

Deixis Found In *Your Place Or Mine* Movie Script

Ni Putu Vinna Ruhita Dewi¹, Ni Luh Ketut Mas Indrawati² Ni Ketut Widhiarchani
Matradewi³

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University, Bali, Indonesia

¹vinnaruhita@gmail.com

²mas.indrawati@yahoo.com

³ketut.widhiarchani@unud.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Deixis plays a crucial role in pragmatics by helping listeners interpret meaning through contextual cues within an utterance. Despite its importance in effective communication, many language users still struggle to identify and explain deictic expressions accurately. This study addresses that gap by categorizing deixis types and analyzing their referential functions in the movie script *Your Place or Mine*. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research employed the film transcript as its primary data. The process involved obtaining the script, repeatedly watching the movie, identifying deictic expressions, and marking them for analysis. The study applies Levinson's (1983) framework—covering personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis—alongside Birner's (2013) reference theory on anaphora and cataphora. The findings show that all five deixis types appear in the script, with personal deixis occurring most frequently. Overall, the results highlight how deixis enhances communicative clarity and demonstrate the value of reference theory in interpreting deictic expressions in film dialogue.

Keywords: Deixis, Reference, Anaphora, Cataphora

1. Introduction

Deixis is a central concept in pragmatics because it relies on contextual information to interpret meaning. Levinson (1983) provides a widely adopted taxonomy of deixis—personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social—each contributing to the listener's ability to interpret an utterance in context. Huang (2007) reinforce the importance of deixis as one of the key pragmatic features that govern how meaning is constructed in real-time interaction.

In addition to deixis, reference theory plays a crucial role in understanding how speakers link expressions to entities in discourse. Halliday and Hasan (1976) highlight the role of anaphora and cataphora as cohesive devices in discourse, while Birner (2013) and Cornish

(1999) emphasize how reference depends on both linguistic form and contextual inference. Ariel's (1990) Accessibility Theory further explains how speakers choose referring expressions based on the cognitive status of the referent. These theoretical contributions strengthen the analytical framework used in this study when examining how deictic expressions function referentially in film dialogue.

Several previous studies have examined deixis and conversational structures in various types of discourse. Cutting (2002) and Cummings (2005) show how deixis supports coherence in media discourse such as films and interviews. Ayeomoni (2004) investigates deixis in political speeches, demonstrating how speakers use personal and social deixis strategically to construct authority and alignment. Similarly, Nababan et al. (2012) confirm that deixis and reference significantly influence clarity and cohesion in translated and multimedia texts. These studies collectively demonstrate that deixis is not merely a linguistic form but a pragmatic tool that shapes interaction, identity, and audience interpretation.

Despite extensive theoretical discussions, the application of deixis analysis to contemporary film scripts—especially romantic-comedy genres such as *Your Place or Mine*—remains limited. Films provide rich and naturalistic linguistic data because characters often engage in spontaneous, context-dependent dialogue (Cutting, 2002). However, few studies have systematically examined the full range of deixis types within such scripts or explored how reference mechanisms operate in cinematic dialogue. This gap highlights the need for more empirical research that bridges theory with real-world language use.

Levinson (1983) describes deixis as the act of pointing through language, using deictic expressions. He categorizes deixis into five types: personal deixis (e.g., I, you), place deixis (e.g., here, there), time deixis (e.g., now, then), social deixis (e.g., Your Excellency, Mr. President), and discourse deixis (e.g., this, that). Each type helps situate an utterance within a specific communicative context, making deixis indispensable for language comprehension.

Language can be acquired through various mediums, including music, literature, and films. Effendy (1986) highlights films as a cultural product that combines artistic expression with technological advancements, serving as a medium for communication. Movies, as a visual representation of storytelling, incorporate moving images that convey meaning and messages in a dynamic format, allowing audiences to engage deeply with the narrative.

This study examines deixis in film dialogue, focusing specifically on deictic expressions in *Your Place or Mine*, written and directed by Aline Brosh McKenna and released on February 10, 2023. Drawing on the frameworks of Levinson (1983) and Birner (2013), the research explores the types and functions of deixis found in the movie's script. The film was selected because its clear and accessible language provides suitable data for identifying and analyzing deictic elements. Despite the central role of deixis in interpreting meaning, many language users still struggle to recognize and understand these expressions, often leading to

miscommunication. A deeper understanding of deixis contributes to more accurate comprehension of spoken and written discourse, particularly in interpreting speaker intentions and contextual references. This study therefore highlights the importance of deixis analysis as a tool for enhancing pragmatic awareness and improving communication effectiveness.

2. Methods

This research employed a descriptive qualitative methodology to examine the various types of deixis and their referential functions within the movie script *Your Place or Mine*. The qualitative approach was selected as the study focuses on linguistic elements such as words, phrases, and sentences rather than numerical data. The primary objective of this method is to systematically describe and interpret the use of deixis as naturally expressed by the characters in the film.

The data for this study were sourced from the movie *Your Place or Mine*, written and directed by Aline Brosh McKenna and released on February 10, 2023. The movie script, obtained from an official subtitle transcript available online, served as the primary material for analysis. This film was specifically chosen for its conversational and authentic dialogue, which provides a rich linguistic environment for the investigation of deictic expressions.

The data were collected using the documentation method, supported by a note-taking technique. This process involved obtaining the movie script, repeatedly viewing the film, and carefully identifying all utterances containing deictic expressions. Each instance of deixis was recorded and categorized according to its corresponding type.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: (1) classifying the deictic expressions using Levinson's (1983) framework, which includes personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis; (2) analyzing their referential functions using Birner's (2013) theory of anaphora; and (3) drawing conclusions by explaining the deixis types found and their references within each utterance.

The results were presented using an informal descriptive method, providing detailed and structured explanations supported by illustrative examples taken directly from the script. Each example was examined in relation to its deixis type and referential function. For clarity, the data were also organized into a table, with key deictic expressions highlighted in bold.

3. Findings and Discussion

1. Person Deixis and Reference

Personal deixis is categorized into three types: first-person, second-person, and third-person deixis. In this study, the analysis is organized based on these categories, with each type examined separately to illustrate how the film's characters use personal references to construct meaning within the interaction.

First Person Deixis

Table 1. Data First Person Deixis

Number of Data	First Person Deixis	Time
1	Petter: Please do not bring soil into my apartment. I'm begging you	00:03:08 – 00:03:12

Data 1

In the sentence “*Please do not bring soil into my apartment. I’m begging you,*” two deictic elements appear: **my** and **I’m**. The pronoun **my** functions as a first-person possessive marker indicating that the *apartment* belongs to the speaker, Peter. Likewise, **I’m**, a contraction of *I am*, is a first-person singular pronoun that directly refers to Peter as the speaker.

Both **my** and **I’m** also serve as anaphoric references, linking back to Peter, who has already been established in the discourse. These pronouns strengthen the connection between his identity and his statements, highlighting his ownership of the apartment and emphasizing the urgency of his plea.

1.1 Second Person Deixis

Table 2. Data Second Person Deixis

Number of Data	Second Person Deixis	Time
2.	Alicia: Well, I just hope that when you're in New York, you will take time to do something nice for yourself . Maybe take a bath. Relax.	00:11:05 – 00:11:08

Data 2

The sentence “*Well, I just hope that when you're in New York, you will take time to do something nice for yourself. Maybe take a bath. Relax.*”, there are three deixis expressions found namely **you**, **your**, and **yourself**. In this context, Alicia is directly addressing Debbie, expressing care and offering a gentle reminder for her to take care of herself during her time in New York.

The pronoun **you** refer to the listener, Debbie, and is used to emphasize her involvement in the action being suggested. The word **your** is used in the contracted form “you’re” (you are), and also appears as part of the reflexive pronoun yourself, which

reflects back to the subject you. The use of **yourself** emphasizes that the action doing something nice is meant personally for Debbie’s own benefit and well-being.

In this case, **you**, **your**, and **yourself** are also examples of anaphora, as they refer back to the same individual mentioned earlier (Debbie), the person being spoken to. The repetition of these forms creates a cohesive and direct tone in the conversation, highlighting the speaker’s intention to remind Debbie to prioritize her own needs.

1.2 Third Person Deixis

Table 3. Data Third Person Deixis

Number of Data	Third Person Deixis	Time
3.	Debbie: He's my baby. I've never left him for that long.	00:03:57 – 00:03:59

Data 3

Based on the sentence above, the words **he** and **him** are both examples of person deixis. They refer to Debbie's son, who is being discussed in the conversation. The word **he** is a personal pronoun used to refer to someone who is not the speaker or the listener, but a third party. It is classified as third person singular, indicating that the person being talked about is male and singular. Similarly, the word **him** is also a third person singular pronoun, but in the objective form, used when the individual is the object of the verb, in this case the person whom Debbie has never left.

Both **he** and **him** can be categorized as anaphoric references. The words **he** and **him** both refer back to Debbie's son, who has already been introduced in the context of the sentence. This usage links the different parts of the sentence together and reinforces the identity of the person she is discussing.

2. Place Deixis and Reference

Table 4. Data Place Deixis

Number of Data	Place Deixis	Time
4.	Petter: Had I known what was going on in this house , I would have come a lot sooner.	00:03:31– 00:03:34

Data 4

Within the data, the utterance was said by Petter, who was reflecting on his lack of knowledge about the situation Debbie’s house. The phrase **"in this house"** serves as a spatial deixis, indicating a specific physical location where the events are taking place. It locates the situation within the context of the house, which is crucial in understanding Petter’s reaction. By using **"in this house,"** Petter draws attention to the space where the activities and events are happening, thus creating a spatial reference that informs his statement.

"In this house" is an example of anaphora, where the phrase refers to a concept that has been implicitly established earlier in the conversation. The events or circumstances in the house, which involve the remotes and rules about TV watching, have already been discussed, and **"in this house"** draws from that shared knowledge to express Petter’s response. It serves as a reference to the previously implied or mentioned situation, solidifying the connection between the speaker’s experience and the setting. Thus, **"in this house"** functions as anaphora by referring to the context of the house that both the speaker (Petter) and the listener (Jack) are already aware of, adding cohesion and clarity to the narrative.

3. Temporal Deixis and Reference.

Table 5. Data Temporal Deixis

Number of Data	Temporal Deixis	Time
5	Petter: Yeah, I screwed something up yesterday , and, uh, didn't sleep last night , but then I did a good thing today , i think.	01:01:38– 01:01:43

Data 5

There are contains several deictic expressions in the sentence presented, which are displayed with the words **yesterday**, **last night**, **then**, and **today**. All of these expressions can be classified as temporal deixis, as they refer to specific points in time relative to the moment of the utterance. The word **yesterday** refers to the day before the current day, anchoring the listener to a past event where the **Petter** "screwed something up." **Last night** refers to the previous night, emphasizing the Petter’s lack of sleep. The word **then** is used to indicate the next action or event in the sequence, functioning as a marker of progression in time. Meanwhile, **today** refers to the day of the utterance, marking when the speaker believes they "did a good thing."

Furthermore, **yesterday**, **last night**, **then**, and **today** can all be categorized as examples of anaphora. Each temporal expression refers back to or continues the Petter’s narrative timeline, contributing to the chronological coherence of the dialogue. These deixis and anaphoric references help the listener clearly understand the order and timing of the events being described by the speaker.

4. Discourse Deixis and Reference

Table 6. Data Discourse Deixis

Number of Data	Temporal Deixis	Time
6.	Debbie: But I didn't do any of those things expecting something in return.	00:19:34– 00:19:38

Data 6

In the table above, contains one deictic expression. The word **"those"** in the sentence can be categorized as discourse deixis. This sentence was uttered by Debbie when responding to Petter's story about everything Debbie had done for him. The word **"those"** refers to the specific actions Petter explained earlier, namely driving from Los Angeles to Ohio to attend the funeral and picking her up from rehab twice.

"Those" in this context is an example of anaphora. In the given dialogue, **"those"** refers back to the antecedent actions that Debbie has just listed. Therefore, **"those"** serves as an anaphoric expression because it points back to elements introduced immediately before in the same conversational context.

5. Social Deixis and Reference

Table 7. Data Social Deixis

Number of Data	Temporal Deixis	Time
7.	Debbie: I feel terrible. I'm about to tell a guy, who’s the most famous literary editor in all of American that I gave him a manuscript that he might want to publish, but he possibly cannot	01:05:54– 01:06:05

Data 7

The use of "**the most famous literary editor in all of America**" in the dialogue above is an example of social deixis. In this case, Debbie uses the phrase to refer to a person with a high-ranking social and professional status. This is an instance of referential social deixis, as it points to an individual whose social identity is marked by fame and a specific occupational role namely, a prominent literary editor. The phrase reflects Debbie's awareness of the editor's public and professional standing, emphasizing his importance within a shared cultural context.

When Debbie says "**the most famous literary editor in all of America**", the phrase functions as an anaphoric reference. It refers back to "a guy" mentioned earlier in the sentence, elaborating on who that guy is and providing more specific social and professional information about him. Therefore, the phrase "the most famous literary editor in all of America" serves to clarify the identity of "a guy", making it an anaphoric expression that enhances the listener's understanding of the person Debbie is about to address.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and analysis presented above, several key points can be highlighted. First, this study confirms the presence of all five types of deixis—personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social—as outlined by Levinson (1983) in the *Your Place or Mine* movie script. Among these categories, personal deixis appears most frequently, functioning primarily to define participant roles and shape interpersonal interactions through the use of pronouns. Spatial and temporal deixis assist in anchoring references to location and time, discourse deixis contributes to textual cohesion, and social deixis, although less common, signals social roles, status, and relational dynamics among characters.

In addition, the application of Birner's (2013) theoretical framework in analyzing referential functions reveals that most deictic expressions operate anaphorically, thereby reinforcing coherence within the discourse. Some expressions—particularly within spatial and temporal deixis—function cataphorically, pointing forward to information introduced later in the dialogue. Together, these mechanisms play a crucial role in organizing interaction, guiding interpretation, and ensuring clarity within the cinematic narrative.

Despite its contributions, this study recognizes several limitations, particularly regarding the restricted scope of analyzing deixis within a single movie script. Future research could expand this focus by examining deixis across various film genres, cultural backgrounds, or linguistic contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of its pragmatic functions in cinematic discourse. Broader comparative studies may also reveal how deixis operates differently depending on narrative style, character dynamics, or sociolinguistic factors. This

research offers valuable insights into the role of deixis and reference mechanisms in shaping meaning within film dialogue. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions in linguistics, discourse analysis, and scriptwriting, supporting deeper awareness of how contextual cues guide interpretation and enhance communicative clarity.

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