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Constructing meaning and emotional intimacy through deixis in Rosé's song lyrics

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates deixis in selected songs from Rosé's Rosie album by identifying deictic types and analyzing their pragmatic functions. Five songs, namely Number One Girl, Toxic Till the End, Two Years, Drinks or Coffee, and APT, were intentionally chosen for their rich emotional content and contextual diversity. The research shows that deixis serves as a discourse strategy that creates emotional closeness, narrative viewpoint, and interpersonal bonds in modern song lyrics. Using a descriptive, qualitative approach with a pragmatic focus, data collection involved stages such as selecting songs, identifying deictic expressions, coding, and interpretive analysis. Results identified five types of deixis: person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse. A total of 119 expressions were found: 68 person, 17 spatial, 19 temporal, 8 social, and seven discourse deixis. Person deixis is most prominent, indicating the singer's personal engagement and emotional perspective as they portray love, loss, and relationships. Overall, the findings emphasize the vital role of deixis in shaping meaning, emotional depth, and interpersonal connections in song lyrics.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is frequently expressed through literary and artistic forms, including song lyrics. Songs combine linguistic elements with musical composition, allowing language to function not only as a medium of communication but also as a vehicle for conveying emotions, moral messages, cultural values, and social experiences (Gaia, 2002; Weingarten, 1991). Through rhythm, melody, and poetic language, song lyrics

are able to articulate personal and collective experiences in ways that resonate emotionally with listeners. As such, song lyrics represent a meaningful and legitimate object of linguistic inquiry, particularly for examining how meaning is shaped through context and interaction (Holliday, 2018).

In linguistic communication, meaning cannot be separated from context. An utterance does not carry a fixed or absolute meaning; rather, its interpretation depends on various contextual factors, including who is speaking, who is being addressed, where the interaction takes place, and when it occurs (Herdiyanti, 2020). Communities use language not only to exchange information but also to reflect shared values, cultural practices, and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, understanding meaning in language requires attention to the situational and social contexts in which expressions are produced and interpreted.

One linguistic phenomenon that strongly reflects this context-dependent nature of meaning is deixis. Deixis refers to linguistic expressions whose meanings shift according to the context of utterance. According to Simatupang & Fathonah (2020), deictic expressions have referents that can only be identified by considering the speaker, the addressee, and the temporal and spatial setting of communication. In other words, deixis involves words whose interpretation depends on the immediate communicative situation rather than on stable lexical meaning (Sinclair & Dowdy, 2005). Expressions such as personal pronouns, time references, and place indicators are therefore inherently relational and contextual.

Within the field of pragmatics, deixis occupies a central position because it illustrates the close connection between language form and language use. Yule (1996) emphasizes that deictic expressions reveal how speakers position themselves in relation to their audience and the surrounding context. Common examples such as *I*, *you*, *here*, *now*, and *that* are frequently used in everyday discourse, yet their meanings vary depending on who uses them and under what circumstances (Sari, 2015). Levinson (1983) further argues that deixis functions as one of the primary mechanisms through which language links utterances to participants, time, and place. Without deixis, communication would become overly explicit and inefficient, as speakers would need to specify all contextual details explicitly in every utterance.

Beyond its referential function, deixis also plays an important role in shaping interpersonal meaning. By choosing particular deictic expressions, speakers signal relationships of intimacy, distance, authority, or solidarity. Deixis therefore contributes not only to grammatical reference but also to the construction of social identity and interpersonal alignment (Nica, 2022). Understanding how deixis operates can help explain how speakers negotiate relationships, express emotions, and position themselves within a communicative event.

Song lyrics provide a particularly rich context for examining deixis because they often foreground personal experience, emotion, and relational meaning. Through the use of deictic expressions, songwriters construct imagined communicative situations that invite listeners to engage emotionally with the lyrical voice. Deixis in song lyrics does not merely indicate physical reference; it often creates emotional space, temporal perspective, and interpersonal connection. Temporal deixis, for example, may signal shifts between past memories and present emotions, while spatial deixis can evoke psychological rather than physical feelings of closeness or distance. As a result, deixis becomes a key linguistic resource for shaping narrative perspective and emotional intensity in songs (Nasution, 2018).

In contemporary popular music, lyrics often adopt a confessional style that emphasizes personal emotion and direct address to the listener. Deictic expressions play a crucial role in this process by positioning the singer as a speaking subject and the listener as an implied addressee. Through first-person pronouns, temporal markers, and discourse references, song lyrics construct a sense of intimacy that allows listeners to relate their own experiences to those expressed in the song. Analyzing deixis in song lyrics, therefore, offers valuable insights into how linguistic choices contribute to meaning construction and emotional engagement.

This study focuses on selected songs from Rosé's *Rosie* album, namely *Number One Girl*, *Toxic Till the End*, *Two Years, Drinks or Coffee*, and *APT*. These songs were purposefully selected because they represent a range of emotional themes, including love, loss, longing, and complex interpersonal relationships. The lyrics also exhibit a variety of contextual references, making them suitable for analyzing different types of deixis, including person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. The selection of five songs allows for in-depth qualitative analysis while maintaining analytical focus and coherence.

Although previous studies have examined deixis in song lyrics, much of the existing research has primarily focused on identifying and classifying deictic types. Such studies often emphasize frequency and categorization but provide limited discussion of how deixis functions pragmatically to construct meaning, emotional intimacy, and narrative perspective. As a result, the role of deixis as a discourse strategy in contemporary popular music remains underexplored.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how deictic expressions function as pragmatic and discourse strategies in constructing meaning and emotional intimacy in selected songs from Rosé's *Rosie* album. By examining the use of person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis, this study seeks to contribute to pragmatic analysis by demonstrating how deixis operates beyond reference, serving as a key

mechanism for shaping emotional depth and interpersonal relationships in song lyrics.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the use of deixis in song lyrics. Qualitative descriptive research is appropriate for analyzing naturally occurring language data and for providing detailed interpretations of linguistic phenomena within their social and situational contexts (Creswell, 2014). Rather than focusing on numerical measurement, this approach emphasizes meaning, interpretation, and contextual understanding, making it well-suited for analyzing song lyrics as textual data.

The data in this study consisted of words and expressions containing deictic elements found in song lyrics. Since the objective of the study was to explore how deixis functions in constructing meaning and emotional intimacy, a qualitative approach was adopted to allow for in-depth interpretation of linguistic forms and their pragmatic functions. The analysis was guided by Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis, which categorizes deixis into person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse types.

The data sources were five songs from Rosé's *Rosie* album: *Number One Girl*, *Toxic Till the End*, *Two Years*, *Drinks or Coffee*, and *APT*. These songs were purposely selected because they exhibit rich emotional content and diverse contextual references, which provide sufficient data for identifying and analyzing various types of deixis. The lyrics were obtained from official and reliable sources to ensure textual accuracy.

Data analysis was conducted through several systematic stages. First, the lyrics of the selected songs were read repeatedly to gain an overall understanding of the content and context. Second, deictic expressions in the lyrics were identified and coded into the five categories of deixis: person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse. Third, each identified deictic expression was analyzed interpretively to determine its pragmatic function and implied meaning within the lyrical context. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the analysis to address the research objectives and explain how deixis contributes to meaning construction and emotional intimacy in the selected song lyrics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study show that a total of 119 deictic expressions were identified in five selected songs from Rosé's *Rosie* album. These expressions were

categorized into five types of deixis: person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. The overall distribution indicates that person deixis is the most dominant category, with 68 occurrences (57.1%) of the total data. This finding highlights the strong reliance on a first-person perspective in the song lyrics, emphasizing personal involvement and emotional subjectivity.

The second most frequent category is temporal deixis, with 19 occurrences (16.0%), followed by spatial deixis, which appears 17 times (14.3%). The relatively high frequency of temporal deixis suggests that references to time play an important role in structuring emotional narratives within the songs, enabling shifts between past experiences, present emotions, and future expectations. Spatial deixis, although slightly less frequent, contributes to the construction of relational and emotional spaces rather than merely indicating physical locations. In contrast, social deixis and discourse deixis occur less frequently, with 8 occurrences (6.7%) and 7 occurrences (5.9%), respectively. Despite their lower frequency, both types are consistently present across the dataset, indicating their supportive role in interpersonal meaning and textual organization.

Table 1 summarizes the overall distribution of deictic expressions identified in the selected song lyrics from Rosé's *Rosie* album. As shown in the table, person deixis appears most frequently, reinforcing the prominence of the singer's voice and emotional perspective throughout the album.

Table 1.
Summary of deictic expressions in Rosé's *Rosie* album

Type of Deixis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Person deixis	68	57.1
Spatial deixis	17	14.3
Temporal deixis	19	16.0
Social deixis	8	6.7
Discourse deixis	7	5.9
Total	119	100

While Table 1 presents the overall distribution of deictic expressions across the dataset, a closer examination of their distribution within individual songs provides further insight into their pragmatic functions. Therefore, Table 2 presents a song-based breakdown of deixis types across the five selected songs, allowing for a comparison of deictic patterns in relation to differing emotional themes and narrative contexts.

Table 2.
Distribution of deixis types across songs in Rosé's *Rosie* album

Song Title	Person	Spatial	Temporal	Social	Discourse	Total
Number One Girl	15	3	0	2	4	24
Toxic Till the End	25	7	9	2	2	45
Two Years	7	3	3	1	1	15
Drinks or Coffee	8	0	4	1	0	13
APT	13	4	3	2	0	22
Total	68	17	19	8	7	119

As shown in Table 2, person deixis consistently dominates across all five songs, confirming the strong first-person orientation throughout the album. Among the selected songs, *Toxic Till the End* contains the highest number of deictic expressions (45 occurrences), indicating a particularly intense use of personal and emotional references. In contrast, *Drinks or Coffee* shows the lowest number (13 occurrences), suggesting a more restrained use of deictic expressions. These variations indicate that while all songs emphasize personal perspective, each song employs deictic expressions differently in accordance with its specific emotional themes and narrative structure.

Discussion

The dominance of person deixis in Rosé's song lyrics indicates that the *Rosie* album is strongly oriented toward personal experience and emotional subjectivity. The consistent use of first-person pronouns such as *I*, *me*, and *my* positions the singer as the primary speaking subject within the lyrical discourse (Timmerman, 1991; Bellis et al., 2023). This pattern suggests that the emotional experiences conveyed in the songs are not presented as generalized or detached narratives, but rather as intimate and individualized expressions. By foregrounding a first-person perspective, the lyrics construct a reflective and personal narrative voice that invites listeners to interpret the emotional content from the singer's internal point of view.

Furthermore, the predominance of person deixis contributes to the confessional style characteristic of contemporary popular music, enhancing the perception of emotional authenticity. As noted by Levinson (1983), person deixis anchors utterances to the speaker's identity and perspective. In the context of song lyrics, this anchoring effect plays a crucial role in fostering emotional closeness between the singer and the listener. Listeners are not positioned merely as passive recipients of the message, but are instead invited to engage with the singer's personal emotional experiences (Durnová, 2013; Price et al., 2024). This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that first-person deixis in song lyrics functions as a key

linguistic strategy for creating intimacy and emotional engagement (Herdiyanti, 2020; Nasution et al., 2018).

Temporal and spatial deixis play a significant role in structuring the emotional and narrative dimensions of the lyrics. Temporal deixis allows the speaker to locate emotional events within a subjective temporal framework, referring to past experiences, present feelings, and anticipated future states. Through the use of temporal markers such as *now*, *two years*, and *someday*, the lyrics depict emotional experiences as dynamic processes rather than static states. This temporal organization enables listeners to follow the progression of emotional change and to perceive continuity or disruption in the singer's emotional journey.

Spatial deixis, on the other hand, contributes to the construction of relational and psychological spaces within the lyrics. Although spatial deixis conventionally refers to physical location, its use in song lyrics often extends to metaphorical representations of emotional proximity or distance (Jamieson, 2005; Umberson et al., 2015; Frost, 2013). Expressions indicating closeness are commonly associated with intimacy and emotional attachment, while references to distant, enclosed, or abstract spaces may symbolize emotional separation, inner conflict, or psychological complexity. This finding supports the views of Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996), who argue that deictic expressions frequently operate within shared emotional and cognitive contexts rather than relying solely on literal spatial reference.

Although social deixis and discourse deixis occur less frequently than other deictic types, they nonetheless play an important role in shaping interpersonal relationships and textual coherence (Grönvall et al., 2022; Atwood & Seifer, 1997). Social deixis reflects how the speaker positions herself in relation to others, signaling degrees of intimacy, solidarity, or distance. Through the use of pronouns, possessive forms, and references to third parties, the lyrics reveal relational dynamics that include emotional closeness, vulnerability, and interpersonal tension (Kelly, 2015).

In addition, social deixis contributes to the construction of relational boundaries and social identity within the lyrical narratives. References to external parties, often realized through third-person plural pronouns, may represent social pressure, external judgment, or conflict between personal and social domains (Cristoforetti et al., 2011; Seaton et al., 2011). Meanwhile, discourse deixis functions to maintain narrative continuity by linking different parts of the lyrical text. Deictic expressions such as *this* and *that* guide listeners' attention to specific ideas or emotional moments, facilitating coherent interpretation of the lyrical progression. Thus, despite their lower quantitative presence, social and discourse deixis make a substantial contribution to the coherence and emotional unity of Rosé's song lyrics.

CONCLUSION

This study explored deixis in selected songs from Rosé's *Rosie* album using a qualitative descriptive approach based on pragmatic theory. Results show that all five deixis types—person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse—are consistently used in the lyrics, with person deixis being the most prominent. This indicates a strong use of first-person narration, highlighting personal experiences and emotional expression.

Beyond identifying deictic categories, this study contributes to pragmatic and discourse analysis by showing that deixis functions as a key linguistic strategy for constructing meaning and emotional intimacy in contemporary song lyrics. Personal deixis enables the singer to position herself as the central speaking subject, while spatial and temporal deixis shape emotional proximity and narrative progression. Social deixis highlights interpersonal relationships and emotional boundaries, and discourse deixis supports coherence and continuity within the lyrical narratives. Together, these forms of deixis operate interactively to create emotionally resonant discourse that engages listeners and invites personal interpretation.

The findings also carry broader implications for the study of language in popular culture. By demonstrating how deixis operates beyond literal reference, this research highlights the role of pragmatic features in shaping emotional meaning and listener engagement in popular music. In addition, the results suggest that song lyrics can serve as effective authentic materials for teaching pragmatic competence, particularly in helping learners understand context-dependent meaning, reference, and interpersonal communication in English.

While this study is limited to five songs from a single album, it provides a foundation for further research on deixis and pragmatic meaning in other musical genres, artists, or cultural contexts. Future studies may adopt comparative or multimodal approaches to explore how deixis interacts with musical elements, visual media, or audience reception. Overall, this study reinforces the importance of deixis as a central mechanism that links language, emotion, and context in contemporary discourse.

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