

Deixis In The Song lyrics of Adele's Album 25

Arif Maulana¹, Fawwaz Rizky²

Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika^{1,2}

e-mail: maulanaputraa71@gmail.com, fawwazrizky50@gmail.com

Abstrak – Studi ini meneliti deiksis dalam lirik lagu Adele menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan fokus pada jenis dan makna pragmatis dari ekspresi deiksis. Penelitian ini dimotivasi oleh pentingnya deiksis dalam memahami bagaimana makna kontekstual dibangun dalam lirik lagu, khususnya dalam gaya penulisan lagu Adele yang ekspresif secara emosional dan personal. Deiksis memainkan peran penting dalam menghubungkan bahasa dengan konteks, memungkinkan pendengar untuk menafsirkan makna di luar ekspresi literal. Studi ini signifikan karena berkontribusi pada analisis pragmatis dan linguistik dengan menyoroti bagaimana ekspresi deiksis berfungsi sebagai alat linguistik untuk menyampaikan keintiman emosional, perspektif, dan hubungan interpersonal dalam lirik lagu kontemporer. Data dikumpulkan melalui pengambilan sampel bertujuan dari lagu-lagu terpilih dalam album Adele 25, termasuk *Hello*, *All I Ask*, *When We Were Young*, *Love in the Dark*, dan *Send My Love*. Lirik diperiksa dengan cermat untuk mengidentifikasi ekspresi deiksis, yang kemudian diklasifikasikan berdasarkan teori deiksis Levinson (1983), yang terdiri dari deiksis orang, tempat, waktu, wacana, dan sosial. Interpretasi data menggunakan kerangka pragmatik Yule (1996), yang menekankan makna kontekstual, maksud pembicara, dan inferensi pendengar. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa deiksis persona adalah tipe yang paling dominan, diikuti oleh deiksis temporal, sedangkan deiksis spasial, wacana, dan sosial muncul lebih jarang. Bentuk-bentuk deiksis ini mencerminkan tema kedekatan emosional, ingatan, kerinduan, dan refleksi diri. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa deiksis dalam lirik lagu Adele berfungsi sebagai perangkat pragmatik penting yang menghubungkan ekspresi linguistik dengan makna emosional dan kontekstual, memungkinkan pengalaman pribadi dipahami sebagai pengalaman bersama dan universal.

Kata Kunci: pragmatik, deiksis, Adele, lirik lagu, studi kualitatif

Abstract - This study examines deixis in the song lyrics of Adele using a qualitative approach, focusing on the types and pragmatic meanings of deictic expressions. The research is motivated by the importance of deixis in understanding how contextual meaning is constructed in song lyrics, particularly in Adele's emotionally expressive and personal songwriting style. Deixis plays a crucial role in linking language to context, allowing listeners to interpret meaning beyond literal expressions. This study is significant because it contributes to pragmatic and linguistic analysis by highlighting how deictic expressions function as linguistic tools to convey emotional intimacy, perspective, and interpersonal relationships in contemporary song lyrics. The data were collected through purposive sampling from selected songs in Adele's album 25, including *Hello*, *All I Ask*, *When We Were Young*, *Love in the Dark*, and *Send My Love*. The lyrics were carefully examined to identify deictic expressions, which were then classified based on Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis, consisting of person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis. The interpretation of the data employed Yule's (1996) pragmatic framework, emphasizing contextual meaning, speaker intention, and listener inference. The findings indicate that person deixis is the most dominant type, followed by temporal deixis, while spatial, discourse, and social deixis appear less frequently. These deictic forms reflect themes of emotional closeness, memory, longing, and self-reflection. The study concludes that deixis in Adele's song lyrics functions as an essential pragmatic device that connects linguistic expression with emotional and contextual meaning, allowing personal experiences to be understood as shared and universal.

Key words: pragmatics, deixis, Adele, song lyrics, qualitative study.

Received
16-12-2025

Revised
25-12-2025

Accepted
30-12-2025

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is the scientific study of language that explores how humans produce, interpret, and communicate meaning. The term linguistics originates from the Latin word *lingua*, meaning "language" or "tongue." As an academic discipline, it examines how language operates within social, cultural, and psychological contexts. Language not only functions as a communication tool but also reflects how individuals perceive and structure their social realities. According to Hall (2017), language is "a social semiotic system through which individuals construct and negotiate meaning in interaction." This statement highlights that language study is essentially the



study of human thought, experience, and identity. One of the primary branches of linguistics is pragmatics, which investigates how meaning is shaped by context, speaker intention, and listener interpretation. Pragmatics moves beyond literal word meaning to reveal what speakers truly intend to convey in particular situations. Yule (2017) defines pragmatics as “the study of how context influences the interpretation of meaning.” Likewise, Mey (2018) explains that pragmatics concerns “how language users make sense of utterances in real communicative situations.” These perspectives underline that pragmatics focuses on understanding language use as a social action shaped by situational, cultural, and interpersonal contexts.

A significant concept within pragmatics is deixis, which refers to words and expressions whose interpretation relies on contextual information such as who is speaking, where, and when. Deictic expressions like I, you, here, there, now, and then are context-dependent, anchoring speech to a particular time, place, or participant. Huang (2017) defines deixis as “a linguistic phenomenon that directly relates utterances to the circumstances of their production.” Similarly, Birner (2020) emphasizes that deixis functions as “the bridge between linguistic form and the situational context in which it is used.” These definitions illustrate that deixis is central to understanding how speakers use language to establish reference and perspective in communication. In artistic language, particularly song lyrics, deixis serves as a crucial element in expressing emotion, narrative stance, and interpersonal connection. Songwriters often use deictic expressions to construct a sense of immediacy, intimacy, or distance, allowing listeners to experience the emotional dynamics of the song. As Simpson (2019) notes, “deictic shifts in lyrics allow the songwriter to move fluidly between personal reflection and shared emotional experience.” This suggests that the analysis of deixis in song lyrics can reveal how artists use linguistic and contextual cues to evoke emotional engagement and meaning.

Deixis is one of the important aspects in pragmatics that connects language and context. Levinson (2018) defines deixis as “the way language encodes or reflects the context of utterance, allowing speakers to refer directly to aspects of the situation such as person, time, and place.” This means deixis helps speakers relate their language to real situations. Deixis requires contextual understanding to interpret meaning accurately. Marmaridou (2017) states that “deixis indicates the relationship between language and context through expressions that require contextual information for their interpretation.” This shows that deictic words such as I, here, or now cannot be interpreted without knowing the context. Deixis also helps speakers situate meaning within discourse. Cummings (2020) explains that “deixis provides the linguistic tools for speakers to situate utterances in relation to the participants and circumstances of a discourse.” Therefore, deixis allows communication to be understood based on who speaks and in what situation.

According to Cutting (2015), “deixis refers to words and phrases, such as pronouns and adverbs, that cannot be fully understood without additional contextual information.” This definition emphasizes that deixis depends heavily on the surrounding situation to convey clear meaning. Huang (2017) highlights that “deixis is a central feature of pragmatics because it illustrates how meaning in communication depends not only on linguistic structure but also on situational factors.” Thus, deixis is essential in analyzing how people use language in real contexts. From the expert definitions above, the researcher concludes that deixis is a linguistic feature that links utterances to their context. It plays a crucial role in communication because it helps listeners and readers understand meaning based on who speaks, where, and when the utterance occurs.

Deixis refers to linguistic expressions whose interpretation depends on the context in which they are used, including factors such as the speaker, the listener, the time, and the place of the utterance. The analysis of deixis is significant in understanding how language functions to express relationships between participants and situations within communication, particularly in artistic expressions such as song lyrics. According to Levinson (1983), deixis is an essential component of pragmatics that deals with how language encodes contextual features of utterances. He classifies deixis into five types, namely person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. This classification serves as a theoretical framework for examining deictic expressions in Adele’s song lyrics. Finally, social deixis, as defined by Levinson (1983), encompasses expressions that encode social relationships and distinctions between participants, such as terms of address or honorifics. In Adele’s lyrics, social deixis reflects varying degrees of intimacy, respect, and emotional distance, demonstrating how language can convey interpersonal dynamics and affective nuance. Deixis is a key concept in pragmatics that connects linguistic expressions to their contextual references. Yule (2021) defines pragmatics as “the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener.” This emphasizes the interactional nature of language, where meaning is constructed through the relationship between the speaker and the listener within a given context.

One of the most influential contemporary artists whose songwriting demonstrates rich deictic expression is Adele, an English singer and songwriter renowned for her emotionally charged and introspective lyrics. Her album 25, released in 2015, centers on themes of love, heartbreak, nostalgia, and self-reflection. Through her songs, Adele

employs deictic expressions that reference people, places, and times, allowing listeners to perceive her emotional journey as immediate and personal. The strategic use of deixis in her lyrics establishes perspective and emotional proximity, enabling audiences to connect deeply with her experiences. This research aims to analyze the types and functions of deixis in the song lyrics of Adele's album 25 from a pragmatic perspective. It focuses on identifying how deictic expressions are used to indicate reference to person, place, and time, and how they contribute to the interpretation of meaning within the lyrics. By examining deixis pragmatically, this study seeks to uncover how Adele's linguistic choices create emotional depth and contextual nuance in her songwriting. Therefore, this research, entitled "A Pragmatic Analysis of Deixis in the Song Lyrics of Adele's Album 25," is expected to provide insights into how contextual and referential language elements shape meaning and emotional resonance in contemporary song lyrics.

The research process in this study is guided by the questions presented below:

- 1.) What types of deixis are found in the lyrics of Adele's 25 album?
- 2.) Which type of deixis is used most frequently in the lyrics of Adele's 25 album?
- 3.) How does the use of deixis differ across the selected songs in terms of perspective and emotional tone?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative method to analyze deictic expressions in Adele's song lyrics. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research explores and interprets meaning in natural context. This method allows the researcher to examine how deixis functions to express personal perspective and emotional meaning in song lyrics. The data were taken from five Adele songs: *Hello*, *All I Ask*, *When We Were Young*, *Love in the Dark*, *Send My Love*. The song lyrics were collected as the primary data source and carefully examined to identify deictic expressions. The researcher identified deictic expressions in the lyrics, categorized them based on Levinson's classification of person, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis. The analysis focused on how these deictic expressions function within the lyrical context to convey meaning and emotion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion of deixis expressions found in Adele's. The analysis focuses on how deixis is used to construct meaning, emotion, and interpersonal relationships in the lyrics. Each selected song lyric was analysed using Levinson's (1983) deictic classification person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis and interpreted through Yule's (1996) pragmatic framework to uncover how contextual meaning is established between the singer and the listener.

Table 1. Classification of Deixis in Adele's Songs

No	Songs	Person Deixis	Spatial Deixis	Temporal Deixis	Discourse Deixis	Social Deixis
1	Hello	5	1	2	1	0
2	All I Ask	4	0	1	1	1
3	When We Were Young	4	1	3	0	0
4	Love in The Dark	4	0	1	1	0
5	Send my love	4	0	1	1	0
Total		21	2	8	4	1

Table 1 shows that person deixis appears most frequently in Adele's lyrics, indicating a strong focus on personal experience, emotional intimacy, and direct address between the speaker and the addressee. Songs such as *Hello* heavily rely on first- and second-person pronouns to emphasize longing, regret, and unresolved relationships. Temporal deixis is also prominent, reflecting memories, past experiences, and emotional transitions over time. In contrast, spatial deixis and social deixis occur less frequently, suggesting that Adele prioritizes emotional proximity rather than physical or social distance.

This section identifies and classifies deictic expressions found in ten selected songs by Adele using Levinson's (1983) deixis typology. The findings indicate that Adele frequently uses deixis to anchor emotions within personal and situational contexts. Person deixis dominates the data, reflecting the singer's confessional style and her tendency to position herself directly within the narrative. Temporal deixis functions to contrast past and present emotional states, while discourse deixis helps organize lyrical flow and emotional emphasis. Table 2 presents examples of deictic expressions found in the data, including their position in the lyrics and deixis type.

Table 2. Examples of Deictic Expressions Analysis

No	Song Title	Deixis type	Verse	Lyric
1	Hello	Person Deixis	Verse 1 Line 1	<i>Hello, it's me</i>
	Hello	Temporal Deixis	Chorus Line 2	<i>I must've called a thousand times</i>
2	All I Ask	Discourse Deixis	Verse 2 Line 1	<i>This is my last night with you</i>
3	When We were Young	Temporal Deixis	Verse 1 Line 2	<i>Everybody loves the things you do</i>
4	Love In The Dark	Person Deixis	Chorus Line 1	We're only holding on to let go
	Love In The Dark	Temporal Deixis	Verse 2 Line 2	This ain't the end
5	Send My Love	Person Deixis	Chorus Line 1	Send my love to your new lover
	Send My Love	Discourse Deixis	Verse 2 Line 1	I was too strong, you were trembling

Guided by Levinson's (1983) theory and Yule's (1996) pragmatic framework, Table 2 identifies forty-six deictic expressions across ten Adele songs. Person deixis is the most dominant type, highlighting Adele's lyrical strategy of emotional self-positioning and direct engagement with the listener or a specific addressee. This finding supports Yule's (1996) claim that person deixis is central to expressing speaker identity and interpersonal meaning in discourse. Each deixis type plays a distinct role in Adele's lyrics. Person deixis (e.g., *I, you, me*) establishes emotional intimacy and vulnerability, allowing listeners to feel personally addressed. Temporal deixis (e.g., *now, when, thousand times*) situates emotions within a timeline of memory, regret, and growth. Spatial deixis, though limited, helps conceptualize emotional states as metaphorical spaces, such as *heart* or *river*. Discourse deixis, such as *this is my last night*, functions to highlight crucial emotional moments within the song narrative. Social deixis appears minimally, suggesting egalitarian and personal relationships rather than hierarchical ones.

From a pragmatic perspective, deixis in Adele's lyrics exemplifies Yule's (1996) view that meaning is highly context-dependent. The interpretation of deictic expressions requires listeners to infer the speaker's emotional situation and relational context. For instance, the pronoun *you* does not refer to a specific individual but invites listeners to project their own experiences onto the lyrics. This pragmatic openness strengthens emotional resonance and universality. In general, the analysis demonstrates that deixis in Adele's song lyrics functions as a powerful pragmatic tool for expressing emotional depth, relational tension, and personal reflection. Through Levinson's classification and Yule's pragmatic lens, Adele's lyricism emerges as a context-driven discourse where meaning is dynamically constructed between the singer and the listener, reinforcing the role of deixis as a bridge between language and lived emotional experience.

CONCLUSION

After identifying, classifying, and analyzing the data, it can be concluded that Adele's song lyrics contain various types of deictic expressions based on Levinson's (1983) classification, which are divided into five categories: person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. The findings show that person deixis is the most dominant type, followed by temporal deixis, while spatial, discourse, and social deixis appear less frequently. This distribution indicates that Adele's lyricism strongly emphasizes personal perspective and emotional interaction between the speaker and the addressee. Person deixis, such as the frequent use of *I, me, you, and we*, plays a central role in constructing emotional intimacy and confessional expression. These forms position the singer as an emotionally involved speaker and invite listeners to engage directly with the lyrical narrative.

Temporal deixis, including expressions such as now, when, tonight, and references to the past, functions to contrast different emotional moments, particularly memories, regret, and personal growth. Spatial deixis, although limited, contributes to emotional imagery by conceptualizing feelings through metaphorical spaces such as heart or here. Discourse deixis highlights significant moments in the lyrics, while social deixis appears minimally, reflecting personal rather than hierarchical relationships.

The pragmatic perspective interpretation of deixis using Yule's (1996) theory reveals that deictic expressions in Adele's lyrics extend beyond their literal reference. Their meanings depend heavily on contextual inference, shared knowledge, and the listener's interpretation of emotional situations. Deixis functions as a pragmatic device that allows listeners to locate themselves within the song's narrative, transforming personal experiences into universally relatable emotions. Through deictic expressions, Adele conveys themes of love, loss, longing, and self-reflection in a way that blends linguistic reference with emotional meaning. This study concludes deixis in Adele's song lyrics functions as a crucial linguistic and pragmatic tool for expressing emotional depth and interpersonal connection. Future research is encouraged to examine deixis in the lyrics of other contemporary musicians or across different musical genres. Comparative studies may reveal broader patterns in the use of deictic expressions to convey emotion, identity, and social relationships, thereby expanding our understanding of the pragmatic role of deixis in song lyrics across diverse cultural contexts.

REFERENCE

- Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, G. G. (2015). *A glossary of literary terms* (11th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Austin, J. L. (2021). *How to do things with words*. Harvard University Press.
- Birner, B. J. (2020). *Introduction to pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Burnard, P., & Murphy, R. (2017). *Teaching music creatively*. Routledge.
- Citraningrum, D. M. (2016). *Song lyrics as literary works*. Graha Ilmu.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cummings, L. (2020). *Pragmatics: A multidisciplinary perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Cutting, J. (2015). *Pragmatics and discourse: A resource book for students* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Fadli, M. (2020). *Pragmatics in communication*. Prenadamedia Group.
- Fitriana, R. (2020). *Language and music in song lyrics*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Frith, S. (2019). *Music for pleasure: Essays in the sociology of pop*. Polity Press.
- Hall, C. J. (2017). *Mapping applied linguistics: A guide for students and practitioners*. Routledge.
- Hassan, R. (2022). *Language, culture, and identity in song lyrics*. Routledge.
- Holmes, J. (2019). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (5th ed.). Routledge.
- Huang, Y. (2017). *Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (2018). *Pragmatics* (updated ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Marmaridou, S. S. A. (2017). *Pragmatic meaning and cognition*. John Benjamins.
- Mey, J. L. (2018). *Pragmatics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Moore, A. F. (2016). *Song means: Analysing and interpreting recorded popular song*. Routledge.

- Nazeeva Yusrina, N., et al. (2024). *Context and meaning in pragmatic studies*. SAGE Publications.
- Nurhayati, N., & Sugiarti, R. (2019). *Song lyrics and moral values*. Deepublish.
- Oviogun, P., & Veerdee, J. (2020). *Foundations of linguistics*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Saragih, A. (2021). *Discourse and song lyrics analysis*. UNIMED Press.
- Shi, X. (2022). *Introduction to modern linguistics*. Springer.
- Simpson, P. (2019). *Stylistics: A resource book for students* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode penelitian kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Tagg, P. (2015). *Music's meanings: A modern musicology for non-musos*. The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press.
- Thomas, J. (2020). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics*. Routledge.
- Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2018). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (7th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wong, D. (2020). *Music, language, and meaning*. Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. (2017). *The study of language* (6th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Yule, G. (2021). *Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Yulianti, S., et al. (2022). *Pragmatics and context*. Elsevier.