Beyond the Context: Exploring the Use of Deixis In Taylor Swift's *Folklore* Album

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ABSTRACT

While deixis has long been recognized as a key feature of everyday communication for the way it connects language to its immediate context, there is still little research that looks at how it works in contemporary music. This study was designed to investigate the representation of deixis in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album, drawing on Yule's (1966) categorizations. A total of 1,160 occurrences of deixis were systematically collected and analyzed through a mixed-methods approach. The analysis demonstrated that deixis in *Folklore* serves as a narrative device that situates stories and emotions within particular times, spaces, and also social relations. Among the three types, personal deixis is the most prominent type, demonstrating the album's clear orientation toward social interaction. Temporal deixis appears at a moderate level, pointing to an interest in time-related contexts, while spatial deixis is used least often, revealing a smaller emphasis on locational aspects. These distributions further highlight how personal and discourse deixis operate as the central mechanisms for creating coherence and sustaining the contextual grounding of the album's narratives.

INTRODUCTION

The use of deixis is paramount in everyday communication. Deictics cannot be disregarded, as they are extensively utilized in ordinary language. This is because numerous aspects of deixis are deeply ingrained in natural language since it provides a mechanism that enables speakers to connect language to the immediate context of an interaction by representing the interrelationship between the frame of time, space, and people involved. Consequently, the topic of deixis has garnered considerable scholarly attention, particularly beyond the lens of pragmatics, which explores the interplay between language and its users (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1966), mapping the intersections between linguistic structures and the social contexts where communication takes place (Hanks, 2011; Ivanova, 2016; Prasch, 2016).

İn the study of linguistics, the view of deixis is multifaceted. Linguists commonly defined it, originating from the Greek verb *dɛíknymı*, meaning 'to point, to show, or also to indicate' through the medium of language, as one of the most essential functions humans perform through utterances (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1966). In other words, any linguistic form utilized to achieve this pointing act is subsequently referred to as a deictic expression or indexical (Bohnemeyer, 2015; Hanks, 2011; Levinson, 1983, 2006; and Yule, 1966). The contemporary interpretation of this concept draws on Peirce's semiotics theory, which classifies indexicality as one of three primary modalities a sign relates to its referent, alongside icon and symbol (Bellucci, 2021; Short, 2007; Yakin & Totu, 2014).

Deictic expressions serve to anchor an utterance to its context, allowing speakers to convey information relative to their immediate environment or perspective. The intricacy of deictic search-domain distinctions differs significantly across languages due to differences in how they distinguish between being 'near speaker or addressee' versus 'away from the speaker, addressee, or both'. As one of the pioneers or contributors in the study of deixis, Yule (1966) generally divided deictic expressions into three main categorizations, consisting of pronouns or pronominals (*e.g., I, you),* known as personal deixis; time-related adverbs (*e.g., now, then,* tense), referred as temporal deixis; as well as locative adverbs (*e.g., here, there*), which then identified as spatial deixis. Otherwise, Levinson (1983) gives a very thorough taxonomy of deixis. He added two secondary types of deixis into account, comprising of (1) Person deixis, which refers to the participants in the conversation; (2) Spatial deixis, which refers to the location or locative adverbs used in the conversation; (3) Temporal deixis, which refers to expressions that indicate the temporal relationship between the utterance and the event being discussed; (4) Discourse or Textual deixis, which refers to expressions that show how an utterance connects to the surrounding text; and (5) Social deixis, which refers to the social identities of speakers and their interpersonal relationships, often expressed through polite pronouns and forms of address.

For Yule (1966), Levinson (1983), and MacDougald (2024), deixis is organized in an ego-centric way, where the deictic center or *perceptual origo* acts as the reference point, or zero-point, for interpreting deictic expressions within a given context. The integrated cognitive system underlies two areas of linguistic reference traditionally referred to as anaphora and deixis. In anaphora, the referent is an element that exists in the current discourse, whereas in deixis, the referent exists outside the discourse, in its personal, spatial, and temporal context (Talmy, 2020, p. 1). Different from other relational expressions, deictic expressions are subjective. Because of that, the interpretation of deictic expressions inherently depends on context, as their meaning can only be fully understood by considering the situational factors surrounding the utterance.

Previous studies have emphasized the systematic nature of this framework, which relies on spatial, temporal, and social factors in everyday conversation. Sanders and Van Krieken

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(2019), for instance, examined linguistic constructions and cognitive representations of time and perspective in the context of news narratives. Their findings further reveal a close link between time and perspective in the cognitive process of news discourse. Stockwell (2020) focused his research on literary dialect as a social marker by analysing the depiction of non-standard accents, regional accents, and dialects in literary fiction. His analysis emphasized how these linguistic features function not only as indicators of social identity but also as tools for character development and narrative organization. By using social deixis, authors can convey information about characters' socio-cultural backgrounds, their relationships, and their status within the story setting. Meanwhile, Khalil (2020) investigated the linguistic representation of time, place, and society in dystopian science fiction for young adults.

In addition to the above, deixis also plays an important role in songs, as it helps establish the context and emotional resonance of lyrics by linking them to specific times, places, and social circumstances. Through deixical expressions, such as pronouns, time markers, and spatial references, songs create a sense of intimacy and personal connection, which allows listeners to connect with the emotions, background, and experiences conveyed, as shown by Sitorus (2019), who investigates the use of deixis in Calum Scott's song lyrics, Rahmadany and Husein (2021) in One Direction's song lyrics, Sari and El Fauziah (2023) in Adele's songs, and Satyadewi et al. (2023) in Avicii's selected songs, and Inayah et al. (2023) in Ervan Ceh Kul's song lyrics.

Different in terms of the material object, this recent study looks at how deixis emerges in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album. The limitations found in previous studies, such as those by Billauri et al. (2022) and Saputra (2024), which rely on restricted datasets and leave out many embedded deictic expressions, risk overlooking the full role of deixis in *Folklore*. To address this gap, the present study conducted a more comprehensive analysis of deictic expressions. In doing so, the study not only identifies their patterns but also underscores their importance in shaping listeners' interpretations and emotional responses.

METHOD

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is used to show the distribution of deixis, providing a statistical overview of its frequency and occurrence in song discourse. Meanwhile, qualitative data provides descriptive and empirical explanations of these findings by offering in-depth interpretations and contextual analyses of how deixis functions in song lyrics. All data were in the form of words labelled as pronouns, adverbs of time, and adverbs of place, embedded in the entire tracks of Taylor Swift's album *Folklore*.

Folklore is Taylor Swift's eighth studio album, released on 24 July 2020 through Republic Records, and marks a shift in style from her previous pop-focused work. Working with Aaron Dessner (from The National), who co-wrote or produced 11 of the 16 songs on the standard edition, the album features indie-folk and alternative styles, characterized by atmospheric

production, narrative lyrics and also introspective themes. Unlike Swift's previous auto-bio-graphical work, *Folklore* weaves fictional narratives that touch on themes of nostalgia, heartbreak, self-reflection, and storytelling from different perspectives

Folklore received widespread praise from critics and numerous prestigious awards. At the *63rd Grammy Awards* in 2021, the album won *Album of the Year*, making Swift the first female artist to win this award three times, and was nominated for *Best Pop Vocal Album*. Its lead single *Cardigan* received nominations for *Best Song and Best Pop Solo Performance*. Beyond the *Grammys, Folklore* also earned recognition from the *American Music Awards*, where it won *Favourite Pop or Rock Album*, as well as from the *Billboard Music Awards*, where it was awarded *Top Billboard 200 Album*. The lists of songs enlisted in *Folklore* are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. The tracks enlisted in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album

No.	Title	Duration/Lengths
1.	The 1	3: 31
2.	Cardigan	4: 00
3.	The Last Great American Dynasty	3: 51
4.	Exile	4: 46
5.	My Tears Ricochet	4: 16
6.	Mirrorball	3: 29
7.	Seven	3: 29
8.	August	4: 22
9.	This Is Me Trying	3: 16
10.	Illicit Affairs	3: 11
11.	Invisible String	4: 13
12.	Mad Woman	3: 58
13.	Epiphany	4: 50
14.	Betty	4: 55
15.	Peace	3: 54
16.	Hoax	3: 40

The whole data were collected through a systematic manual process involving the following steps: (1) observing and listening the entire song lyrics available on the Spotify application; (2) identifying, annotating, and highlighting all deixis within the lyrics; (3) sorting the data; (4) organizing the identified data into a structured datasheet; (5) coding and labeling the data; (6) classifying the data based on Yule's (1966) deixis categorizations; as well as (7) calculating the frequency (-ies) and percentage(-s) of each deixis type by using descriptive statistics. The data were then analyzed descriptively, with a primary focus on the contextual usage of each deixis category.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Deixis plays an important role in shaping the delivery and interpretation of messages across various forms of discourse, including music and songs. As described by Lyons in Macrae (2019), deixis refers to the identification and location of persons, objects, events, processes, and activities being discussed or referenced in relation to the spatiotemporal context established and maintained by the act of utterance. This context typically involves a single speaker and at least one addressee.

In literary discourses, deixis is reflected as *am phantasma*, highlighting the implementation of deixis in the context of describing imagined scenes, where elements of them are rendered from the perspective of a deictic center, which may be remembered or imagined (Macrae, 2019, p. 46). Through meticulous investigations, the findings of this study revealed that, characterized by its evocative storytelling and poetic lyricism, Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album prominently employs personal, temporal, and spatial deixis, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Distributions of Deixis in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album

No.	Type of Deixis	Frequency(-ies)	Percentage(-s)
1.	Personal	810	69.83%
2.	Temporal	290	25.00%
3.	Spatial	60	5.17%
	Total	**1,160**	**100.00%**

Table 2 shows that, in the context of Folklore's lyrics, the predominance of personal deixis (69.83%) reflects the album's deeply introspective and narrative-driven nature. Taylor Swift frequently employs first-person and second-person in both personal and possessive pronouns in her song lyrics, as well as proper names, to craft intimate, emotional storytelling, drawing listeners into personal experiences, memories, and imagined perspectives. This strong focus on interpersonal references aligns with the album's themes of nostal-gia, love, heartbreak, and self-reflection, reinforcing the connection between the narrator (as well as singer) and the audience. By centering the lyrics around personal deixis, *Folklore* creates a confessional and immersive listening experience, making the emotions feel raw and also authentic.

The moderate presence of temporal deixis (25.00%) suggests that time plays a significant, yet not dominant, role in structuring the narratives within the album. Many songs, such as *The 1* and *August*, reflect on past events, regrets, and fleeting moments, using temporal markers to establish a sense of longing or progression. However, the minimal occurrence of spatial deixis (5.17%), consisting of distal and proximal terms, indicates that the lyrics are less concerned with physical settings and more focused on emotional landscapes. Although some songs (*e.g., The Last Great American Dynasty, Seven, Invisible String, Betty, and Hoax*) mention specific locations, these references function primarily as background details which

emphase that *Folklore* focuses more on personal emotions as well as shifts in time than on concrete spatial descriptions

Personal Deixis Embedded in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* Album

Personal deixis relates to the position of individuals in a speech event, primarily reflected through the system of pronouns and inflectional markers. In English, this includes personal pronouns and possessive pronouns, such *as he, she, her, my*, and *mine* (Abualadas, 2019). Levinson (1983, 2006), characterizes personal deixis using two primary features, consisting of speaker inclusion [S] and addressee inclusion [A]. According to this framework, the first-person encodes the participant role with speaker inclusion [+S], the second-person encodes the role with addressee inclusion [+A, –S], while the third-person encodes the exclusion of both speaker and addressee [–S, –A].

In terms of song lyrics, the extensive use of personal deixis reflects its vital role in creating closeness and emotional resonance between the songwriter (as the speaker/narrator) and the listener (as the recipient or addressee). Because pronouns serve as the fundamental elements of reference in language, pointing to the speaker (*e.g.*, 'I'), the listener (*e.g.*, 'you'), and other participants, personal deixis creates an immediate and intimate connection, making the lyrics feel relevant and also engaging. This linguistic feature enables songwriters to convey feelings, tell stories, and express relationships in a manner that is both direct and personal, thereby increasing the listener's emotional engagement and identification with the song's theme, as shown in the following excerpts.

(1) "But **I** knew you,
    Dancin' in your Levis.
    Drunk under a streetlight, **I**" (*Cardigan*, 2020: Chorus, lines 1-3)

(2) "**I** knew you
    Hand under my sweatshirt
    Baby, kiss it better, **I**" (*Cardigan*, 2020: Chorus, lines 4-6)

(3) "And when **I** felt like **I** was an old cardigan
    Under someone's bed
    You put me on and said **I** was your favorite" (*Cardigan*, 2020: Chorus, lines 7-8)

The use of the first-person pronoun 'I' in the lyrics of the song *Cardigan* (2020) serves as a first-person pronoun that emphasises the singer's point of view, which allows the narrative to become very personal and reflective. In excerpts 1 and 2, "*I knew you*" creates an intimate bond between speaker and addressee, reinforced by imagery like "*Dancin' in your Levis*" and "*Hand under my sweatshirt*." These lines highlight the speaker's role as an active participant in relational dynamics by emphasizing personal memories and emotional involvement. In excerpt 3, the speaker's use of "I" shifts to a reflective tone, expressing vulnerability through the metaphor of feeling like an old cardigan "*under someone's bed,*" symbolizing neglect, insignificance, or abandonment. Nevertheless, the narrative changed when the speaker

recounted his experience of being metaphorically '*imposed upon*' and appreciated, which conveyed a sense of renewal and recognition.

(4) "I can see you standing, honey
With his arms around **your** body
Laughin', but the joke's not funny at all" (*Exile*, 2020: Verse 1, lines 1-3)

(5) "I can see you starin', honey
Like he's just your understudy
Like you'd get **your** knuckles bloody for me" (*Exile*, 2020: Verse 2, lines 1-3)

(6) "I think I've seen this film before
And I didn't like the ending
I'm not **your** problem anymore" (*Exile*, 2020: Chorus, lines 1-3)

(7) "All this time
I never learned to read **your** mind (Never learned to read my mind)
I couldn't turn things around (You never turned things around)
'Cause you never gave a warning sign (I gave so many signs)" (*Exile*, 2020: Bridge, lines 8-10)

The personal pronoun 'your' in the lyrics of *Exile* (2020) functions as a possessive pronoun that creates a direct connection between the singer and the listener. In excerpt 4, '*your body*' emphasizes the physical and emotional involvement of the message recipient with other people, which reinforces the speaker's sense of alienation and discomfort. In excerpt 5, '*your understudy*' reflects the speaker's view of the addressee's new relationship as inauthentic when compared to their past relationship. In this case, the phrase "*your knuckles bloody*" reinforces this emotional depth, describing the recipient's actions as potentially passionate but misguided. In excerpt 6, "*your problem*" marks a turning point, where the speaker realizes the loss of his importance in the listener's life. Finally, "*your mind*" in the bridge (in excerpt 7) underscores the emotional miscommunication and disconnect between the speaker and the addressee, encapsulating the unresolved nature of their relationship.

(8) "But I knew **you'**d linger like a tattoo kiss
I knew **you'**d haunt all of my what-ifs
The smell of smoke would hang around this long" (**Cardigan**, 2020: Verse 3, lines 1-3)

(9) "'Cause I knew everything when I was young
I knew I'd curse **you** for the longest time" (*Cardigan*, 2020: Verse 3, lines 4-5)

(10) "Chasin' shadows in the grocery line
I knew **you'**d miss me once the thrill expired
And **you'**d be standin' in my front porch light" (*Cardigan*, 2020: Verse 3, lines 6-8)

(11) "And I knew **you'**d come back to me
You'd come back to me
And **you'**d come back to me
And **you'**d come back" (*Cardigan*, 2020: Verse 3, lines 9-12)

In Cardigan (2020), the personal deixis "you" serves as a direct address that conveys the speaker's emotions, memories, and expectations. It represents a significant figure from the past, evoking longing, regret, and the cyclical nature of the relationship. In lines like "*I knew*

you'd linger like a tattoo kiss" and "*I knew you'd haunt all of my what-ifs*" (excerpt 8), "you" is cast as an enduring presence tied to both intimacy and pain. The phrase "I knew I'd curse you for the longest time" (excerpt 9) underscores the mix of affection and bitterness, while "*you'd miss me once the thrill expired*" and "*you'd be standin' in my front porch light*" (excerpt 10) reveal the speaker's foresight of the addressee's eventual regret. The repetition of "*you'd come back to me*" (excerpt 11) further underscores the cyclical pull of their relations. Taken together, "you" becomes the focal point of reflection on love and also loss, embodying the intensity and lasting impact of the relationship.

(12) "And that's the thing about illicit affairs
      And clandestine meetings and stolen stares
      They show their truth one single time
      But **they** lie and **they** lie and **they** lie
      A million little times" (*Illicit Affairs*, 2020: Chorus, lines 1-5)

In *Illicit Affairs* (2020), the third-person pronoun 'they' refers to the people involved in secret relationships, highlighting their actions and the consequences of their lies. The phrase "*They show their truth one single time*" implies that the truth behind these relationships is only revealed briefly, while "||| *they lie and they lie and they lie | A million little times* |||" describes the repeated dishonesty and emotional manipulation inherent in such relationshipsThe use of the diexis 'they' highlights the speaker's external observation and also criticism of other people's actions, creating a distance between the speaker and the subject of the song. This distance enables the speaker to consider the destructive nature of the lies and cyclical, repetitive behaviour associated with these illegal gatherings.

(13) "**Betty,** I won't make assumptions
      About why you switched your homeroom, but
      I think it's 'cause of me" (*Betty*, 2020: Verse 1, lines 1-3)

(14) "You heard the rumors from **Inez**
      You can't believe a word she says
      Most times, but this time, it was true
      The worst thing that I ever did
      Was what I did to you" (*Betty*, 2020: Pre-Chorus, lines 1-5)

(15) "I was walking home on broken cobblestones
      Just thinking of you when she pulled up like
      A figment of my worst intentions
      She said, "**James,** get in, let's drive"
      Those days turned into nights
      Slept next to her, but
      I dreamt of you all summer long" (*Betty*, 2020: Bridge, lines 1-7)

The inclusion of the definite article, and thus definite referring expressions, within deixis carries logical implications for the corresponding inclusion of locative expressions (as will be discussed below in the context of spatial deixis) and for proper names. Stockwell (2019, p. 45) explains his inclusion of names from the cognitive lens that "*reference is [understood as]*

to a mental representation and is a socially located act and is therefore participatory and deictic". An alternative but related explanation for classifying proper names as deictics is to regard them as, or as an extension of, definite referential expressions.

The personal deixis manifested in names, such as "Betty," "Inez," and "James" in *Betty* (2020), function as personal deixis that directly identify the main characters, grounding the story in specific figures who embody the speaker's emotional turmoil and relational conflict. "Betty" is the addressee throughout the song, representing the speaker's love interest, and the use of her name in lines such as "*Betty, I won't make assumptions*" (as shown in excerpt 13) emphasizes the speaker's attempt to address her directly, acknowledging his feelings of guilt and responsibility for the situation. "Inez," on the other hand, is a third-party character who spreads rumors, and her name in "*You heard the rumors from Inez*" (in excerpt 14) reflects the influence of external voices on the dynamics of the relationships within the song. The use of "Inez" functions to introduce a narrative of gossip as well as misunderstanding that complicates the speaker's attempts at reconciliation. Lastly, "James" is the speaker himself, revealed in the line, "*She said, 'James, get in, let's drive,'*" (as in excerpt 15), marking a shift to the speaker's perspective on his actions as well as the events that led to the estrangement. Returning to the concept of deixis, it can be argued that personal and demonstrative pronouns are entirely and inherently deictic in function, while the definite article and definite referring expressions are occasionally and/or partially deictic. Proper names, in turn, are the most rarely and/or minimally deictic in function.

Temporal Deixis Embedded in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* Album

Temporal deixis actually includes tensed verbs, temporal adverbs like *now, today, yesterday, tomorrow, soon,* and *later,* as well as prepositions such as *beyond, with,* and *over* when used in combination with non-deictic terms, as in *after three weeks* (Levinson, 1983; Lyons, 1977; Stockwell, 2019). Temporal expressions like *in the morning* are included, often based on the deictic value of definite referring expressions. Demonstrative pronouns are employed in both this category and the spatial category, while prepositions prototypically used to denote spatial relations are often metaphorically extended to express temporal relations (*e.g., an hour behind*). The emergence of temporal deixis in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album can be seen as follows.

> (16) "I'm doing good, I'm on some new shit
>   Been saying "yes" instead of "no"
>   I thought I saw you at the bus stop, I didn't though
>   I hit the ground running each night
>   I hit the **Sunday** matinée
>   You know the greatest films of all time were never made"
>   (*The 1*, 2020: Verse 1, lines 1-6)

The phrase "*Sunday matinée*" in *The 1* (2020) refers to the cultural tradition of attending afternoon film screenings, usually on Sundays, or discounted matinée screenings at the

cinema (see https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/matinee). This reference evokes a sense of nostalgia and also tranquillity, as Sunday afternoon film screenings are often associated with a relaxed and reflective time to enjoy classic or popular films. In the song, "*Sunday matinée*" suggests the speaker is spending quiet time alone, using it as a moment of comfort or distraction from emotional pain. It underscores a pause for reflection on past experiences or relationships, contrasting the rush of "*hit the ground running each night*" with the calm, contemplative mood of a Sunday afternoon.

> (17) "But I can see us lost in the memory
>   **August** slipped away into a moment in time
>   'Cause it was never mine" (*August*, 2020: Chorus, lines 1-3)

In *August* (2020), the word "August" doesn't just mark a time of year; it carries the weight of memory and emotion. It evokes the end of summer, a season tied to fleeting moments and inevitable change. When the speaker sings, "*August slipped away into a moment in time*," it captures how quickly that period passed, leaving behind only a memory tinged with longing and loss.

Spatial Deixis Embedded in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* Album

Spatial deixis encompasses spatial adverbs such as *here* and *there*, *near* and *outside*, as well as demonstrative pronouns, which express differences related to experience in predictions, such as *this, that, these*, and *those*, and verbs of motion such as *come, go*, and *bring* (Brandt, 2016; Dubrow, 2015; Reuter et al., 2022; and Stockwell, 2019). Some scholars also consider locative expressions *in, on, under, over, beside, between, etc.*, like *in the valley*, which can be justified based on their function as definite referring expressions, although some others consider them to be non-deictic (cf. Fillmore, 1985). As explained by Herman (2001, 2002), spatial deictic expressions can interact with figure and ground relations, where the deictic centre functions as a background that serves as a reference for the orientation coordinate system (Fillmore, 1985; Giaxoglou, 2015; Langacker, 1999; and Talmy, 2000). Spatial deictic expressions can also interact with concepts such as regions, landmarks, paths (Landau & Jackendoff, 1993; Talmy, 2000), and with topological structures (Frawley, 2013).

In *Folklore*, social deixis plays an important role in building narrative worlds that are full of social dynamics. Swift uses linguistic elements to describe the social roles, relationships, and status of characters in the stories she creates, showing how social factors such as gender, age, and personal relationships can influence individual identities and experiences, as shown in the following excerpts.

> (18) "Stood **on the cliffside** screaming, "Give me a reason"
>   Your faithless love's the only hoax I believe in" (*Hoax*, 2020: Chorus, lines 1-2)

> (19) "Don't want no other shade of blue but you
>   No other sadness **in the world** would do" (*Hoax,* 2020: Chorus, lines 3-4)

In Hoax (2020), spatial deixis like "*on the cliffside*" and "in the world" paints vivid emotional landscapes that mirror the speaker's turmoil. "*On the cliffside*" conveys isolation as well as vulnerability, with the act of screaming reflecting a desperate plea for meaning, while "*in the world*" broadens the scale of sorrow, suggesting that no sadness compares to the pain tied to the addressee.

> (20)"And they said,
>   "There goes the last great American dynasty
>   Who knows, if she never showed up, what could've been
>   There goes the maddest woman **this town** has ever seen
>   She had a marvelous time ruining everything" (*The Last Great American Dynasty*, 2020: Chorus, lines 1-5)

The representation of spatial deixis "*this town*" in *The Last Great American Dynasty* (2020) functions as a reference to a specific, localized setting, enhancing the sense of community and the judgmental gaze of the collective. In excerpt 20, "*this town*" highlights the close-knit, perhaps insular nature of the place, where the actions of an individual, referred to as "*the maddest woman this town has ever seen*", are magnified and scrutinized by the local society. The use of "*this*" emphasizes the immediacy and proximity of the town, positioning it as a central focal point of both the narrative and the social judgment the subject faces.

The use of personal, temporal, and spatial deixis in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* plays a vital role in shaping the album's storytelling. Personal deixis, seen in the frequent use of pronouns and names, brings listeners closer to the narrative by creating a sense of intimacy as well as identification with the speaker's emotions and relationships. Temporal deixis places songs in specific moments, whether brief seconds or recurring cycles, which capture the fragility of memory and the resilience of emotional recollections. Meanwhile, spatial deixis places characters in physical or symbolic settings that reflect broader themes of longing, isolation, and social boundaries.

Taken together, these deictic elements do more than structure the lyrics; they construct layered narrative worlds in which listeners are drawn to experience shifting perspectives and also emotional landscapes. Through this interplay, *Folklore* revealed how deixis functions not simply as a linguistic tool but as a poetic strategy that deepens listeners' emotional engagement and expands the album's thematic reach. In this way, deixis becomes central to the album's storytelling, shaping how meaning is perceived and how intimacy between narrator and listener is achieved.

CONCLUSION

This study explores how deixis appears in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album and shows that it is inseparable from the construction of the lyrics. Personal deixis is revealed as the most prominent, reflecting the album's focus on intimacy and self-reflection. Through frequent use of first- and second-person pronouns, Swift builds closeness with listeners and invites them into stories of love, nostalgia, and memory. Temporal deixis reinforces the narrative

by placing events in brief moments as well as memories, while spatial deictics, although less frequently used, are employed to strengthen emotional descriptions and highlight specific settings when necessary.

These findings show that Swift's use of deixis in *Folklore* does more than convey words, it shapes the listener's emotional journey. By inserting personal, temporal, and also spatial references into her lyrics, she creates intimacy, evokes memories, and brings stories of love, longing as well as reflection to life. This demonstrates how linguistic choices in music can transform songs into immersive narrative experiences, drawing listeners into the emotions and worlds the singer creates.

However, this study is limited to *Folklore,* meaning the patterns of deixis identified may be closely tied to Swift's distinctive storytelling style and may not generalize to other singers or musical genres. Her unique approach to lyrics likely shapes how personal, temporal, and spatial references are used, which calls for caution in applying these findings more broadly. Future research could examine other albums, genres, or even languages to explore whether similar deictic strategies emerge, offering deeper insight into how lyrics across contexts use language to create intimacy, structure narratives, and engage listeners emotionally.

STATEMENTS OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author(s) herewith declare that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, and the editorial process, and the publication process in general.

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