

## A Deixis Analysis of Song Lyrics Entitled “This Town” by Niall Horan

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### Abstract:

In this study, the researcher aims to analyze the use of deixis in one of Niall Horan's songs, “This Town.” This study used a qualitative descriptive method to analyze and classify the types of deixis and the meanings of deixis found in the lyrics of “This Town.” This study uses a qualitative descriptive method because the research data consists of words that will be analyzed by describing the data descriptively. In this study, the researchers used a pragmatic approach to identify the types and explain the meanings of the types of deixis. The results of the study are as follows: first, in the lyrics of “This Town,” there are a total of 58 deixis, consisting of 28-person deixis, 6-time deixis, 15 place deixis, and 9 discourse deixis. Second, how the deixis help build the message in the lyrics of “This Town” is not only a linguistic marker but also builds the emotional depth of the song.

**Keywords:** song; lyrics; deixis

### Abstrak:

Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti bertujuan untuk menganalisis penggunaan deixis dalam salah satu lagu Niall Horan, “This Town.” Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis dan mengklasifikasikan jenis-jenis deixis serta makna deixis yang terdapat dalam lirik lagu “This Town.” Metode deskriptif kualitatif dipilih karena data penelitian terdiri dari kata-kata yang akan dianalisis dengan cara mendeskripsikan data secara deskriptif. Dalam penelitian ini, para peneliti menggunakan pendekatan pragmatik untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis dan menjelaskan makna dari jenis-jenis deixis. Hasil penelitian sebagai berikut: pertama, dalam lirik “This Town,” terdapat total 58 deixis, terdiri dari 28 deixis orang, 6 deixis waktu, 15 deixis tempat, dan 9 deixis wacana. Kedua, bagaimana deixis membantu membangun pesan dalam lirik lagu “This Town” tidak hanya sebagai penanda linguistik tetapi juga membangun kedalaman emosional lagu tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** lagu; lirik; deiksis

## INTRODUCTION

In language use in communication, the use of deixis can help to clarify the interpretation determined by the context. Cruse (2006) states that deictic expressions is a linguistic tool as expressions that refer to their referents. Deictic expressions can refer to a person's social position, place, time, and also objects, considering the context. Understanding the situational context can help students analyze how interactions in

literary texts unfold (Kuswardani et al., 2024). Deixis explores the speaker's perspective, the person or people to whom the sentence or utterance is addressed, the place being referred to, and the time at which the sentence or utterance occurs, all of which are analyzed based on the context. Levinson (1983) recognized five main types of deixis: person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis. The first deixis is person deixis, which takes the form of pronouns such as I, you, and they. The second is time deixis, which refers to a specific time and can also use grammatical features to refer to time. The third is place deixis, which refers to the use of a specific place. The fourth is discourse deixis, which refers to things that have been discussed with the help of the words “that” and “this”. The fifth is social deixis, which refers to the mention of social positions or relationships in society. The purpose of using deixis is to be able to describe in a text or conversation by providing references to things that are already familiar when mentioned or referred to again in the text and conversation. Deixis helps listeners or readers understand the language to use when communicating (Ratri & Bram, 2023).

Deixis can be found in song lyrics, which is why this research uses a song titled “This Town” by Niall Horan. This song was released as debut single of Niall Horan, it tells the story of Niall’s past and also about the town where he grew up, also about the personal feelings that arise when discussing the songwriter's childhood town, which many people can relate to. Safrina & Siregar (2025) consider that these linguistic and musical elements together allow the audience to experience the narrative from within, rather than as an external observer. The researcher found personal nuances, space, and time, making it ideal for analyzing the deixis in the song lyrics. Syaputri & Rohaili (2022) explain that listeners may search for song lyrics to understand the meaning and message that the singer wants to convey.

Song lyrics have personal meanings that can be analyzed contextually and pragmatically in terms of language use influenced by context. Rabi’ah et al., (2023) said that contextual meaning can be used to analyze many types of literary works, including song lyrics. By analyzing the lyrics contextually, it will help to understand the true meaning by understanding what certain words refer to, where they refer to, and the time they refer to. Song lyrics are a part of music that can convey feelings and emotions to others who hear it (Bulqis et al., 2023). To understand song lyrics, it is important to know the context and identity of the songwriter in order to discover the true meaning of the song,

which is sometimes not clearly understood by listeners and deixis is the right tool to overcome this problem.

In previous studies, several researchers analyzed deixis using different objects. The first study was from Fadilah & Resmini (2021). They analyze the kinds of dominant deixis in the song lyrics entitled 'Lover' using Levinson (1983) theory, the result of this study is that personal deixis is the most dominant type in these songs. This is because the singer talks about her feelings of love for a man in her songs, making the use of personal deixis more frequent than other types. The second study from Keo et al., (2023) analyzed and determined which deixis was present in the song "Night Changes" by One Direction, the results of this study indicate that there are several types of deixis in the lyrics, such as spatial deixis, personal deixis, and temporal deixis and the dominant type of deixis used is personal deixis.

The third study from Amelia et al., (2023) analyzed the use of deixis in one of Olivia Rodrigo's songs, Driver License, the results of this study suggest that the most dominant type of deixis used in the song Driver License is personal deixis, this is because the singer describes falling in love with a man in the song, so the use of personal deixis is more frequent than other types of deixis. The fourth study of Agatha & Inayah (2022) analyze the various forms of deixis used in the lyrics of the song "Beautiful In White" and determine which is the most dominant, the results of this study indicate that from five types of deixis, the researcher found that person deixis is the most frequently used type of deixis in the lyrics, which is dominated by the word "You.". The fifth previous study is from Aisyah Basuki & Husnussalam (2025). This study aims to analyze the types and/or dominance of deixis in the lyrics of the song "Our Song" composed by Anne Marie, the results of this study indicate that personal deixis is considered the most dominant type of deixis among all types of deixis that appear in song lyrics. From the findings of several previous studies above, most of these studies analyzed types of deixis and found the most frequently used types of deixis in song lyrics.

In this study, the researcher analyzed deixis using different research objects. Therefore, the research questions in this study are, first, to analyze the types of deixis in the lyrics of Niall Horan's song "This Town," and second, to analyze how the deixis help build the message in the lyrics of Niall Horan's song "This Town." In addition, this study is expected to be a reference for other researchers who wish to conduct similar research in the future.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Levinson (1983) deixis is a linguistic tool used to refer to things that have been mentioned before in a conversation or text, according to Levinson theory deixis is divided into five types. First, person deixis is a word that refers to a pronoun, which can be a first pronoun, second pronoun, or third pronoun, and can also be in the form of a plural pronoun. Its purpose is clearly to determine the listener or the target of the utterance. Here is the example: **Let's** go to the cinema. Second, time deixis is deixis that refers to the time at the moment referred to in the utterance. It can be a specific place, adverb like now, then, soon, and so on. Furthermore, it can be in the form of grammar, for example, past tense which refers to the past. Here are the examples of time deixis: **wrote** this letter while chewing peyote.

Third, place deixis is concern on the specification of locations that as reference of sentence or utterance. The location can be specific place or relative to the speaker position, and also adverb like here, there. Here are the examples of place deixis: It's two hundred yards **away**. Fourth, discourse deixis is used to refer to something that has been discussed previously or to a specific part of a sentence or conversation. This deixis usually uses the words 'this' or 'that'. For examples: I bet you haven't heard **this** story. Fifth, social deixis refers to the social identity of participants based on their position or social relationship between them, or between one of them and the people and entities mentioned. This could be a family relationship or position at work, as well as how they call each other according to that social relationship. Here are the examples of social deixis: Your Honour, Mr President (Levinson, 1983, pp.69-79). Therefore, based on the above statement, deixis can be a tool to reveal the meaning in song lyrics that will be analyzed in this study.

Thus, deixis is relevant to be applied in this research, because the object itself contains nuances of personal, place, and time, making it ideal for researching deixis. In addition, the results of some previous studies that have been written in the introduction, the researcher concluded that in some previous studies in song lyrics only found three deixis, namely person, time and place, whereas in this study person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis will be analyzed based on Levinson's deixis theory.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study analyzes the use of deixis used descriptive qualitative research methods. Based on Umar & Choiri (2019) qualitative research is research that produces findings

that cannot be achieved through statistical procedures. This study will answer the research questions, followed by data collecting, classifying, discussing the findings, and writing conclusions. This study used written data sources from the song lyrics of Niall Horan's "This Town".

In this research, the researcher is the main instrument in it, because the researcher selected and analyzed the data on her own with the help of device such as a laptop. To collect data, the researcher took data from the song lyrics available on online website. The researcher chose this song because it had been listened and it was concluded that it contained deixis. After the data was obtained, the researcher began the analysis. First, the words or phrases were categorized into five types of deixis expressions based on Levinson's theory, namely person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Second, the researcher provided a descriptive explanation of the findings in accordance with Levinson's theory. Then, the researcher discussed the meaning of the deixis found in the song lyrics in the discussion section. Lastly, the researcher drew conclusions from the analysis that had been conducted, which contained a summary from beginning to end.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### Type of Deixis

Type of Deixis	Frequency
Person Deixis	28
Time Deixis	6
Place Deixis	15
Discourse Deixis	9
Social Deixis	0
Total	58

The researcher found a total of 58 deixis in the lyrics of "This Town" by Niall Horan. The most frequently found was person deixis with a total of 28. The form of person deixis found in song lyrics is pronouns. They are first pronouns such as (i, we and me), second pronouns such as (you and your, and also third pronouns such as (them and they). Then the second most frequently type was place deixis found by researchers as many as 15. They are specific place names such as (in the air, the whole world, highways, byways, old town, fairground, in the pub, in the room). Then also words that indicate position such as (round, so far, around you, next to), as well as adverbs (there). Discourse appeared 9 times such as (that, this, it). The following type was time deixis was found 6 times in the song lyrics

“This Town” by Niall Horan, including specific time such as (yesterday, the first time, when we were children and now). Other forms are also verbs that show time such as (thought, saw moved on and met). Whereas social deixis was not found at all, as it covered in table 1.

### Person Deixis

From the above findings, person deixis was found in the lyrics of the song “This Town” by Niall Horan. Several forms of person deixis were found, the first is the first pronoun (I, we and me), which refers to the speaker who is the subject of the lyrics. The second is the second pronoun (You and your), which in deixis refers to the purpose or object of the lyrics. The third is the third-person pronoun (Them and they), which refers to an object other than the speaker and someone who is the main object in the lyrics, examples are given below.

Data 1: And **I** want to tell **you** everything

The person deixis here is found in “I,” which is the first pronoun, meaning that “I” here is the speaker or singer himself, Niall Horan. Means that someone who in the lyrics says he wants to tell everything. Then there is the second pronoun in the lyrics, “You,” which, according to the context of the lyrics, is someone who is the object of the lyrics, namely someone who wants to be told everything by the speaker which in this case, Niall Horan.

Data 2: And **I** remember everything

The person deixis in the lyrics above is “I,” which according to the context of the lyrics, is the singer, Niall Horan that expressing his point of view. The singer reveals that he, referred to as “I,” remembers everything.

### Time Deixis

In the table above, temporal deixis is found in the form of specific times or verb tenses that indicate time. The first is specific times (yesterday, the first time, when we were children and now). The second is verbs that contain verbs that show time, for example, past tense (thought, saw, moved on and met). In addition, the use of time deixis aims to refer to the time discussed in the context. In this case, it refers to the time something happened that is discussed in the lyrics. Here are the examples:

Data 3: **Yesterday** I **thought** I **saw** your shadow running round

There are two forms of time deixis found in the lyrics above. The first is specific time, which is referred to by the word “Yesterday.”, according to the context of the lyrics, it means yesterday was the specific time when the speaker saw the object's shadow running

around. Then there is the past tense verb form (Thought and saw), which means that because the event occurred yesterday, the verb used is in the past tense. In addition, either specific time or verb tenses that show time occur, time deixis function is to indicate the time referred to in the context of the lyrics.

### Place Deixis

Based on the above findings, it was discovered that the lyrics of “This Town” contain references to specific places or places relative to the speaker's position, as well as adverbs such as “here” and “there.” The first are references to specific places (in the air, the whole world, highways, byways, old town, fairground, in the pub and in the room), the second are references related to the speaker's position (round, so far, around you and next to), and the third are the use of adverbs (there). Place deixis is intended to indicate where the events being discussed took place. In song lyrics, place deixis found in the lyrics serves to indicate where the memories took place, and by mentioning these places, listeners to the song can be carried away by the feelings of those memories. Here are some examples:

Data 4: It’s funny how things never change in this **old town**

In the lyrics above, there is a place deixis mentioned in the specific place “old town.” The context is that the singer returns to his hometown and reminisces about his childhood there. The singer mentions place deixis by referring to the specific place “old town” to indicate where he is, as mentioned in the lyrics, so that the listener can imagine being in the old town, which has not changed since the singer was a child. The reference to the place using place deixis makes the listener imagine the story sung by the singer, as in the lyrics of the song “This Town,” which is about reminiscing about the past. Therefore, mentioning a specific place conveys the singer's emotions to the listener.

Data 5: Drive **highways** and **byways** to be **there** with you

The example of the lyrics above contains place deixis that refers to specific places, namely “highways” and “byways,” and also the adverb “there.” In the context of the song lyrics, it talks about things that happened to the singer in the present as he grew up and felt the desire to return to his hometown. He uses “highways” and “byways” to convey the feeling of a long driving trip taken by the singer, allowing the listener to feel the emotions in the song. The adverb “there” refers to the singer's hometown. Overall, the meaning of the place deixis used makes the singer as if he is bringing the listener to feel the feelings of a child who has grown up, went on a long journey, but in the end he still wants to return to his origin.

## Discourse Deixis

In the lyrics of the song “This Town” by Niall Horan, discourse deixis is found, for example (that, this and it). The use of discourse deixis aims to refer to something that has been discussed previously through pronouns (that, this and it). In the context of song lyrics, discourse deixis not only refers to certain parts of the lyrics, but also serves to connect the emotional feelings between lyrics so that the meaning is clearly conveyed to the listener.

Data 6: And I know **that it’s** wrong  
**That** I can’t move on

In the lyrics above, “that” functions as discourse deixis because it does not refer to a specific person, time, or place, but rather to the previous part of the discourse. “That” allows listeners to see that the sentence “it’s wrong” is directly linked to the condition “I can’t move on.”. The use of discourse deixis here shows how lyrics build relationships between parts of sentences so that the emotional meaning is understandable to listeners.

Data 7: The smell of your perfume still stuck in the air  
**It’s** hard

In the lyrics above, “it” functions as a discourse deixis because it refers to the previous part of the discourse. “it” allows the listener to understand that the sentence “it’s hard” is directly related to the situation described in the previous lyric “The smell of your perfume still stuck in the air”. The use of discourse deixis here shows that discourse deixis in songs is not only a linguistic indicator, but also plays an important role in emphasizing the emotional flow that the lyrics want to convey.

## Discussion

The results of this research show that four types of deixis were found in the lyrics of Niall Horan's song “This Town”, namely person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, and discourse deixis, while social deixis was not found. These findings are similar to previous studies, most of which show that person deixis is the most dominant type in song lyrics. For example, studies by (Agatha & Inayah, 2022; Aisyah Basuki & Husnussalam, 2025; Amelia et al., 2023; Fadilah & Resmini, 2021; Keo et al., 2023) all found that person deixis was the most frequently used form of deixis. This similarity can be interpreted as songs generally share the singer's personal experiences addressed to specific persons, so it is reasonable for the use of person deixis to be dominant.

This study also found that time deixis occurs quite often. This can be seen from the use of specific time markers such as yesterday, the first time, when we were children, now, and past tense verbs such as thought, saw, moved on, met. Compared to previous studies, this finding adds another dimension to the analysis (Agatha & Inayah, 2022; Aisyah Basuki & Husnussalam, 2025; Amelia et al., 2023; Fadilah & Resmini, 2021; Keo et al., 2023) they did report the presence of time deixis but did not find much, the difference with this study is that this study shows that time deixis appears more frequently with specific time forms and also with tense verbs that indicate time. This is reasonable because the lyrics of “This Town” focus on nostalgia for the past, so the use of time markers is necessary to emphasize the difference between the present and past memories. Thus, time deixis serves to emphasize the time reference of the emotions expressed by the singer.

Another finding is place deixis, such as old town, highways, byways, in the pub, in the room, fairground, and place descriptions such as here, there, next to, around you. This study shows that in the song “This Town” the mention of these specific places makes listeners feel as if they are being brought into the singer's memories. In addition, this study also finds the use of discourse deixis. The finding of discourse deixis in this study is a new addition to the results of previous studies, which more focus on of person deixis, time deixis and place deixis, as in (Aisyah Basuki & Husnussalam, 2025; Amelia et al., 2023; Fadilah & Resmini, 2021; Keo et al., 2023). Thus, these findings expand our understanding that discourse deixis is also important in building emotional flow in song lyrics.

Overall, compared to previous studies, this study results that person deixis remains the most dominant type in song lyrics which functions to express personal relationships between singers and the person being addressed. This study adds new findings of the presence of time deixis and place deixis quite a lot, the absence of social deixis, and the finding of discourse deixis which functions as reference between lyrics. This shows that the deixis in the song “This Town” is due to the emphasis on specific memories of time and place, which gives a deep emotional message.

## CONCLUSION(S)

In conclusion, in the song lyrics “This Town” by Niall Horan, the researcher found person deixis, time deixis, place deixis and discourse deixis, while social deixis is not found. Person deixis is the most used in the lyrics of this song, in this song the person

deixis found is in the form of first pronoun (I, we and me), second pronoun (You and your) and third pronoun (Them and they). This result is to be expected because the lyrics talk about past memories with the person referred to in the lyrics with person deixis. Then there are also time deixis, place deixis and discourse deixis that help singers convey emotions in songs, so that listeners feel like they are brought to the memories in the song lyrics. In addition, in song lyrics, deixis is not only a linguistic marker, but also serves to build the emotional depth of a song, so that the message of the song is conveyed well to the listener.

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