PRAGMATICS DEIXIS ON TAYLOR SWIFT'S SPEECH AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study analyzed the types of deixis, references of deixis, and factors influencing the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University. The research employed Stephen C. Levinson's theory and utilized a descriptive qualitative method with a content analysis approach. The findings revealed that the data were classified into five types of deixis: personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis. The researcher identified 488 instances of deixis, with 277 (61.8%) instances of personal deixis, 37 (8.3%) instances of spatial deixis, 26 (5.8%) instances of temporal deixis, 85 (19%) instances of discourse deixis, and 23 (5.1%) instances of social deixis. It was observed that the dominant reference of deixis was personal deixis. The results indicated that each type of deixis has different references based on the context of its use in the speech. The factors influencing the use of deixis in the speech were social distance or sociality; status and power; formality; and the specific function of deixis. These factors interacted to shape the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University.

Keywords: pragmatics, deixis, speech, Taylor Swift, NYU.

INTRODUCTION

Deixis is a concept that refers to the relationship between speech and its context. Levinson (2008) has stated that the taxonomy of deixis encompasses five distinct categories, namely personal, temporal, spatial, social, and discourse. Deixis may be found in writtentexts such as speeches, novels, song lyrics, advertisements, interview transcripts, and stories. In addition, Crystal (2008) asserted that the term *deixis* refers to a component of language that directly refers to the unique temporal or locational aspects of the circumstance in which an utterance occurs, and whose meaning relates to that event.

On specific occasions, a speech must be given by leaders or other significant individuals in order to present or transmit information to the audience in the form of ideas, thoughts, and instructions. In a speech or presentation, the use of deixis can help the speaker build a connection with the audience and make the speech more personal and

relevant (Putri & Kurniawan, 2015). This pragmatic deixis allows the audience to understand and apply the materials provided in areal and appropriate context.

The focus of this study was based on Taylor Swift's speech at New York University graduation in 2022, which was a significant event that attracted public attention. The speech was delivered at the university's spring commencement, held at Yankee Stadium in New York City, where tens of thousands of newly graduated graduates greeted Swift. She used specific language to address the graduates and the occasion, making her speech a suitable subject for pragmatic deixis analysis. The speech was significant because it attracted public attention and provides an opportunityto analyze the types of deixis used by Taylor Swift and the factors that influence the use of deixis.

This study is conducted because Taylor Swift's speech at New York University graduation in 2022 contains many examples of deixis usage which were used to effectively convey messages. In her speech, Taylor Swift used deixis to communicate with the graduates and her audience. The audience, composed of enthusiastic graduates and their families, responded with overwhelming cheers and applause creating an exciting atmosphere. Her ability to connect with the audience through these linguistic tools underlined the effectiveness of her speech in resonating with the diverse crowd.

Most pieces of writing or essays contain deixis. This deixis also appears in speeches. Cruse (2006) stated that the process of obtaining this by using the speaker as a point of reference is known as deixis, and the broader word for recognizing the objects almost nothing of language is reference. According to Levinson (2008, p. 27), there are fivetypes of deixis: spatial, temporal, personal, social, and discourse. Based on the theory of Levinson, the personal deixis is involved with the processing of the responsibilities of those present during the speech event in which the inquiring utteranceis delivered: the first person category is the grammaticalization of the speaker's reference to himself; the second person category is the encoding of reference to one or more addresses; and the third person category is the encoding of reference to people andentities who are neither speakers nor addresses of the inquiring utterance.

Then, the spatial deixis is a kind of deixis that is used when the words are employed to indicate a location, i.e., a space or a place. Temporal deixis is the process of storing temporal spans and points in relation to the time when the speech was made (or a written message inscribed). Text deixis, also known as discourse deixis, pertains to the utilization of terms within a spoken expression to denote a segment of the discourse encompassing that particular expression. Lastly, social deixis refers to the use of language to indicate social relationships and statuses between participants in a conversation.

Several studies have been conducted to analyze the use of pragmatics deixis. These studies were conducted by Hasanah et al. (2021); Susanti et al. (2023); and Khan (2021). These three previous studies investigated different objects. In the first study which was conducted by Hasanah et al. (2021), the researchers identified various types of deixis in student speeches to understand their use in this context. The second study by Susanti et

al. (2023) provided a detailed breakdown of deixis usage in Kim Namjoon's United Nations speech, with personal deixis being the most prevalent, followed by discourse, spatial, temporal, and social deixis. Next, the third study which was conducted by Khan (2021), specifically focused on social deixis. It aimed to understand the types, functions, and dominance of social deixis in Imran Khan's interview with CNN. These three previous studies presented a similarity with the author's study as they all used qualitative methodology to analyze the use of deixis. Apart from that, all these researches also used Levinson's theory to analyze deixis.

In accordance with the previous literature review, this paper analyzes the use of semantic deixis in pragmatics in *NYU's 2022 Commencement Speaker Taylor Swift* [Video] (New York University, 2022). Thus, Taylor Swift's use of deixis in her speech helps her effectively convey important messages to her audience. In this paper, researchers aim to explore the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech. The main aim is to identify the various types of deixis used in her speech text as well as to understand the factors that influence their use. This study will also analyze the deixis references contained in the speech text. To carry out this analysis, the researchers used Levinson's theory which includes several types of deixis, including personal, temporal, spatial, social and discourse deixis. With this approach, it is hoped that research can provide a deeper insight into how Taylor Swift uses deixis context in her speech.

METHOD

This present research was qualitative research. According to Moleong (2018, p. 4), the qualitative technique is a research process that generates descriptive data from observed persons and activities in the form of written or spoken words. This research applied the content analysis method with qualitative approach to explore the types, references, and factors that influence the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University in 2022. Researchers used the qualitative approach to collect qualitative data in order to obtain qualitative information. The collected data were then used by the researchers as a material of analysis in order to answer the research problems.

The process of collecting the data in *NYU's 2022 Commencement Speaker Taylor Swift* [Video] (New York University, 2022) involved several steps. First, the researcher began by searching for the relevant video on YouTube, ensuring it features clear and relevant speech from Taylor Swift. Once the video was found, the researcher watched it carefully to understand the context and content. Following this, the researcher transcribed the video, converting spoken words into written text for a detailed analysis. The next step was to identify specific words spoken by Taylor Swift that contain deixis, i.e., words that point to people, places, times, or contexts. The researcher then categorized these deictic expressions into different types, such as personal deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, and social deixis. Finally, the meanings of these deictic expressions were described, explaining how they function within Taylor Swift's speech to convey specific references

and nuances. This systematic approach ensures a thorough analysis of the use of deixis in her speech.

After collecting the data, the next step was analyzing the data. As defined by Creswell (2018, p. 243), the following processes were used to assess the data procedures. First, the researcher organized and prepared the data, which may include transcribing interviews and sorting different materials. Next, the data was thoroughly read to gain an overall understanding and to start identifying patterns. The third step was coding,where specific segments of text were labeled with terms or categories. These codes were thengrouped into themes or categories in the fourth step. The fifth step involved presenting these themes through narratives, graphics, or tables to clearly illustrate the findings. Finally, the sixth step was interpreting the data, where the researcher reflected on the meanings of the themes, how they answer the research questions, and their implications in relation to existing literature. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive analysis of qualitative data.

FINDINGS

In this paper, the authors used Levinson's theory, which categorizes deixis into five distinct types, including personal deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. The total number of deixis found in Taylor Swift's speech text was 480, with details presented in Table 1. The following deixis of were found in the Taylor Swift' speech.

Table 1. Proportions Deixis Types in Taylor Swift's Speech (New York University, 2022)

No.	Deixis Type	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Personal Deixis	309	64.4%
2.	Spatial Deixis	37	7.7%
3.	Temporal Deixis	26	5.4%
4.	Discourse Deixis	85	17.7%
5.	Social Deixis	23	4.8%
Total	480	100%	

Based on Table 1 above, it was found that there were six types of deixis. There was a significant number of personal deixis, namely 309, which reached 64.4% of the total deixis). This suggests that the speaker's focus was on the self and the audience. Then, the number of spatial deixis was 37 (7.7%). After that, the total number of temporal deixis was 26 (5.4%), which showed the speaker's focus on time and the sequence of events. The number of discourse deixis was 85 (17.7%). Lastly, the number of social deixis was 23 (4.8%).

References in Deixis

Levinson (2008) stated a reference is the act of a writer or speaker in using words to urge a reader or listener to recognize something. In addition, Matthews (2001) claims that

a reference is a connection that an utterance has towards those individuals or people that it identified. In conclusion, the concept of a reference in linguistics refers to the act of using words to help a hearer or reader identify something. This involves the connection that an utterance has towards those individuals or people that it identifies.

Fromkin (2011) stated that a reference is a term, phrase, or thing that has reference to its meaning. Yule (1996) asserted that a reference is a connection between an expression in one section of a text and expressions in other sections of the same text. This indicates that the reference's entity could be present inside or between texts.

The researcher summarizes that deixis and reference have a relationship when it comes to identifying the source of a statement. It can also be used to refer to something in an utterance. A reference is the act of the speaker in referring to something in his/her utterance. This understanding of reference is crucial in grasping how language is used to convey meaning and how speakers use words to draw attention to specific entities or concepts.

Datum 1
*"The people who want it most are the people **I** now hire to work for **my** company."*
(New York University, 2022)

The word 'I' in Datum 1 can be found in minutes 16:21 – 16:23 at the speech which is a rhetorical device where a pronoun is used to refer back to a previously mentioned word or phrase. In this case, 'I' refers back to the speaker, who described the people she hired to work for her company.

Datum 2
*"The first of which is…life can be heavy, especially if **you** try to carry it all at once."*
(New York University, 2022)

The researcher found the second personal deixis in Datum 2. There were the deixis words 'you', 'your', and 'yourself' that were addressed to the listeners as second personal singular or plural deixis. These deixis words can be singular and plural depending on the sentence. In this speech, the deixis word 'you' can be found in minutes 12:59 – 13;04. At the speech, it referred to the audience in the New York University graduation in 2022.

Datum 3
*"I know that I'm talking to a group of perfectionists because you are **here** today graduating from NYU."*
(New York University, 2022)

In Datum 3, the word 'here' can be found in minutes 23:51 – 23:54 in the speech. It was a spatial deixis that referred to a specific location concerning the speaker or the

participants in the speech event. In this context, it referred to New York University, Yankee Stadium, where Taylor Swift gave a live speech.

> ### Datum 4
> *"**Today**, you leave New York University."*
> (New York University, 2022)

The deixis word 'today' can be found in minute 11:35 of the speech. This temporal deixis addressed the present time. In this context, it referred to the present time when the speaker, Taylor Swift, delivered a speech at New York University on Wednesday, May 18th, 2022.

> ### Datum 5
> *"I promise you, you're probably doing or wearing something right now **that** you will look back on later and find revolting and hilarious."*
> (New York University, 2022)

In this datum, the word "that" refers to a future time, indicating the action or situation being described. The use of expressions in the datum above referred to certain parts. This deixis use in the form of the word 'that' can be found in minutes 14:41 – 14:49 at the speech which referred to the future. Then, the word 'that' referred to the previous section. The discourse deixis includes expressions that refer to features of an actual discourse or conversation. Discourse deixis helps in maintaining cohesion, referring to previous information, and introducing new topics.

> ### Datum 6
> *"I'd like to thank NYU for making me technically, on paper at least, a **doctor**."*
> (New York University, 2022)

The word 'doctor' in Datum 6 above can be found in minutes 8:40 – 8:43. In this speech, it referred to the degree she received, which was an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from New York University. She explained in the example that NYU technically made her a doctor on paper. In this context, the use of the word 'doctor' as an anaphora suggests that the honorific title was initiated earlier in the discussion.

The researcher concluded that deixis and reference have a relationship when it comes to identifying the source of a statement. Or, it is used to refer to something in an utterance. Meanwhile, a reference is the act of the speaker when referring to something in the utterance.

Factors Influencing the Use of Deixis

The present study discovered that there were five types of deixis. The personal deixis was the most dominantly used deixis in Taylor Swift's speech (see the details in Table 1).

According to Holmes (2013), the factors that influence the use of deixis include social distance or solidarity; status or power; formality; and function. Meanwhile, the deixis which was used by Taylor Swift's speech was influenced by the sociolinguistics dimension consisting of social distance or solidarity; status or power; formality; and function which are explained below. Based on the sources provided, the factors of social distance or sociality, status, power, formality, and function that influenced the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University according to Holmes's theory can be outlined as follows:

Social distance or sociality

In the context of this study, social distance or solidarity is categorized into two distinct types: high solidarity and low solidarity. High solidarity denotes a close relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, characterized by a high degree of familiarity, intimacy, and shared experiences. Low solidarity, on the other hand, refers to a general relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, where the interaction may not be characterized by a strong bond, familiarity, or shared history.

Social distance refers to the overall distance between people in their sociological attributes, not their liking, attraction, or affinity. It captures the idea of social differences and similarities between individuals and their relative location in social space. Swift used the deixis 'we' in "We're all in this together" to simultaneously refer to herself and her audience indicates a closer social distance between Taylor Swift and her audience. The use of 'we' also indicated Swift's awareness that they all shared the same experiences and goals.

Status or power

In this study, status or power is classified into low and high status. According to Holmes (2013), a speaker with low status or power has a lower status than the interlocutor, or vice versa. Conversely, a speaker with great prestige or authority has a higher status than their interlocutor or vice versa. Here, status or power encompasses a wide range of factors, including age, employment status, and expertise. Status and power play crucial roles in shaping social interactions. People are differently located within patterns of deference and domination, forming a pecking order within society's stratification system. Total status is often a function of wealth, power, and prestige, influencing how individuals interact and communicate with each other. Taylor Swift used the deixis 'I' in "I am truly grateful to be here today." to indicate her status as the main speaker who held power in the context of the speech. The use of 'I' emphasized her position as a key figure with influence and authority. Swift also used the deixis 'I' in "I believe that music has the power to bring us closer" to show her authority and presence as the main speaker. The use of 'I' also showed that Taylor Swift was speaking from personal experience.

In the statement "You all have the power to achieve your dreams and change the world.", Taylor Swift used the deixis 'you' to directly engage with her audience,

acknowledging and recognizing the strength and potential of her listeners. The use of 'you' demonstrated that despite her status and power, Taylor Swift also acknowledged the power held by her audience. While in this sentence "We as musicians have a great responsibility in voicing positive messages.", Taylor Swift used the deixis 'we' to refer to herself and fellow musicians, showing their collective status as prominent figures in the music industry. The use of 'we' reflects the strength and influence held by Taylor Swift and her fellow musicians.

By considering the examples above, it is evident how the deixis usage in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University reflects the influence of her status and power as an influential and authoritative speaker.

Formality

Formality is concerned with formal and informal situations. Formality is useful in determining the influence of the social setting or type of interaction on the language used. Formality in social interactions can impact the use of deixis in speech. Formal settings may require more structured and respectful language, while informal contexts allow for greater flexibility and casual speech behavior. The level of formality in a situation can influence the choice of deixis and the overall tone of communication.

In more formal settings, such as a university graduation speech, Taylor Swift may opt for the inclusive 'we' toconvey a sense of unity and shared responsibility, as in *"We must strive for unity and understanding"* Conversely, in more personal orinformal moments, she might use 'I' to express her individual beliefs or experiences as in *"I believe in the power of music."*

In formal contexts, speakers oftenuse honorifics, such as in the statement *"**Ladies and gentlemen**, I am honored to be here today."* to address the audience respectfully. This formality sets the tone for the speech and influences the choice of deixis throughout the address.

> **Datum 7**
> *"Not a single one of **us** here today has done it alone. **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."*
> (New York University, 2022)

In Datum 7, Taylor Swift used the deixis 'we', 'us', and 'our' in a formal context, such as a speech, to refer to herself and her audience as one unit that was interconnected and influenced each other.

By examining these examples, it is evident how the level of formality in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University influenced the selection of deixis. The formality of the

occasion shapes the language choices, including deixis, to align with the tone and expectations of the audience.

Function

The function of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University depends on the context and purpose of the speech. Deixis serves the function of pointing to specific references in the discourse, anchoring the speech to the immediate context and participants. The function of deixis can vary based on the social dynamics, status differentials, and power relations present in the speech setting.

The speech is a ceremonial address to graduates, which influences the use of deixis to emphasize the occasion and the audience. For instance, Taylor Swift's use of 'today' to refer to the graduation day and 'you' to address the graduates directly reflects the function of the speech as a celebratory and motivational address. She also includes personal anecdotes and reflections, which influence the use of deixis to create a sense of intimacy and shared experience with the audience. For example, her use of 'I' to refer to herself and 'we' to refer to herself and the graduates create a sense of shared experience and community. The speech includes a call to action, urging the graduates to take responsibility for their future and to learn from their mistakes. This function influences the use of deixis to emphasize the importance of the audience's actions and decisions. For instance, Taylor Swift's use of 'you' to address the graduates and 'your' to refer to their future decisions reflects the function of the speech as a call to action.

In conclusion, social distance, status, power dynamics, formality, and the specific function of deixis all interact to shape the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University, as analyzed through Holmes's theory of deixis and social interaction.

DISCUSSION

The study of Taylor Swift's New York University graduation speech from 2022 demonstrates the importance and the significant role of personal deixis in influencing the dynamic between the speaker and the audience. Often using inclusive pronouns such as "we," "us," and "our," Swift created a feeling of community and shared experience that was essential for keeping her audience interested. This is consistent with the more general purposes of deixis in speech, in which the speaker manipulates the social structure of the exchange to their advantage.

One of the central factors influencing the use of deixis in Swift's speech is social distance. Swift used language that conveyed relatability and solidarity despite her widespread popularity, which lessened the perception of social distance. By using the pronoun "we" often, she urged the audience to see her as a member of their group and connected her experiences to those of the teachers and alumni. This was a calculated rhetorical move meant to make her relatable to an audience that may otherwise see her as aloof because of her fame.

Swift's usage of deixis was also significantly influenced by status and power dynamics. Swift's dilemma as a person of higher social standing was to maintain her position while making her discourse seem approachable and intimate. She effectively reduced the hierarchical gap and humanized her message by fusing more formal, authoritative language with everyday idioms and personal tales. This is especially crucial during a graduation speech, as the speaker's main objective is usually to uplift and empower the audience.

Furthermore, the degree of deixis utilized is influenced by the formality of the event. Although the NYU graduation ceremony was a serious event, Swift manages this by adding some lightheartedness to her speech. She was nevertheless able to establish a personal connection while preserving the proper tone for the occasion because of her combination of formality and informality.

In Swift's speech, deixis ultimately served to establish inclusion and shared identity. By using the personal deixis in this manner, Swift broke down the conventional barriers between audience and celebrity and fostered a collaborative and conversational environment. She was able to strengthen a feeling of understanding and connection amongst people via her deft use of deixis, which supports her message of shared experience, tenacity, and success.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the analysis of references in Taylor Swift's speech revealed that the most dominant type of deixis used in this context was the personal deixis. This was evident from the way she used pronouns like 'you,' 'we,' 'us,' and 'our' to refer to fellow graduates in the speech, creating a sense of shared experience and inclusivity among the audience.

Factors that influence the use of deixis in this speech are social distance or sociality, status and power, formality, and the specific function of deixis. All these factors interact to shape the use of deixis in Taylor Swift's speech at New York University, as analyzed through Holmes's theory of deixis and social interaction. The social distance or sociality between Taylor Swift and her audience at the New York University commencement address was likely to be relatively close, given the setting of the event at a university where she addressed students and faculty. Swift used more inclusive language and referred to her own experiences in a way that was appropriate to her audience. For example, she used the pronoun 'we' to emphasize her relationship with the audience, rather than 'I' or 'me', which can create a sense of shared experience and community. The status and power dynamics between Swift and her audience were also important factors. As a famous celebrity, Swift is likely to have a higher status than her audience, which may influence her use of deixis to maintain or challenge this power dynamic.

However, Swift also used more colloquial language to create a sense of familiarity and shared experience with her audience, which can help challenge power dynamics and

create mutual understanding. This approach was evident in her speech, where she shared personal anecdotes and relatable experiences, making her audience feel more connected to her and less intimidated by her celebrity status.

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