self-awareness, as the casual greeting contrasts with the deeper themes of self-criticism and emotional struggle developed throughout the song. By introducing herself so directly, the speaker acknowledges her own presence and flaws, reinforcing the confessional tone of the lyrics. This self-directed deixis thus strengthens the contextual meaning of introspection, where identity is not only stated but consciously examined within the narrative.

The lyric “I’m the problem, it’s me” demonstrates the co-occurrence of person deixis and discourse deixis through the pronouns I, me, and it. The first-person forms I and me clearly position the speaker as the central participant, while the pronoun it functions as discourse deixis by referring back to the proposition the problem introduced earlier in the same utterance. As explained by Levinson, (2006), discourse deixis involves reference to elements within the discourse itself, allowing speakers to highlight or reframe particular propositions. In this lyric, the use of it enables the speaker to reassert and emphasize the evaluative judgment directed at herself. Pragmatically, this deictic construction intensifies self-blame by repeatedly circling back to the same negative self-assessment, creating a sense of inescapability. The tight linkage between person and discourse deixis also reinforces thematic cohesion, as the speaker’s identity and the problem are linguistically bound together. This interpretation is consistent with Agustina & Hendar, (2022) who argue that discourse deixis in lyrical discourse often strengthens evaluative emphasis and deepens the emotional impact of self-directed statements.

The line “At teatime, everybody agrees” contains temporal deixis, marked by (teatime). This expression situates the utterance within a socially recognized time frame. The reference to “teatime” evokes a routine, communal moment, reinforcing the sense of shared social norms and expectations. By anchoring the utterance in a culturally familiar time frame, the lyric heightens the impression of public scrutiny and consensus. As a result, temporal deixis functions to intensify the speaker’s perception of being collectively evaluated within an ordinary yet symbolically charged moment. Pragmatically, the deixis emphasizes the moment of collective judgment perceived by the speaker. Van Thao (2020) argues that temporal deixis often frames emotional evaluation within shared temporal contexts.

The lyric “It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero” demonstrates discourse deixis through the pronoun (it). This pronoun refers to the overall situation previously described. By using the pronoun “it,” the lyric encapsulates a complex set of prior events and attitudes into a single evaluative reference. This summarizing function allows the speaker to adopt a reflective stance, inviting listeners to reassess the emotional weight of the narrative as a whole. Consequently, discourse deixis here not only preserves textual cohesion but also sharpens the thematic focus on fatigue and self-awareness within the song. Pragmatically, discourse deixis functions to summarize and evaluate the preceding narrative. Levinson, (2006) emphasizes that such deixis maintains coherence and reinforces thematic unity.

Sometimes, I feel like everybody is a sexy baby”, temporal deixis (sometimes) and person deixis (I) are employed. The adverb “sometimes” introduces temporal vagueness, suggesting that the speaker’s insecurity is recurrent but not constant. Combined with the first-person pronoun “I,” this temporal framing emphasizes a subjective and introspective stance toward self-perception. Consequently, the interaction of temporal and person deixis highlights the unstable emotional rhythm that characterizes the speaker’s ongoing internal struggle. Temporal deixis indicates an unspecific recurring time relative to the speech moment (Yule, 1996). Pragmatically, this conveys fluctuating emotional states and persistent insecurity. Rebono & Handayani, (2023) notes that non-specific temporal deixis often reflects emotional instability in pop lyrics.

The line “And I’m a monster on the hill” contains person deixis (I) and spatial deixis (the hill). The spatial expression locates the speaker metaphorically above others. The phrase “on the hill” evokes a position of visibility and separation, reinforcing the speaker’s sense of being observed yet disconnected from others. Through the first-person pronoun “I,” the lyric foregrounds self-identification with monstrosity, intensifying internal conflict and self-judgment. As a result, the interaction between person and spatial deixis deepens the metaphorical portrayal of emotional estrangement within the narrative. Pragmatically, this deixis symbolizes isolation and perceived otherness. Eva et al., (2022) argue that elevated spatial references often represent emotional alienation.

In “Too big to hang out, slowly lurching toward your favorite city”, person deixis is realized through the possessive pronoun (your). This form refers to the addressee within the discourse. The possessive pronoun “your” positions the addressee as an implied participant whose preferences are presupposed rather than explicitly explained. This indirect address subtly personalizes the narrative while maintaining a sense of emotional distance between the speaker and the addressee. Consequently, second-person deixis functions to balance intimacy and detachment, enriching the relational dynamics within the lyric. Pragmatically, it creates interpersonal distance while acknowledging the presence of another participant. Levinson, (1983) states that second-person deixis strengthens relational orientation in narrative discourse.

The lyric “I have this dream my daughter-in-law kills me for the money” contains person deixis (I, me) and discourse deixis (this). Additionally, the use of “this” foregrounds the dream as a salient mental event, directing the listener’s attention to its narrative significance. The first-person references “I” and “me” reinforce the speaker’s subjective perspective, emphasizing vulnerability and personal anxiety within the imagined scenario. Together, person and discourse deixis intensify the psychological depth of the lyric and anchor the dream firmly

within the broader narrative structure. The demonstrative *this* introduces a new discourse segment, namely the dream. According to Levinson, (2006), discourse deixis frequently functions to signal newly introduced propositions. Pragmatically, it frames the dream as central to the narrative.

In “She thinks I left them in the will”, person deixis appears through (*she*, *I*, and *them*). These references rely on contextual understanding. The pronouns “*she*,” “*I*,” and “*them*” position the speaker within a network of interpersonal relationships that the listener must infer from the surrounding context. This layered reference system encourages active interpretation and deepens engagement with the narrative situation. Consequently, person deixis in this line functions not only as a referential device but also as a means of enriching the lyrical storyline and its emotional dynamics. Pragmatically, person deixis constructs relational roles and shared knowledge within the narrative. Aulina et al., (2023) argue that third-person deixis often strengthens narrative complexity.

The line “The family gathers ‘round and reads it” employs discourse deixis through the pronoun (*it*), which refers back to the will. Furthermore, the use of the pronoun “*it*” allows the lyric to avoid repetition while preserving referential clarity, reinforcing the cohesion of the narrative. By directing listeners back to the previously mentioned will, discourse deixis helps structure the unfolding event and guides interpretation across lines. As a result, the lyric achieves a smoother narrative progression and a more unified textual meaning. Pragmatically, this deixis ensures continuity and coherence within the discourse. Indriani et al., (2023) emphasize that discourse deixis is essential for maintaining narrative flow in lyrical texts.

Finally, “She’s laughing up at us from Hell” contains spatial deixis (*up*, *from Hell*) and person deixis (*us*). Moreover, the phrase “*from Hell*” functions not only as a metaphorical location but also as a marker of moral and emotional contrast between the speaker and the referenced figure. The collective pronoun “*us*” expands the emotional scope from an individual experience to a shared one, inviting listeners into a sense of collective irony and suffering. Through this interplay of spatial and person deixis, the lyric deepens its dramatic resonance and strengthens the audience’s affective engagement with the narrative. Spatial deixis indicates vertical and locational relations relative to the speaker. Pragmatically, it intensifies dramatic imagery and collective involvement. Levinson, (2006) notes that spatial deixis often amplifies emotional impact through imagined positioning.

Table 2. Classification of types and the contextual meaning found in the song lyrics *Anti Hero* by Taylor Swift

Lyric Location	Lyric Example	Deixis Form	Type of Deixis	Contextual Meaning
1.	<i>I have this thing where I get older, but just never wiser</i>	<i>I</i>	Person	<i>I</i> refer directly to the speaker (singer) as the center of speech.
2.	<i>Midnights become my afternoons</i>	<i>My</i>	Person	<i>my</i> indicates the ownership associated with the speaker.
3.	<i>When my depression works the graveyard shift, all of the people</i>	<i>My</i>	Person	<i>My</i> associates mental state with the identity of the speaker.
4.	<i>I've ghosted stand there in the room</i>	<i>There, the room</i>	Spatial, Spatial	<i>There</i> and <i>The Room</i> indicate the location relative to the singer.
5.	<i>I should not be left to my own devices</i>	<i>I, My</i>	Person	Both forms refer to the singer as the center of reference
7.	<i>I end up in crisis</i>	<i>I</i>	Person	Self-identification of the singer.
10.	<i>One day, I'll watch as you're leaving</i>	<i>I, you, One day</i>	Person, temporal	<i>One day</i> designates the future time; <i>You</i> point to the opponent contextually.
12.	<i>(For the last time)</i>	<i>The last time</i>	Temporal	Contextually marking the last deadline.
13.	<i>It's me, hi</i>	<i>me</i>	Person	The speaker designates himself explicitly.
14.	<i>I'm the problem, it's me</i>	<i>I, me, it</i>	Person, Discourse	<i>It</i> summarizes the previous proposition "the problem".
15.	<i>At teatime, everybody agrees</i>	<i>teatime</i>	Temporal	Designate a specific time that is understood contextually.

A Deixis Analysis in Song Lyrics of Anti-Hero by Taylor Swift

17.	<i>It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero</i>	It	Discourse	<i>It</i> refers to the entire situation just discussed.
18.	<i>Sometimes, I feel like everybody is a sexy baby</i>	Sometimes, I	Temporal, Person	<i>Sometimes</i> it shows a time that is not specific relative to the time of speech.
19.	<i>And I'm a monster on the hill</i>	I, on the hill	Person, Spatial	Metaphorical location relative to the speaker.
20.	<i>Too big to hang out, slowly lurching toward your favorite city</i>	your	Person	<i>Your</i> designate the ownership of the opponent's property.
34.	<i>I have this dream my daughter-in-law kills me for the money</i>	I, me, this	Person, Discourse	<i>This</i> refers to the discourse of dreams that are being introduced.
35.	<i>She thinks I left them in the will</i>	She, I, them	Person	Referents can only be understood through the context of speech.
36.	<i>The family gathers 'round and reads it and then someone screams out</i>	it	Discourse	<i>It</i> refers to "the will" mentioned earlier.
37.	<i>"She's laughing up at us from Hell"</i>	Us, up/ from Hell	Person, Spatial	Shows the relationship between vertical space and speaker groups.

Through a comprehensive deixis analysis of selected lyric segments from *Anti-Hero*, this study demonstrates how Taylor Swift employs deictic expressions to construct a self-portrayal characterized by insecurity, self-blame, and shifting relational positioning. The distribution of person deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and spatial deixis indicates that deixis functions not merely as a grammatical referencing system but as a strategic linguistic resource that shapes narrative voice and frames the song's psychological conflict. Person deixis foregrounds the narrator's introspective stance and persistent self-evaluation, supporting Permani Debina & Eliasanti, (2023) view of person deixis as a marker of emotional vulnerability. Temporal deixis reflects fluctuating emotional states and anticipatory anxiety, which is consistent with (Stockwell, (2002) argument regarding psychological instability in lyrical representations of time. Discourse deixis operates to summarize and evaluate preceding propositions, while metaphorical spatial deixis symbolically encodes psychological distance and moral positioning, aligning with Fillmore, (1971) extended interpretation of spatial reference beyond physical location.

Overall, the findings are consistent with previous studies by Agustina & Hendar, (2022), Damayanti, (2022), and (Novsianti, 2024), which similarly emphasize that deixis in contemporary song lyrics functions as a narrative mechanism that enhances emotional depth and guides listener interpretation. Within the broader field of pragmatics, the deixis patterns identified in *Anti-Hero* illustrate how popular music can serve not only as a medium of artistic expression but also as a valuable source of linguistic data for examining identity construction, interpersonal alignment, and discursive self-evaluation. Based on a thorough examination of the lyrics, all significant deictic expressions in "*Anti Hero*" have been identified and analyzed. No additional primary deixis were found beyond those already discussed, as the remaining expressions consist largely of repetitions or symbolic forms that do not introduce new deictic references.

CONCLUSIONS

This study identified four types of deixis in Taylor Swift's "*Anti-Hero*," namely person, temporal, spatial, and discourse deixis, with a total of 26 occurrences. Person deixis appears most frequently (14 occurrences), indicating that the song primarily centers on self-referential perspective and identity construction. Temporal, spatial, and discourse deixis each occur four times and contribute to organizing emotional progression, psychological positioning, and narrative cohesion. In terms of contextual meaning, the findings demonstrate that deixis functions not merely as grammatical reference but as a pragmatic mechanism that constructs internal conflict, emotional vulnerability, and self-reflective narration. Overall, this study confirms that song lyrics provide valuable data for pragmatic analysis, particularly in examining how context-dependent expressions shape interpretive meaning.

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