

Deixis in Taylor Swift's Speech at New York University Spring Graduation 2022: A Pragmatics Study

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Abstract

The study purposes to analyse deixis types in speech conducted by Taylor Swift in particular event, and the factors of the deixis on its data source. It implemented qualitative descriptive method with the theory from Sutopo (2006). Theories used in the research are regarding to deixis from Cruse (2000), and Levinson (1983). For the factor of deixis, the writer used the theories from Cruse (2000), and Levinson (1989). The results of the research indicated (1) there are 51 data of five deixis types found in Taylor Swift's Speech at New York University Spring Graduation 2022, consisting of: 6 data (11.7%) of person deixis, 5 data (9.8%) of place deixis, 6 data (11.7%) of time deixis, 1 data (1.9%) of discourse deixis, and 33 data (64.7%) of social deixis. (2) The data analysis revealed five factors that influence the use of deixis: participant role, usage function, social status, formality/informality, and intimacy. By examining patterns and variations in these aspects of deixis, the study contributes to our understanding of how speakers utilize deixis to establish referential coherence and navigate spatial relationships.

Keywords: *deixis, speech, referential coherence*

Introduction

Effective communication relies not only on the choice of words but also on the context in which they are used. Deixis, a phenomenon deeply ingrained in language, plays a fundamental role in establishing referential coherence by allowing speakers to refer to entities, locations, and temporal relations within a specific context. This introductory chapter sets the stage for the exploration of deixis, its theoretical foundations, and its implications for understanding human communication. According to Lyons (2002), Language is a system of communication that uses symbols to convey meaning. Communication itself is a process of delivering information through messages and ideas from one person to another. Good communication can happen only when the messages are delivered well from the speaker to the listener and understood by each other. Speakers will use different kinds of words in different contexts because the speakers must be capable of conveying their messages to be understood and accepted by the audience. It means it is very important to people to know about this concept of communication. In linguistics, there is a study discussing speech's meaning or context, called Pragmatics.

Deixis encompasses several dimensions that influence the way speakers refer to elements in their speech. One such dimension is person deixis, which involves the use of pronouns and other grammatical forms to refer to participants in the conversation. Spatial deixis, on the other hand, involves orientation and references to objects and locations, allowing speakers

to situate entities within a physical or imagined space. Yule (1996:3) stated that Pragmatics refers to the study of speaker meaning. In other word, Pragmatics is concerned with studying meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). Mey (1993:6) said that pragmatics explains how language users can resolve apparent ambiguity since meaning depends on the way, the location, and the time that an utterance is made. The meaning of a word in a sentence or text is determined by its context, which is called deixis. Deixis is a type of expression that refers to something in a specific dimension by using the speaker, place, and time of the speech as the centre of reference.

In a formal context, for example, the speakers usually prepare the formal speech by choosing the words carefully to make sure the intention and meaning of their messages will deliver well. In this research, the writer is interested in observing the deixis used in a speech delivered by one of the best songwriters and singers of the decade, Taylor Swift, at New York University's Spring Graduation in 2022. As a great singer and songwriter who successfully made her songs well-received by every pop music lover in the world, with her self-made song using metaphor, idioms, and poetic words, it's very interesting to know what kind of deixis words she used in this formal and big occasion to deliver her messages well to all the audiences. Then, analyse what factors influenced the deixis used in her speech.

Pragmatics

Language is not merely a system of words and grammar; it is a dynamic tool used by individuals to convey meaning and achieve effective communication. Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics, focuses on how context influences the interpretation and use of language. Within the realm of pragmatics, deixis emerges as a crucial component, providing speakers with the means to refer to elements within a specific context. This chapter explores the relationship between pragmatics, deixis, and the role they play in speech to facilitate referential coherence. As Cruse (2006) defined that pragmatics refers to the study of context-dependent features of meaning. Furthermore, it investigates how language is used in context and how various linguistic interpretations vary depending on the situation (Lycan,1995:588). Pragmatics investigates the principles and processes through which speakers convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. It delves into how speakers use language to achieve specific communicative goals, account for the context, and consider the shared knowledge between interlocutors. Pragmatic aspects such as presupposition, implicature, speech acts, and deixis contribute to the rich tapestry of meaning in speech.

Deixis

Deixis serves several pragmatic functions in communication. It enables speakers to establish referential coherence by providing contextually relevant information. Deictic expressions assist in resolving ambiguity and clarifying referents within a conversation. Moreover, deixis helps negotiate shared understandings and social bonds by signalling the speaker's perspective, stance, or relationship to the referents. Deixis is an integral part of pragmatics that allows speakers to refer to elements within a particular context. It is context-dependent, relying on the spatial, temporal, and interpersonal aspects of the speech event to determine meaning. Deictic expressions, such as pronouns, adverbs, and demonstratives, acquire their reference based on the context in which they are used. Understanding deixis is essential for achieving referential coherence and effective

communication. Yule (1996:9) stated that deixis represents a technical term (from Greek) for one of the most basic things we do with utterances. It refers to 'pointing' called a deictic expression. Moreover, Levinson (1983:54) conveyed that deixis relates to the way in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of the context of an utterance or speech event, and thus relates to the ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterances. While deixis is a fundamental aspect of communication, it is not without challenges. Deixis varies across languages, cultures, and speech contexts, influenced by factors such as cultural norms, social conventions, and individual perspectives. Understanding deixis requires sensitivity to these variations and an appreciation for the contextual cues that shape its interpretation.

Deixis Types

In speech, deixis encompasses several types that allow speakers to establish reference and convey meaning within a specific context. These types of deixis are interrelated and often co-occur within speech, allowing speakers to establish referential coherence, resolve ambiguity, and effectively communicate within specific contexts. The appropriate use of deixis enhances the clarity and precision of speech, ensuring that interlocutors share a common understanding of the referents being discussed. According to Levinson (1983), deixis has been classified into five types; person deixis (first, second and third person), place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis.

1. Person Deixis

The deixis involves the use of pronouns, such as "I," "you," and "he/she," to refer to participants in a conversation. It enables speakers to establish their own identity, address others, and maintain continuity in discourse. Person deixis also includes self-references, such as "myself," and other grammatical forms related to personhood. Person deixis refers to the encoding of the participant's role in the speech event in which the utterance is spoken. There are three categories divided person deixis: "I/me, we/us" refers to first person category as a speaker; "you" refers to the second person category as a listener; and "he/him, she/her, it, they/them" refers to the third person category as other participants, people, or things which are not the speaker and not the audience. When the utterance is spoken, explaining the role of participants in the speech act is the function of person deixis. It can work effectively if the participants are aware of the speakers' roles, the context, and the target audience. The participants in a conversation or speech act are also referred to by the term "person deixis." (Levinson, 1983: 62; Cruse, 2000: 320).

2. Place Deixis

The deixis is also called spatial deixis refers to a type of deixis that refers to the location of the speaker, listener, or object in the context of the utterance. Spatial deixis is typically expressed using deictic words and phrases, such as "here," "there," "this," "that," "near," and "far." The speaker's and listener's distance are indicated using spatial deixis. "Here and there" is an adverb of place that is used in spatial deixis. According to Levinson (1983: 79), the purpose of spatial deixis in a speech act is to describe the distance between the location and the locations of the participants involved in conversation. Proximal and distal are the two terms used in spatial deixis to describe the distance between the speaker and the listener. When referring to a place that is close to the speaker, the term "proximal" is used. Spatial deixis involves expressions that refer to objects, locations, and directions in relation

to the speaker's or listener's position or the shared space. Deictic expressions like "here," "there," "this," and "that" help establish spatial relationships and orient interlocutors within the physical or imagined space being discussed.

3. Time Deixis

Temporal deixis, also known as time deixis, is a deictic category that refers to the time of the utterance. It is used to express temporal relations between the speaker, the listener, and the discourse. According to Levinson (1983), the encoding of a spoken or written message at specific temporal points is referred to as time deixis. Any phrase that denotes a specific time is known as a temporal deixis, such as "now, then, soon, tomorrow, tonight, yesterday, today, etc." Time deixis is a linguistic expression that identifies the specific time at which the speaker uttered a particular statement. Temporal deixis relates to expressions that convey time and temporal relations. Deictic expressions such as "now," "then," "today," "yesterday," and "tomorrow" anchor events or actions in relation to the speaker's or listener's present, past, or future. Temporal deixis allows for the sequencing of events, discussing durations, and coordinating temporal references in conversation.

4. Discourse Deixis

The term "discourse deixis" refers to text deixis and has to do with encoding references to specific passages of the discourse that is currently being spoken (Levinson 1983: 62). It is common to refer to previous or upcoming parts of the discourse in both spoken and written discourse. The use of expressions within some utterances to refer to a particular section of the discourse that contains those expressions is known as text deixis (Levinson, 1983:85). This deixis uses the deictic terms "this," which refers to an upcoming portion, and "that," which refers to an earlier portion. Discourse deixis involves expressions that refer to elements within the ongoing discourse or conversation. It includes anaphoric and cataphoric references, where expressions refer back to or anticipate upcoming elements in the discourse. Discourse deixis aids in maintaining cohesion, referencing previous information, and introducing new topics.

5. Social Deixis

The social status gap between the speaker and the listener is demonstrated through social deixis. According to Levinson (1983:85), "Deixis concerns the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participant-roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship held between speaker and addressee(s) or speaker and some referent." Person deixis can occasionally include social deixis, which refers to the different social statuses of both participants. The purpose of social deixis, according to Levinson (1983: 89), is to demonstrate social differences, particularly those pertaining to social interactions between the speaker and the listener or between the speaker and other participants. The speaker also employs social discourse to demonstrate respect and courtesy to the other addressees. Social deixis focuses on linguistic markers that reflect social hierarchies, power dynamics, and social roles within speech. These markers include honorifics, titles, and kinship terms that convey respect, formality, or familiarity. Social deixis helps establish and negotiate social relationships, politeness strategies, and social norms within communication.

Deixis Factors

Numerous factors can affect how deixis is used in a speech act. Simatupang (2020:309) stated that participant role factors and usage function factors are two factors that affect the use of those three deixis (person, spatial and time). The usage function factor affects how discourse analysis is used. Social status, intimacy, and formality or informality can all have an impact on how social deixis is used.

1. Participant Role

According to Levinson (1989), a speech act's participant role can have an impact on the use of deixis. Each participant has a specific role to play during the speech act. Among other things, the participants' roles in an event of speech may be that of the speaker, who is typically referred to as the first person, followed by the role of the listener for the second participant, and the role of other participants for the third participant.

2. Usage Function

Based on Simatupang (2021:455), the way each type of deixis is implemented within a speech act is commonly influenced by its function. Based on its use, each type of deixis performs a different function. The purpose of person deixis is to identify the participants in a conversation or speech act; The speaker and the audience are both deictic elements, and they can be singular or plural. The purpose of spatial deixis is to describe the distance between the speaker and the audience during a speech act; this distance can be either proximal (close to the speaker) or distal (far from the speaker). The purpose of time deixis is to indicate the time at which the speaker made the utterance. This time can be in the past, the present, or the future. The purpose of time deixis is to indicate the time at which the speaker made the utterance. This time can be in the past, present, or future. The purpose of discourse deixis is to demonstrate references to specific discourse-related elements that are present in the utterance. References can be made to things that have already been mentioned in a text (anaphora) or to things that will be mentioned later (cataphora).

3. Social Status

Social level differences can impact the roles of participants in a speech act. In a conversation between two people of equal social status, the roles of speaker and listener are typically symmetrical. However, when there is a social level difference between the speaker and the listener, the roles may become asymmetrical. For example, a student may be more likely to defer to a teacher, or a subordinate may be more likely to defer to a supervisor. This is because social level differences can create power imbalances, which can influence how people interact with each other. Cruse (2000) asserted that three factors have an impact on how social deixis is used.

4. Intimacy

Cruse (2000) argues that intimacy is one of the factors that affects how often people use social discourse. He defines social distance as the degree of intimacy between the speaker and the listener. In addition, according to Cruse (2000: 323), "One factor is typically described by some such term as 'social distance': to indicate intimacy, or to indicate lack of intimacy, or to indicate distance." The concept of "social distance," which can be referred to as the degree of intimacy between the speaker and the listener, is one of the factors that

affects how often people use social discourse. People are more likely to use social discourse with those who they are close to, such as family and friends. Conversely, people are less likely to use social discourse with those who they are not close to, such as strangers or acquaintances.

5. Formality/Informality

When using social deduction in a speech act, the formality or informality of the situation becomes important. Cruse (2000) lists formality or informality as the third variable that can affect how social deduction is used. "The deciding factor seems to be the formality or informality of the situation." (Cruse, 2000: 323).

Method

The speech's topics and contexts were generated from speech-facts, including the form of words and phrases, indicating that the research used a qualitative and descriptive research method. Sutopo (2006) claimed that qualitative descriptive research refers to a detailed and in-depth description of the condition portrait of what happens according to what it is in the field of study. And according to Nazir's (2013) explanation, qualitative descriptive method is one that researchers employ to discover knowledge or study theories at a specific time. The source of data was mined from the specific website <https://www.billboard.com>, October 18th, 2022.

The initial purpose of the research is to analyse and describe the following questions as follow:

1. What are the types of deixis were found in Taylor Swift's Speech at New York University Spring Graduation 2022?
2. What are the factors that influence the deixis used in that speech?

The steps for analysing the data in this research are: (1) determine the speech to be studied, (2) look for the speech script on the internet, (3) read the speech script, (4) find the deixis, (5) classify the types of deixis, (6) analyse the factors that influence the deixis used, and (7) draw a conclusion. This research applies Levinson's theory in classifying and analysing the types, and for analysing the factors that occur in using the deixis, this research uses Cruse's theory.

Results and Discussion

Deixis is a linguistic phenomenon that refers to the use of words or phrases that are not inherently meaningful, but instead gain meaning from their context. There are five types of deixis: person deixis, place/spatial deixis, time/temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. The use of deixis, or words that refer to people, places, or things without naming them, is influenced by five factors: participant role, usage function, social status, intimacy, and formality/informality. The data that will be analysed are the deixis found in the Taylor Swift's speech at New York University Spring Graduation 2022.

Person Deixis

Data 1

“**We** are each a patchwork quilt of those who have loved **us**, those who have believed in **our** futures, those who showed **us** empathy and kindness or told **us** the truth even when it wasn’t easy to hear.”

(Taylor Swift, New York University Spring Graduation 2022, May 18 2022)

Data 1 above is a one-way communication between Taylor Swift who acted as a speaker and is addressed to the students who attended the event as the audiences who acted as the listener. The context in the speech above is, Taylor said that in everybody's life journey, there is help from the people who are credited with encouraging and helping to become a better person.

Taylor's use of the plural pronouns "**we, us, and our**" to refer to the participants in the speech is an example of person deixis. Person deixis is a linguistic phenomenon in which pronouns and other terms are used to refer to the speaker, the addressee, and other participants in a conversation. In this case, Taylor's use of the plural pronouns "**we, us, and our**" to refer to the participants in the speech serves to create a sense of inclusion and community. It suggests that Taylor sees herself as part of a group that includes both herself and the audience. This use of person deixis is particularly effective in a speech setting, where the speaker is trying to connect with the audience which are the students who attended the event and build rapport.

The use of person deixis in this data is influenced by the usage function factor. The plural pronoun "**we, us, and our**" is used by the speaker to refer to herself and other participants in the conversation. In data 1, the speaker used the plural pronoun "**we**" which function is to show Taylor's reference as the speaker referring to herself and referring to the audiences.

Place/Spatial Deixis

Data 2

“If they are **here** in this stadium, I hope you’ll find your own way to express your gratitude for all the steps and missteps that have led us to this common destination.”

(Taylor Swift, New York University Spring Graduation 2022, May 18 2022)

The context in data 2 above is, Taylor encouraged the audience to express gratitude to the people who have gave support in their life and point out whereas the people are in the same place or not.

Taylor's use of the adverb "**here**" is an example of proximal deixis, a type of spatial deixis that refers to a place that is close to the speaker. Proximal deixis is contrasted with distal deixis, which refers to a place that is far from the speaker. In this case, Taylor is using the adverb "here" to indicate that the place she is referring to is close to her.

The use of spatial deixis in data 2 was influenced by the participant role factor. This can be seen from the use of the adverb "**here**" by Taylor in her utterance. The word "**here**" refers to a place that Taylor visited, which indicates that Taylor is the speaker in this data.

Time Deixis

Data 3

“And let me just say, I am elated to be here with you **today** as we celebrate and graduate New York University’s Class of 2022.”

(Taylor Swift, New York University Spring Graduation 2022, May 18 2022)

The data 3 above showed Taylor said she was elated to be in the same place as the audience that day to celebrate and graduate New York University's Class of 2022.

The adverb "today" is a deictic term, which means that it refers to the time at which it is spoken or written. In the sentence "The adverb of time **“today”** used in the above data is included in the time deixis," the word **"today"** refers to the date on which the data was collected. This is evident from the fact that the data is referred to as "the above data," which suggests that it has already been collected. The use of the word **"today"** in this sentence is therefore an example of time deixis.

In data 3, the use of time deixis is influenced by usage function. This can be seen in Taylor's use of the adverb **"today,"** which refers to a time that is still in progress and the day when the speaker used the word **"today"** in her utterance. This suggests that Taylor's use of time deixis is strategic and serves a specific purpose in her discourse.

Discourse Deixis

Data 4

“So, I became a young adult while being fed the message that if I didn’t make any mistakes, all the children of America would grow up to be perfect angels. However, if I did slip up, the entire earth would fall off its axis and it would be entirely my fault and I would go to pop star jail forever and ever. It was all centred around the idea that mistakes equal failure and ultimately, the loss of any chance at a happy or rewarding life. **This** has not been my experience. My experience has been that my mistakes led to the best things in my life.”

(Taylor Swift, New York University Spring Graduation 2022, May 18 2022)

In Data 4, Taylor expressed her belief that mistakes do not equal failure or the loss of any chance at a happy or rewarding life. She uses the word **"this"** to refer to the idea that mistakes are always negative, which she believes is a false narrative. This use of **"this"** is an example of anaphora, a rhetorical device in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of a clause or sentence to emphasize its importance.

The use of discourse deixis in data 3 was influenced by the usage function. This is evident in Taylor's use of the adverb "this" to refer to the discourse that has already been mentioned in her utterance. This use of **"this"** functioned as anaphora, which is a type of reference that links back to something that has already been said.

Social Deixis

Data 5.1

“I’d like to say a huge thank you to **New York University’s Chairman of the Board of Trustees**, Bill Berkeley”.

(Taylor Swift, New York University Spring Graduation 2022, May 18 2022)

The context in data 5.1 is when Taylor gave her thanks to Bill Berkeley for have allowed her to be a speaker of the opening speech at the event. The data above used social deixis, a type of deixis that refers to social relationships between people. This type of deixis is often used to show respect or deference, or to establish a sense of camaraderie or intimacy. For example, the use of titles, pronouns, and honorifics are all examples of social deixis. Taylor used the word **"Chairman of the Board of Trustees"** in her utterance to call Bill Berkeley to show the social level differences between Taylor who acted as the speaker and student, with Bill Berkeley who has a higher title than Taylor in the academic organizational structure.

The use of social deixis, or words that refer to the relationship between the speaker and listener, is influenced by social status and formality/informality. In data 5.1, the word **"Chairman of the Board of Trustees,"** the speaker used this title to acknowledge the listener's higher social status in a formal setting. Taylor used the title **"Chairman of the Board of Trustees"** to show politeness and respect in a formal setting. Using the title instead of the person's name is a way to show deference to their position and authority. This is especially important in formal settings, where it is important to maintain a respectful atmosphere.

Data 6

"I know that words are supposed to be my 'thing', but I will never be able to find the words to thank *my mom and my dad, and my brother*, Austin, for the sacrifices they made every day so that I could go from singing in coffee houses to standing up here with you all today because no words would ever be enough."

(Taylor Swift, New York University Spring Graduation 2022, May 18 2022)

The context in data 6 is when Taylor is thankful to her family member that she can't thank them enough for everything they sacrificed to support her career.

The type of deixis used in data 6 above is social deixis. It is included in social deixis because the speaker who is a part of family member in her utterance to call the part of the listener **"my mom and my dad, and my brother"** who have social status as family between the speaker and her family that mentioned as the part of the listener.

The factor that influenced the use of social deixis in data 6 is intimacy. The use of the word **"my mom and my dad, and my brother"** by the speaker is used to show intimacy because the words used shows the relationship and closeness from the speaker and the mentioned listener which are her mother, her father, and her brother.

Conclusion

In this research, numbers types of deixis, particularly five types, were analysed: person deixis, spatial deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. From all the numbers of data analysed, 6 (11.7%) are person deixis, 5 (9.8%) are spatial deixis, 6 (11.7%) are time deixis, 1 (1.9%) is discourse deixis, and 33 (64.7%) are social deixis. The dominance of social deixis showed that Taylor was respectful and courteous to the audience.

Five factors were found to influence the use of deixis; the role of participant, usage function, status of social status, intimacy, and formality/informality. The use of person deixis, time deixis, and discourse deixis was found to be influenced by the usage function

factor. Spatial deixis was found to be influenced by the participant role factor. Social deixis was found to be influenced by the social status, intimacy, and formality/informality factors.

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