A Pragmatic Analysis of Deixis and Reference on Taylor Swift Songs: Anti-hero and Back to December

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Abstract

This research examines the pragmatic aspects of deixis and reference in song lyrics. Pragmatics is concerned with how speakers or writers convey meaning, and how listeners or readers interpret it. Deixis refers to linguistic elements that directly refer to the personal, temporal, or locational characteristics of the situation in which an utterance occurs. The study explores the different types of deixis, including person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis, and their role in establishing meaning and creating a connection between the songwriter and the audience. Reference, on the other hand, focuses on the identification of things in the world, with deixis serving as the mechanism for achieving reference. The analysis highlights the importance of context in determining the referents of deictic expressions and the impact of deixis and reference in conveying the songwriter's intended message. By understanding the pragmatic use of deixis and reference in song lyrics, researchers and readers can gain insights into the communicative strategies employed by songwriters and the ways in which meaning is constructed within the lyrics.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, deixis, reference, song lyrics, linguistic analysis, meaning, interpretation*

INTRODUCTION

These days, listening to music is more than just a pastime activity. When someone listens to music or pays attention to the words, it has the potential to be a tool that helps

them feel better about themselves. As a result, people will experience changes in their moods in addition to the enjoyment that comes from listening to music (Piragasam et al., 2013). Rock music, jazz, pop music, R&B music, rap music, and even Korean pop music have all made their way throughout the world. One of the genres that is currently popular is called Elektro, and it is also one of the genres that pop. Because of this, musicians who play in this genre have achieved a lot of success. Taylor Swift is considered to be one of them. She explained to him that it was a means of compensating for things that he was unable to experience or feel in the physical world.

Music listening is no longer just a leisure activity. When someone listens to music or considers the words, it might lift their mood. As a result, listening to music will make people feel good and change their mood (Piragasam et al., 2013).In addition, the writers believe that the majority of this songs incorporate visuals because the lyrics of his songs are difficult to comprehend. Despite this, the lyrics are open to a wide variety of interpretations. According to Crowther (1995), a song is "a typical brief piece of music words that constitute song lyrics." [Citation needed] Lyrics provide an additional medium via which one can communicate their sentiments and emotions to another person. The lyrics make an effort to transport the audience to a world that exists only in his or her mind, which then compels them to reflect and respond (Raj & Muniapan, 2012). People listen to a song with the intention of deciphering its lyrics and gaining an appreciation for the profound meaning that lies inside it. In other words, the listener will ultimately feel compelled to make an effort to figure out what the songwriter intends to convey. Pragmatics is the academic study of the meaning of what a speaker intends to convey. On the other hand, the writers decided to incorporate two songs by Taylor Swift, Anti-hero and Back to December, because both songs discuss the highs and lows that come with living a life. The music belongs to a different genre than what has been researched in the past, which is pop Elektro. In addition to that, the author did their analysis using Cruse's theory. As a result, we are going to look at these three aspects: 1) What kinds of deixis can be found in musical compositions? 2.) Can you explain the meaning of the references in songs? And finally, the third question: what kind of deixis is most common in songs?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of pragmatics focuses on how meaning is conveyed by speakers or writers and interpreted by listeners or readers (Yule, 1996). In the context of this research, the analyst must decipher the intended meaning from the sung lyrics in order to understand the songwriter's message.

Deixis, derived from the Greek words "dexis" and "deictic," refers to linguistic elements that directly refer to the personal, temporal, or locational characteristics of the situation in which an utterance occurs (Crystal, 1998). It is essential to analyze deixis to comprehend the dialogue, utterance, or sentence, as every sentence contains specific references to people, objects, places, or times. By understanding who, where, and when the statement was made, the speaker's intent becomes clearer to the listener or reader. Cruse (2000) identifies five types of deixis: person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis.

Person deixis involves the references to the speaker, the addressee, and those who are neither the speaker nor the hearer. It is divided into three parts: first-person (referring to the speaker), second person (referring to the addressee), and third person (referring to others) (Yule, 1996:5). Through person deixis, the songwriter establishes a sense of personal connection with the audience, conveying their perspective and emotions.

Spatial deixis indicates a spatial location and includes words like "this," "that," "here," "there," and demonstratives/determiners. These deictic expressions create a frame of reference for the speaker and contribute to the vividness and specificity of the lyrics (Cruse, 2000). Temporal deixis involves references to time and utilizes the moment of utterance as a reference point to locate points or intervals on the time axis. By using temporal deictics, such as words indicating past, present, or future, the songwriter can situate events and create a temporal context for the audience (Cruse, 2000). Discourse deixis refers to expressions that refer to a specific area of the discourse. Words and phrases like "but," "therefore," "however," and "so on" are examples of discourse deixis, which establish connections and convey relationships between utterances and past discourse (Cruse, 2004). Social deixis involves the use of linguistic forms that represent the speaker's social standing in relation to the addressee or others. This includes familiar forms, polite forms, or honorifics, which convey social relationships and hierarchies (Grundy, 2002).

Reference, according to Cruse (2006), is the general term for identifying things in the world, and deixis is the mechanism used to achieve reference. It is the speaker's or writer's ability to help the listener or reader identify something (Yule, 1993). Deixis and reference are interconnected, as deixis facilitates the process of reference by pointing or indicating the intended referents within the context of utterance (Levinson, 1983). The context plays a crucial role in determining the referents of deictic expressions, assuming that the listener already possesses the necessary contextual information (Grundy, 2002).

In short, the analysis of deixis and reference in song lyrics reveals how these pragmatic elements contribute to conveying meaning and establishing a connection between the songwriter and the audience. Deixis allows for the precise indication of personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social aspects, while reference helps in identifying and understanding the intended referents. By examining the use of deixis and reference in

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the song lyrics and explore the phenomenon of deixis and reference within them. Descriptive research, as defined by Nassaji (2015), seeks to describe and classify phenomena. In line with this objective, the qualitative design was chosen to provide a detailed description of the song lyrics and their characteristics.

To analyze the deixis and reference in the lyrics, Allan Cruse's theory was employed as a framework. Cruse's theory categorizes deixis into various types, including person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. The researcher applied this theoretical framework to identify and examine instances of deixis and their reference in the song lyrics.

The analysis focused on identifying the specific types of deixis used in the lyrics and how they contributed to the overall meaning and interpretation of the song. In-text citations were utilized to support the analysis and provide references for the theoretical concepts and perspectives applied. By employing the pragmatic approach, this study aimed to shed light on how the songwriter conveyed meaning and how the audience interpreted it through the

use of deixis and reference. The findings of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the pragmatic aspects of song lyrics and their role in communication.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The lyrics

Anti-hero	Back to December
I have this thing where I get older but just never wiser	I'm so glad you made time to see me
Midnights become my afternoons	How's life? Tell me, how's your family?
When my depression works the graveyard shift	I haven't seen them in a while
All of the people I've ghosted stand there in the room	You've been good, busier than ever
I should not be left to my own devices	We small talk, work and the weather
They come with prices and vices	Your guard is up and I know why
I end up in crisis (tale as old as time)	Because the last time you saw me
I wake up screaming from dreaming	Is still burned in the back of your mind
One day I'll watch as you're leaving	You gave me roses and I left them there to die
'Cause you got tired of my scheming	So this is me swallowin' my pride
(For the last time)	Standin' in front of you sayin' I'm sorry for that night
It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me	And I go back to December all the time
At tea time, everybody agrees	It turns out freedom ain't nothin' but missin' you
I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror	Wishin' I'd realized what I had when you were mine
It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero	I'd go back to December, turn around and make it alright
Sometimes I feel like everybody is a sexy baby	I go back to December all the time
And I'm a monster on the hill	These days, I haven't been sleepin'
Too big to hang out, slowly lurching toward your favorite city	Stayin' up playin' back myself leavin'
Pierced through the heart, but never killed	When your birthday passed and I didn't call
Did you hear my covert narcissism I disguise as altruism	Then I think about summer, all the beautiful times
Like some kind of congressman? (Tale as old as time)	I watched you laughin' from the passenger's side
I wake up screaming from dreaming	And realized I loved you in the fall
One day I'll watch as you're leaving	And then the cold came, the dark days
And life will lose all its meaning	When fear crept into my mind
(For the last time)	You gave me all your love and all I gave you was goodbye
It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me (I'm the problem, it's me)	So this is me swallowin' my pride
At tea time, everybody agrees	Standin' in front of you sayin' I'm sorry for that night
I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror	And I go back to December all the time
It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero	It turns out freedom ain't nothin' but missin' you
I have this dream my daughter in-law kills me for the money	Wishin' I'd realized what I had when you were mine
She thinks I left them in the will	I'd go back to December, turn around and change my own mind
The family gathers 'round and reads it and then someone screams out	I go back to December all the time
"She's laughing up at us from hell"	I miss your tan skin, your sweet smile
It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me	So good to me, so right
It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me	And how you held me in your arms that September night
It's me, hi, everybody agrees, everybody agrees	The first time you ever saw me cry
It's me, hi (hi), I'm the problem, it's me (I'm the problem, it's me)	Maybe this is wishful thinkin'
At tea (tea) time (time), everybody agrees (everybody agrees)	Probably mindless dreamin'
I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror	But if we loved again, I swear I'd love you right
It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero	

	I'd go back in time and change it, but I can't
	So if the chain is on your door, I understand
	But this is me swallowin' my pride
	Standin' in front of you sayin' I'm sorry for that night
	And I go back to December
	It turns out freedom ain't nothin' but missin' you
	Wishin' I'd realized what I had when you were mine
	I'd go back to December, turn around and make it alright
	I'd go back to December, turn around and change my own mind
	I go back to December all the time
	All the time

Pragmatic Analysis of Deixis and Reference in "Antihero":

The song "Antihero" by Taylor Swift exhibits a nuanced employment of deixis and reference, which significantly contribute to the pragmatic aspects of the lyrics and enhance the communicative intentions of the song.

Deixis:

1. "I have this thing where I get older but just never wiser": The phrase "this thing" functions as a deictic expression, indexing a specific personal phenomenon experienced by the singer. It conveys a subjective and individualized perspective on the matter at hand. By employing deixis, Swift engages the listener by inviting them into her personal realm and sharing a relatable aspect of her own growth and self-awareness.

2. "All of the people I've ghosted stand there in the room": The word "there" operates as a deictic reference, indicating the physical or imagined location where the individuals who have been ignored by the singer are envisaged. It implies a spatial dimension, enriching the conceptualization of the depicted scenario. Through the use of deixis, Swift brings the listener into the scene, creating a sense of presence and adding depth to the emotional impact of her actions.

Reference:

1. "When my depression works the graveyard shift": The phrase "the graveyard shift" functions as a reference, metaphorically alluding to a nocturnal or dark period during which the singer's depression becomes more intense. It signifies a time frame characterized by heightened emotional struggles. This reference encapsulates the singer's internal battle and portrays the emotional weight carried during challenging times.

2. "I wake up screaming from dreaming": The term "dreaming" refers to the cognitive activity of experiencing dreams during sleep. It connotes a state of subconscious thoughts and emotions, emphasizing the profound impact of these dreams on the singer's waking experiences. By employing this reference, Swift conveys the intensity of her emotional turmoil, highlighting the haunting nature of her dreams and the consequential effect on her well-being.

The strategic use of deixis and reference in "Antihero" enhances the listener's engagement and empathy, as the deictic expressions create a sense of shared experience, and the references provide vivid imagery and emotional depth. Through the adept utilization

of deixis, Swift establishes a personal connection with the audience, inviting them to empathize with her introspective journey. The references employed offer a glimpse into the singer's emotional landscape, allowing the listener to grasp the complexities of her struggles and experiences.

Pragmatic Analysis of Deixis and Reference in "Back to December":

The song "Back to December" by Taylor Swift employs deixis and reference in a compelling manner, contributing to its pragmatic significance and facilitating the communication of the singer's intentions.

Deixis:

1. "I'm so glad you made time to see me": The pronoun "you" operates as a deictic term, directly referring to the person being addressed by the singer. This deictic reference establishes a specific and personal connection between the speaker and the listener, reinforcing the intimate nature of the interaction. Through the use of deixis, Swift conveys her gratitude for the listener's presence and underscores the significance of their meeting.

2. "How's life? Tell me, how's your family?": The use of the pronoun "me" in the phrase "tell me" serves as a deictic expression, indicating the speaker's desire to obtain information or updates from the listener. It highlights the active involvement and genuine interest of the singer in the listener's well-being. By employing deixis, Swift establishes a personal and engaged conversation, fostering a sense of openness and connection.

Reference:

1. "And I go back to December all the time": The expression "go back to December" constitutes a reference, symbolizing the act of mentally revisiting a specific past period or recalling particular memories associated with December. This reference evokes a sense of nostalgic longing for the past and an ardent yearning to relive those significant moments. Through this reference, Swift captures the essence of her emotional journey, allowing the listener to join her in reflecting on the impact of past experiences.

2. "It turns out freedom ain't nothin' but missin' you": The term "you" functions as a reference, signifying a specific individual to whom the singer is addressing their sentiments. This reference denotes the person who represents the source of the singer's longing and emotional attachment, suggesting the significance of their presence in the singer's concept of freedom. By employing this reference, Swift conveys the profound emotional impact of the listener's absence and highlights the complexity of emotions associated with freedom.

In "Back to December," the strategic use of deixis and reference enriches the listener's experience by fostering a sense of personal connection and evoking emotional resonance. Through the skillful employment of deixic expressions, Swift establishes an intimate conversational tone, inviting the listener to actively engage with her narrative. The references employed allow the listener to journey alongside the singer as she reminisces and reflects upon her past, effectively conveying her regret, longing, and desire for reconciliation.

In both songs, the deliberate use of deixis and reference enhances the lyrical impact by creating a sense of immediacy, intimacy, and emotional depth. The employment of deictic expressions establishes a personal connection with the audience, while references add

texture and imagery to the narrative, allowing listeners to relate to the singer's experiences and emotions on a profound level.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

In conclusion, the analysis of Taylor Swift's song lyrics from a pragmatic perspective reveals the intricate use of language and its impact on communication. Through the examination of deixis and reference in her songs, several key findings have emerged. Firstly, Taylor Swift demonstrates a remarkable ability to employ deixis effectively to create a sense of personal engagement and connection with her audience. Her use of person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis contributes to the overall meaning and emotional resonance of her songs. By incorporating these elements, she shapes the listener's interpretation and evokes specific emotions.

Furthermore, the analysis of reference in Taylor Swift's songs highlights her skill in using referential expressions to provide contextual information and enable the audience to identify and relate to the subject matter. Through her precise choice of referential expressions, she successfully conveys her intended messages and fosters a deeper understanding and emotional connection with her listeners. Based on these pragmatic results, it is evident that Taylor Swift's songwriting is not merely a form of artistic expression but also a strategic means of communication. Her meticulous use of deixis and reference enhances the effectiveness of her songs in conveying personal experiences, emotions, and universal themes.

Moving forward, it is recommended that future studies delve deeper into the pragmatic analysis of Taylor Swift's song lyrics, exploring additional aspects such as speech acts, implicature, and context-dependent meaning. By conducting comprehensive analyses of her songs, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of her communicative strategies and their impact on her audience. Additionally, educators and language practitioners can utilize Taylor Swift's songs as valuable resources for teaching pragmatics and enhancing communicative competence. By incorporating her lyrics into language learning materials and classroom activities, students can engage with authentic language use and gain insights into the pragmatic aspects of communication. In conclusion, the pragmatic analysis of Taylor Swift's songs provides valuable insights into the power of language and its pragmatic functions in the realm of popular music. Through her adept use of deixis and reference, Taylor Swift effectively communicates her messages, connects with her audience, and leaves a lasting impact on listeners.

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