



A Deixis Analysis in Justin Bieber's Song Lyrics 'Baby'

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Abstrack. Song lyrics often serve as a medium through which songwriters express emotions and experiences, frequently relying on context-dependent expressions known as deixis to make their message more personal and relatable. This study aims to identify the types of deixis used in the lyrics of "Baby" by Justin Bieber and to examine how these expressions contribute to conveying the song's intended meaning. Using a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in pragmatic theory, the lyrics were read repeatedly, classified according to type, and analyzed based on their contextual function. The results show that three types of deixis were found in the lyrics: personal, spatial, and temporal deixis. Personal deixis appeared most frequently, with 69 occurrences, followed by spatial deixis with 16 occurrences and temporal deixis with 6 occurrences. The dominance of personal deixis indicates that the lyrics primarily focus on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, reflecting the singer's personal experiences of love and heartbreak. These findings confirm that deixis plays an essential role in constructing meaning in song lyrics and offer a new empirical case for pragmatic studies on deixis in globally popular music.

Keywords: Baby; Deixis; Justin Bieber; Pragmatics; Song Lyrics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many songwriters around the world express their emotions through the lyrics they compose, often conveying deep and meaningful messages. These lyrics allow listeners who have experienced similar situations to relate to the emotions expressed in the songs, particularly feelings of love, loss, and heartbreak. In this process, the use of language plays a crucial role, including the use of deictic expressions, which help make the lyrics more relatable and easier for listeners to understand. Music reflects and shapes cultural narratives, particularly through the interaction between lyrics and melody (Waldan et al., 2025). Song lyrics are not merely a sequence of words arranged to match the rhythm of music; they also function as a medium of communication through which songwriters express their ideas, emotions, and life experiences.

One of the most popular forms of entertainment is music. According to Hidayah (2021), songs are an integral part of everyday life and are widely enjoyed by people around the world as a source of entertainment and a means of expressing emotions. Music is not only enjoyed for personal interest but is also considered a companion in various daily activities, especially among teenagers, such as studying, working, or exercising (Lisnawati & Parmawati, 2023). According to Rokhmah and Santoso (2022), song lyrics may contain various textual meanings, and different listeners may interpret these meanings in different ways.

Song lyrics are a form of literary expression that communicate messages, emotions, and personal experiences through language (Lailiyah et al., 2026). Language, whether spoken or written, is an essential means of communication that enables individuals to express ideas, share experiences, and understand the context of everyday life (Simanjuntak et al., n.d.). Therefore, the analysis of song lyrics provides valuable insights into the use of language and helps listeners and readers understand the meanings conveyed through the lyrics more comprehensively.

One branch of linguistics that examines the meaning of language in relation to its context of use is pragmatics. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics is the study of the relationship between language and context, which provides the basis for understanding the meaning of an utterance. Similarly, Yule (1996), as cited in Wibowo (n.d.), defines pragmatics as the study of the meaning intended by the speaker and interpreted by the listener within a particular context of communication. Within pragmatics, deixis is an important area of study that examines the context-dependent use of language (Dylgjeri & Kazazi, 2013). Deixis refers to linguistic expressions—such as *I*, *you*, *here*, and *now*—whose reference shifts depending on who is speaking, to whom, and at what time and place the utterance occurs. According to Kusumadewi and Anggraeni (2020), deictic expressions are linguistic forms whose meanings depend on the context or situation in which they are used, and Levinson (1983) further classifies deixis into personal, spatial, and temporal categories, each anchoring an utterance to a different dimension of its communicative context. This theoretical framework provides the analytical lens used throughout the present study.

The problem this study addresses stems from the fact that song lyrics, despite their brevity, are dense with such context-dependent expressions, and misreading them can obscure the emotional narrative the songwriter intends to convey; without a systematic pragmatic analysis, listeners may grasp only the surface meaning of a song rather than the relational and emotional structure built through its deictic choices. This concern is far from trivial: music remains one of the most consumed forms of media worldwide, and songs with a large listener base can shape how millions of people understand romantic experiences through language, making it urgent to examine precisely how such widely circulated lyrics construct meaning. The song "Baby" by Justin Bieber is a fitting case in point. Released in 2010 as the lead single from *My World 2.0*, the song became the most-viewed music video in YouTube history at the time of its release, surpassing 246 million views and later crossing the 3-billion-view milestone, a scale of circulation that underscores how deeply its language has reached global audiences and why an examination of its linguistic construction carries real interpretive weight even more than a decade after its release. Deixis is a branch of pragmatics that examines the relationship between

linguistic expressions and the context in which they are used, so that their meanings depend on the communicative situation (Aulina et al., 2023), and "Baby" tells the story of a teenager who experiences both the joy of love and the pain of heartbreak in a romantic relationship, with deictic expressions such as *I*, *you*, and *my* appearing frequently throughout the lyrics, making them more personal, relatable, and easier for listeners to understand.

To support this research, the researcher draws on several recent, Sinta-indexed studies related to the analysis of deixis in song lyrics, all published within the last five years. Ilma and Sabat (2023) examined the use of deixis in Ed Sheeran's song "Shape of You," focusing on identifying the most frequent types of deixis and their conveyed meanings; both this study and the present research employ a descriptive qualitative method and share the same focus on analyzing deictic expressions in song lyrics. Keo et al. (2023) analyzed deixis in One Direction's "Night Changes" using a descriptive qualitative approach similar to the present study, though differing in research object. More recently, Nazula, Prasetyo, and Sabat (2026) analyzed deixis in Sabrina Carpenter's song "Espresso" using Levinson's (1983) and Yule's (1996) frameworks and found that person deixis dominates, functioning not only referentially but also symbolically to express identity and emotion. Similarly, Yusuf and Afriana (2026) examined deixis in Wiz Khalifa's "See You Again" and "Roll Up," finding that personal deixis dominates expressive and narrative song lyrics because it directly involves the speaker and the addressee. Dwi et al. (2024) analyzed deixis in Sabrina Carpenter's "Emails I Can't Send," revealing that deixis—particularly first-person pronouns and time expressions—makes lyrics more personal and context-dependent, while Harahap et al. (2024) analyzed deixis in "Who I Am" by Alan Walker, Putri Arian, and Peder Elias and found that person deixis reflects identity and self-expression while discourse deixis connects ideas within the lyrics. In a related context, Audia et al. (n.d.) examined figurative language in Justin Bieber's "My World" album using a descriptive qualitative method and suggested that songs can serve as an effective medium for English language learning; although the linguistic focus differs, this study confirms that Justin Bieber's song lyrics are a rich object of linguistic analysis.

Although these recent studies have examined deixis across a range of song lyrics, most of them (e.g., Ilma & Sabat, 2023; Nazula et al., 2026; Yusuf & Afriana, 2026; Dwi et al., 2024; Harahap et al., 2024) tend to stop at identifying the types of deixis and counting their frequency of occurrence, with limited attention to how each deictic expression functions together to construct the emotional narrative of a specific song. Furthermore, although Justin Bieber's songs have previously been studied from the perspective of figurative language (Audia et al., n.d.), no previous study has specifically examined the use of deixis in his song "Baby," despite

the song's massive global circulation and its dense use of context-dependent expressions. This indicates a clear research gap: a detailed pragmatic analysis of deixis that connects each deictic form to the narrative of heartbreak and reconciliation in "Baby" has not yet been conducted. Based on this gap, the researcher is interested in analyzing the use of deixis in the song "Baby" by Justin Bieber, aiming to identify the types of deixis used in the song and to examine how these deictic expressions contribute to conveying the intended meaning of the lyrics more clearly and effectively. This study seeks to fill the identified gap and offers its novelty by providing an in-depth analysis of the types and contextual functions of deixis in the lyrics of "Baby," a song that, despite its enormous popularity, has not previously been examined from a pragmatic perspective. By combining frequency-based identification with a contextual explanation of how personal, spatial, and temporal deixis jointly construct the song's narrative of love and heartbreak, this research contributes a new empirical case to the growing body of literature on deixis in popular song lyrics, in line with the recent trend of applying deixis theory to popular songs (Nazula et al., 2026; Yusuf & Afriana, 2026), and reinforces the relevance of pragmatic analysis to a widely known contemporary text more than a decade after its release.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This entire research was carried out based on a qualitative research method with the approach used, namely the descriptive approach, an approach that attempts to describe and interpret a phenomenon according to what it is or according to its actual condition without relying on statistical analysis (Wijaya & Hadi, 2024). Based on the scope and depth of the research, this approach was used to gain an understanding of the types, meanings, and functions of deixis employed in "Baby," a song lyric by Justin Bieber, analyzed through Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis.

The object of this research is directly related to the problem stated in the title, namely the lyrics of the song "Baby" by Justin Bieber, officially released in 2010 as the lead single from the album *My World 2.0* and accessed through its official lyric and audio release. The research began with an initial reading of the lyrics conducted on 20 July, during which the researcher listened to the song repeatedly to identify any linguistic phenomena worth investigating. After the lyrics had been read and understood thoroughly, the researcher continued the research by identifying and classifying every deictic expression found in the text, so that after the data had been collected, starting from the initial reading through the classification stage, the results of this research could be formulated. The subject of this study is the entire text of the song lyrics under investigation. Thus, the primary data in this study

are all utterances contained in the lyrics of "Baby" by Justin Bieber, while the secondary data consist of books, journal articles, and previous studies related to deixis and pragmatics that provide the theoretical foundation and supporting information for the analysis (Simanjuntak et al., n.d.). According to Hasanah (n.d.), deixis is used to analyze conversations, utterances, or sentences because every utterance refers to particular people, places, times, or situations, which justifies the use of the full lyrics as the unit of analysis rather than a sample of selected lines.

The instrument used in this study was a data classification sheet developed by the researcher to record and categorize every deictic expression found in the lyrics. This instrument was used to determine the type of deixis present in each line—namely personal, spatial, or temporal deixis, following Levinson's (1983) theory as cited in Fadilah and Resmini (2021)—as well as the contextual function of each expression and its frequency of occurrence throughout the song. While the classification sheet was used to organize the raw linguistic data, close reading of the lyrics was used to obtain the contextual and interpretive information needed to explain how each deictic expression conveyed meaning within the narrative of the song.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

After conducting the data analysis, this section presents the research findings based on the analysis of deixis in Justin Bieber's song "Baby". The analysis was carried out using Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis as the theoretical framework to identify and classify the deictic expressions found in the song lyrics. Each word or phrase containing deictic expressions was examined based on its contextual use to determine its function and contribution to the meaning of the song.

The analysis revealed three types of deixis used in the lyrics of "Baby", namely personal deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis. These three types of deixis appeared with different frequencies of occurrence throughout the song. Among them, personal deixis was found to be the most dominant type because the lyrics mainly describe the singer's personal experiences, emotions, and interactions between the speaker and the person being addressed in the song. Meanwhile, spatial and temporal deixis function to provide contextual information related to the place and time of the events described in the lyrics. The findings of the deixis analysis are presented in tabular form to provide a clearer overview of the data. A detailed explanation of each type of deixis and its function in the lyrics of "Baby" is presented in the following section.

Table 1. Personal Deixis Found in the Lyrics of “Baby” by Justin Bieber.

No	Types of Personal Deixis	Example from the Lyrics	Function	Frequency
1	I	“i though...”	Refers to the speaker (Justin Bieber)	28
2	You	“you know...”	Refers to the addressee (the person being spoken to)	14
3	Me	“...got me...”	Refers to the speaker as the object of the utterance	7
4	We	“we were...”	Refers to the speaker and another person together	4
5	My	“my first love...”	Indicates possession belonging to the speaker	10
6	Mine	“...be mine”	Indicates possession or belonging to the speaker	6
Total				69

Table 2. Spatial Deixis Found in the Lyrics of “Baby” by Justin Bieber.

NO	Types of Spatial Deixis	Example from the Lyrics	function	Function
1	This	“From this bed...”	Refers to something close to the speaker or within the speaker’s immediate context	1
2	There	“I’ll be there”	Refers to a place that is distant from the speaker’s current location	3
3	Going	“I’m going down”	Indicates movement toward a particular place or direction	2
4	At School	“ And at school”	Refers to a specific location where an event takes place	1
5	Street	“ In the Street”	Refers to the place where an event occurs	1
6	Playground	“On the playground”	Refers to the location of an event or activity	1
7	Gone	“I’m gone”	Indicates movement away from a previous location or the absence of the speaker from a place	7
Total				16

Table 3. Temporal Deixis Found in the Lyric “Baby” by Justin Bieber.

No	Types of Temporal Deixis	Example from the Lyrics	function	Frequency
1	Now	“And now please say...”	Refers to the present time when the speaker expresses his feelings or thoughts	5
2	Weekend	“I really wanna see her on the weekend”	Refers to a future time when the speaker expects or wishes to meet the person he loves	1
Total				6

Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis, the researcher classified the types of deixis found in the lyrics of Justin Bieber's song "Baby" into three categories: personal, spatial, and temporal deixis, each serving a different function in constructing meaning and helping listeners understand the contextual information conveyed through the lyrics. Personal deixis, referring to the roles of participants in an utterance—the speaker, the addressee, and other participants (Levinson, 1983)—was found in the forms of *I*, *you*, *me*, *we*, *my*, and *mine*, with *I* functioning as first-person singular reference to the singer and *you* referring to the addressee, while *my* and *mine* indicate possession connected to the speaker. With a total of 69 instances (Table 1), personal deixis is clearly the most dominant type, reflecting that the lyrics primarily focus on the speaker's personal experiences, emotions, and relationship with the addressee. Spatial deixis, which indicates location or spatial distance in relation to the speaker's position (Cruse, 2006; Lyons, 2010, as cited in Natalia & Santoso, 2020), appeared through expressions such as *there*, *this*, *going*, *gone*, *at school*, *street*, and *playground* (Table 2), functioning to provide contextual background for the events described rather than to dominate the narrative. Temporal deixis, referring to the encoding of time points relative to the moment of utterance (Levinson, 1983), appeared only as *now* and *weekend* (Table 3)—*now* anchoring the present moment of heartbreak in the lyric "And now my heart is breaking, but I just keep on saying," and *weekend* marking a hoped-for future meeting. Although spatial and temporal deixis occur far less frequently than personal deixis, both remain important in establishing the place and time that frame the song's emotional narrative, and their combined use makes the message of the lyrics clearer and easier for listeners to relate to emotionally.

These findings are consistent with several recent studies on deixis in song lyrics, confirming that the dominance of personal deixis is a recurring pattern in popular music rather than a phenomenon unique to "Baby." Lailiyah et al. (2026) found the same dominance of personal deixis in Taylor Swift's introspective "Anti-Hero," while Nurul Fauziyah et al. (2025) reported that personal pronouns dominated One Direction's "Night Changes" due to its direct speaker–addressee structure, closely mirroring the pattern in "Baby." Anggraeni and Kareviati (2025), examining Disney songs, and Sahusilawane et al. (2023), analyzing Taylor Swift's discography, likewise found personal deixis to be the most frequent type, suggesting that first- and second-person reference is a common strategy across genres for building emotional closeness with listeners. The comparatively marginal role of spatial and temporal deixis in "Baby" is similarly supported by prior research: Risanty et al. (2021) found spatial deixis used only to situate isolated scenes in "Happier" by Olivia Rodrigo, Kurniati and Haryudin (2021)

found temporal deixis sparse but pivotal in Adele's "Hello," Saputra and Apsari (2021) found both categories functioning only to frame rather than dominate the narrative in Queen's "I Want to Break Free," and Indriani et al. (2023) found temporal deixis to be the least frequent category in Shania Yan's "Nothing's Gonna Change My Love For You"—identical to the pattern found in the present study. Taken together, this comparison indicates that the hierarchy of personal deixis as dominant, spatial as secondary, and temporal as least frequent is part of a broader tendency in popular song lyrics centered on romantic relationships, reinforcing the reliability of Levinson's (1983) framework for analyzing deixis in musical texts.

Despite these findings, this study is not without limitations. First, the analysis relies solely on the written lyrics of "Baby" as the unit of analysis, without considering paralinguistic elements such as vocal intonation, rhythm, or the music video's visual narrative, which may also shape how deictic expressions are interpreted by listeners. Second, the classification and interpretation of each deictic expression were conducted manually by the researcher, introducing a degree of subjectivity, particularly in borderline cases where an expression could plausibly belong to more than one deictic category. Third, this study is limited to a single song by a single artist, so the findings cannot be generalized to represent deixis patterns across Justin Bieber's broader discography or popular music as a whole.

These limitations open several directions for further research and practical application. Future studies could expand the scope of analysis to multiple songs by the same artist or compare deixis patterns across different genres and time periods to determine whether the dominance of personal deixis observed here holds more broadly, and researchers may also combine textual analysis with audience-reception studies to examine how listeners actually interpret deictic expressions in context, rather than relying solely on the researcher's interpretation. Practically, the findings of this study can serve as supplementary material for teaching pragmatics, particularly deixis, in English language classrooms, using popular and familiar songs such as "Baby" to help students recognize how personal, spatial, and temporal deixis function in real, authentic language use.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion presented above, the researcher concludes that three types of deixis are used in the lyrics of the song "Baby" by Justin Bieber, namely personal deixis, temporal deixis, and spatial deixis. Among these three types, personal deixis was found to be the most dominant, with 69 occurrences. Meanwhile, spatial and temporal deixis appeared less frequently. The dominance of personal deixis indicates that the lyrics of

the song focus more on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, as well as expressing the singer's personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences. The use of pronouns such as I, my, me, and you helps listeners understand the participants involved in the communication and identify the direction of the message conveyed in the song. Furthermore, spatial and temporal deixis function to provide information about the place and time that support the narrative structure of the lyrics. Although these two types of deixis occur less frequently than personal deixis, they still have an important role in establishing the context, making the meaning of the song clearer and easier for listeners to comprehend. The presence of these types of deixis demonstrates that each linguistic element in the lyrics contributes to conveying and clarifying the intended meaning of the song.

Thus, the song "Baby" can be interpreted as an expression of the singer's feelings as they describe their romantic experiences, ranging from moments of happiness to disappointment caused by the end of a past relationship. The results of this study also demonstrate that the use of deixis plays an important role in helping listeners understand the meaning, context, and messages conveyed through song lyrics. Furthermore, this study is expected to serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in exploring pragmatic aspects, particularly the analysis of deixis in song lyrics and other forms of literary works.

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