

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF DEIXIS IN BILLIE EILISH'S SONG LYRICS "HAPPIER THAN EVER"

ADELIA MAHA SUCI¹, LINDA FARIDA ASLAMIAH²

^{1,2} UNIVERSITAS TRUNOJOYO MADURA

Abstract

This pragmatics study aims to examine the use of deixis in Billie Eilish's song "Happier Than Ever," focusing on its role in shaping emotional dynamics and narrative depth. Deixis, a key concept in pragmatics, connect language to specific context, including personal, spatial, and temporal. The study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze how personal pronoun like "I" and "You" reflect relational conflict, spatial terms such as "home" and "away" convey emotional distance, and temporal markers like "when" and "ever" highlight shift in time and emotion. Finding reveal that deixis enriches the song's emotional resonance, capturing themes of heartbreak, self-discovery, and emotional liberation. By exploring deixis in this song, this research contributes to understanding how linguistic elements enhance narrative and emotional expression in music.

Keywords: Billie Eilish; Deixis; Pragmatic; Song lyric.

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the tools used by humans to communicate. According to Kurniati & Haryudin, (2021) language is not only used as media of communication but also Language has been used as an appliance to convey aesthetic taste or human beauty through literary art, may be seen in advertisement and entertainment which appear in society such as music, movie and so on. One of the literary arts that is favored by young people is music. Music is an art form that uses sound as a medium to create structured music in the form of melody, rhythm, and harmony. Music can be created using various musical instruments or human voices, and it has the ability to express emotions, ideas, and beliefs.

Music can be used for more than just entertainment; it can also be used for communication, education, ritual, and as an identity symbol for a group or community. Music exists in a variety of forms, including classical, traditional, popular. moreover, Language functions as a dynamic medium that allows emotions, relationships, and context to be conveyed. Therefore, when conveying language, it must be clear and logical to avoid misunderstandings, and language also serves as a communication tool. This is related to a pragmatic study. According to Yule, (2020: 150) pragmatics is study of invisible meaning or how we recognize what is meant even when it is not actually said or written. With this, it can be concluded that pragmatics is about how we can understand a text without knowing its actual meaning beforehand

According to Levinson, (1983) and Yule, (1996) state that in pragmatics, deixis plays an important role in connecting communication with specific references, including person, spatial, and temporal deixis, so that the listener can understand the message in its situational context. Beside that Lisnawati & Parmawati, (2023) state that deixis becomes very influential in song lyrics, where it enriches the depth of the narrative and emotional resonance. Therefore Hidayah, Purnomo, et al. (2023) state that, when the people listen to song lyric, sometimes they do not only try to apprehend the meaning of lyric itself, but also the meaning of the reader or speaker means. This research explores deixis in Billie Eilish's song "Happier Than Ever," Billie Eilish a contemporary pop musician noted for her unique voice and original music, with over 121 million followers on Instagram. Her work has captivated a global audience with its emotionally charged lyrics. which is renowned for its strong emotional narrative and complex lyrics. The lyrics of "Happier Than Ever" depict themes of personal growth, disappointment in relationships, and emotional liberation.

Based on Yule, (1996: 9) deixis consists of three types through the use of personal, spatial, and temporal deixis:

First personal deixis is a word that function as a personal pronoun. Personal deixis is described in a linguistic concept. Personal deixis also refers to pronouns such as "I", "you", "he", and "they". This is used to identify the speaker and plays an important role in identifying the speaker in a conversation or communication. Furthermore, Aulia (2023, p.8). state that person deixis is distributed to be three branches, specifically first person, second person, and third person. Secondly, temporal deixis is a word refers to the time of utterances. Temporal deixis refers to words or phrases that help place an event or action in time, such as "now," "then," "today," "tomorrow," or "yesterday." These terms depend on the context of the speech to indicate when something happens. The sentence would be clearer if rewritten as: "Temporal deixis refers to words that indicate the time of speech." The last Spatial Deixis, utilize the demonstrative pronouns and adverb of place: "here and there" and it can be the most straight forward and a very universal example of spatial deixis. Temporal deixis refers to words or phrases that help place an event or action in time, such as "now," "then," "today," "tomorrow," or "yesterday." These terms depend on the context of the speech to indicate when something happens.

A previous study relevant to this research has highlighted about examine the use of deixis through the song lyrics and had been conducted by Aulia (2023). In her thesis, she analyzes the use of deixis in the lyrics of the song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran and finds that there are two types of deixis, such as personal deixis and temporal deixis. (Kakiay & Maitimu, 2021). has highlighted the importance of deixis in music as a tool for explaining changes in relationships and emotional transitions. Another previous study analyzed deixis by identifying three types: Person deixis, Spatial deixis, and Temporal deixis, as dominant deixis (Sitorus & Herman 2019). The

distinguishes this research from the previous study is this research aims to fill the gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of deixis in Billie Eilish's song "Happier Than Ever," exploring not only types of deixis but also their role in shaping the song's emotional narrative and dynamics, which has not been extensively studied before

In this study research wants to analyze focusing on the pragmatic aspects of deixis to answer the question: How does the use of deixis in Billie Eilish's song "Happier Than Ever" convey emotional dynamics and relationships? The results of this research are expected to contribute to the understanding of pragmatics in music and its role in linguistic studies.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, this research using qualitative descriptive approach. Because the data are taken from lyric of the song. It is important to note beforehand that qualitative research, according to Creswell (2014) is one method for investigating and comprehending the meaning that people or groups assign to a social or human issue. Based on Sudaryanto, (1993) Descriptive is research completed exclusively based on the truth. The reason the researchers chose the descriptive qualitative method is because the data used consists of words that are analyzed according to the existing facts without any manipulation. Pathak, Jena, et al. (2013) Stated that the qualitative method is used to understand human beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions. Additionally, Hence, et al. (2020, p. 15), as cited in Herman & Pardede, (2020) stated that some researchers state that qualitative research aims to explore and uncover the main points of the study.

This research focuses on the types of deixis found in the lyrics of the song "Happier Than Ever" by Billie Eilish and the emotional dynamics contained within it. The main data used in this research are the lyrics of the song, which include various types of deixis, such as person deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis. Data collection in this research was carried out through several steps. First, the researcher listens to the song "Happier Than Ever" to gain a comprehensive understanding of the emotional context within the song. Then, the researcher searches for the song's lyrics transcript to facilitate the analysis. Next, the researcher selects relevant parts of the lyrics to be analyzed based on the types of deixis found. These lyric data are chosen for further analysis to identify and classify the deixis present in the song.

The data analysis method used is descriptive qualitative analysis. After the data was collected, the researcher identified the lyrics that contained deixis. Then, the researcher classified the deixis found into three main categories: personal deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis. Each type of deixis found in the song lyrics is explained and analyzed to understand the emotional

dynamics and meaning contained within the lyrics. The researcher then concludes the relationship between the deixis found and the emotions intended to be conveyed through the song lyrics.

FINDINGS

Based the analysis, the researchers found the use of deixis in the lyrics of Billie Eilish's song "Happier Than Ever", focusing on three main types: person deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis. these types play crucial role in shaping the emotional and relationships in this song.

1. Person Deixis

Person deixis refers to words that show who's involved in the communication. In this song, Person deixis is used a lot and is key to showing the emotional ups and downs between the singer and the person they're singing about. Below the table showing how person deixis shows up in the lyrics:

Table 1: Personal Deixis

No	Person Deixis	Pronoun	Number of Word
1	First Person	I	24
		My	8
		Me	10
2	Second Person	You	33
		Your	4
Total			79

Based on the table above, it seen that from the song Of Billie Eiliesh, two types of personal deixis occur. The writer found 5 deitic words "I, My, Me, You, and Your." Starting from the use of first person deixis like "I," "My," and "Me" helps Billie express her own feelings and emotional journey. Which the total of the personal deixis used is 79 words. For example, in the lyric "I don't relate to you", she is clearly expressing disconnection from her ex-partner, a sign of emotional detachment. These words give listeners direct access to her personal feelings, positioning the listener to understand the inner conflict and personal perspective of the singer.

On the other hand, second person deixis like "You" and "Your" directly address the ex-partner, shifting the narrative's focus onto them. In the lyric "You made me hate this city", "You" represents the person who has caused Billie emotional distress, highlighting the blame and the

anger she feels towards them. This creates a stark contrast between Billie's emotional state and the subject of the song.

2. Spatial Deixis

Spatial deixis in the song refers to word that indicates physical and emotional distances related to the relationship. Words like "Trough," "Away," and "Home" provide both literal and metaphorical context or meaning that helping the singers to frame the emotional journey or context of the song.

Table 2: Spatial Deixis

No	Spatial Deixis	Term	Number of Words
1	Path-related	Through	1
2	Distal	Away	3
3	Proximal/Fixed	Home	1
Total			5

From the data, the total of spatial deixis find in the song lyrics is 5 data of the words in the lyrics. The path-related deixis "through," like in the lyric "You said you were passing through", gives the impression that the ex was not really there to stay or commit in any meaningful way. It feels like they were just temporarily passing by, like they weren't invested or serious about the relationship at all. This idea of being "just passing through" makes the ex come across as fleeting, unreliable, and even emotionally distant, reinforcing the sense that they didn't care enough to put in the effort. It suggests the ex's transient presence in her life.

The distal deixis "away" show Billie's need for distance to regain happiness, as in "When I'm away from you, I'm happier than ever," symbolizing both physical separation and emotional detachment. This word emphasizes the emotional gap between the singer and her ex, representing the separation and isolation she feels in the relationship and highlighting the diminishing emotional connection. These spatial markers clearly describe the emotional landscape of the song, making the contrasting feelings of attachment and distance clear for the listener.

On the other hand, the proximal deixis "home" in "Driving home under the influence" creates a powerful contrast. Normally, when you think of "home," it's a place that feels safe, comforting, and stable somewhere you can relax and feel protected. But in this context, "home" becomes something completely different because it's tied to the ex's reckless and destructive behavior. Instead of being a safe haven, "home" is now associated with danger and chaos, showing

how the ex's actions have completely disrupted what should have been a source of peace and security in Billie's life. This twist makes the emotional impact of the lyrics even stronger, as it highlights just how toxic the relationship had become.

3. Temporal Deixis

Temporal deixis refers to words that mark time, showing specific time frames, the progression of event in relationships and emotions. Words such as "when," "ever," and "a day or two" within the song in various moments.

Table 3: Temporal Deixis

No	Temporal Deixis	Term	Number of Words
1	Past	When	7
2	Continuous/ Broad	Ever	3
3	Short-term Future	A day or two	1
Total			11

Base on the data above, the researchers find 11 words of temporal deixis. The specific past deixis "when" shows up a lot in the song, and it's used to point back to moments of emotional conflict and disappointment in the relationship. For example, in the line "When I asked you to be cool about what I was telling you", Billie is talking about a specific time when she tried to make things work or communicate her feelings, but it clearly didn't go well. This use of "when" makes it feel like she's replaying these moments in her head, anchoring the song in the painful memories of what went wrong. It Recalls a specific moment of betrayal.

On the flip side, the broad temporal deixis "ever," like in "I'm happier than ever", captures this ongoing sense of relief and freedom she feels now that she's out of the toxic relationship. It's not just about one happy moment it's this sustained feeling of happiness that contrasts with all the pain and frustration she felt before. Using "ever" makes it feel like she's finally broken free and is experiencing a kind of peace she didn't have before.

Then there's the short-term future deixis in "Give me a day or two to think of something clever". This line shows that even though Billie is trying to process her feelings and move forward, she still needs a little time and space to figure things out. It's a really human moment—like she's saying, "I need a minute to get my thoughts together and deal with all of this." It reflects how complicated the aftermath of the relationship is for her and how she's still navigating the emotions and decisions that come with it.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the discussion, the researchers finally conclude that deixis plays a crucial role in Billie Eilish's song "Happier Than Ever," enriching the song's emotional and narrative dimensions. Personal deixis such as "I" and "you" reveals the emotional tension between the singer and her ex-partner, allowing listeners to experience her personal journey. Spatial deixis like "away" and "home" emphasizes the physical and emotional distance that underpins the singer's sense of freedom and safety. Temporal deixis, with terms like "when" and "ever," highlights shifts in time and emotion, contrasting painful memories with newfound happiness. Together, these deictic elements craft a powerful emotional narrative that resonates with listeners on multiple levels.

The analysis demonstrates that deixis not only serves a linguistic purpose but also acts as a narrative tool in music, helping artists convey complex emotions and experiences. The use of deixis in Happier Than Ever reflects broader themes of personal growth, emotional detachment, and empowerment, making it a profound example of how pragmatics operates in creative expression. This study emphasizes the value of pragmatics in understanding song lyrics and other forms of artistic communication.

As a recommendation, future researcher could explore deixis in other songs by Billie Eilish to identify patterns in how she uses language to convey emotions and narratives. Comparative studies with other artists could also reveal unique and shared linguistic strategies in songwriting. Additionally, a deeper examination of spatial deixis in music could uncover its potential to symbolize not just physical but also metaphorical distances.

Researchers, educators and linguists could benefit from incorporating the analysis of song lyrics into teaching materials, using popular music to make linguistic concepts like deixis more relatable and engaging for students. This approach could help bridge the gap between theoretical linguistics and real-world applications, fostering a deeper appreciation for the role of language in everyday life.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of linguistic elements like deixis in creating meaningful and emotionally charged narratives in music. By analyzing these elements, we gain insight into how language shapes not only artistic expression but also the listener's emotional experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all parties who have provided assistance during the process of writing this article. Thank you to Allah SWT who has granted us knowledge so that we can complete this article as best as possible. Thank you also to Ma'am Diah, the lecturer for the Pragmatics course in the English Literature program, who has provided guidance on the concept of deixis and the method of writing, as well as imparted knowledge in the preparation of this article. We would also like to thank Hilya, our friend, who has provided motivation during the research and writing process of this article.

REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Herman, H., & Pardede, H. (2020). Deixis analysis in the business article of the Jakarta post. *Wanastra: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 12(2), 137-141.
- Hidayah, A., Purnomo, B., & Widarwati, N. T. (2023, February). A Deixis Analysis Of Song Lyrics In Stay By Justin Bieber. In *National Seminar of PBI (English Language Education)*.
- Kurniati, N., & Haryudun, A. (2021). A Deixis Analysis of Song Lyrics in Hello by Adele. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 4(3), 409-413.
- Levinson, S. C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lisnawati, R., & Parmawati, A. 2023. Exploring deixis in song lyrics: A pragmatic approach to emotional resonance. *International Journal of Linguistic Research*, 12(1), 35–47.
- Pathak, V., Jena, B., & Kalra, S. (2013). Qualitative research. *Perspectives in clinical research*, 4(3), 192.
- Sudaryanto. (1993). *Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa: pengantar penelitian wahana kebudayaan secara linguistic*.
- Yule, G. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. 2020. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge University Press.