



Constructing Meaning through Deictic Expressions in EFL Student's Poetry: A Pragmatic Analysis

Egi Raputri^{1*} , Eggi Pratama² , Aulia Andhini³ , Rahma Widi⁴ ,
Annisa Tasyakurna⁵ , Hafni Hafsah⁶ , Ade Dwi Cahyanti⁷

¹⁻⁶ Institut Az Zuhra, Kota Pekanbaru, Riau 28292, Indonesia

⁷ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Sumbawa, West Nusa Tenggara 84381, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 11 April 2026	This research investigated the use of deictic expressions in students' poems. It also explored the interpretation of deictic expressions and identified the most dominant types used in the poems. Deixis plays an important role in language use because the interpretation of deictic expressions depends on contextual information. This research occupied a descriptive qualitative approach. The data were obtained from twelve poems written by students and analyzed using Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis, which classifies deixis into five categories: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. The data analysis involved identifying deictic expressions, classifying them into their respective categories, interpreting their contextual meanings, and calculating the frequency of occurrence of each type. The findings revealed that all five types of deixis were identified in the students' poems, with a total of 214 deictic expressions found in the data. Person deixis was identified as the most dominant type with 145 occurrences (67.76%), followed by place deixis with 27 occurrences (12.62%), while time deixis and discourse deixis each occurred 20 times (9.35%). Social deixis was identified as the least frequent type with only 2 occurrences (0.93%). The findings indicate that students tended to use poetry as a medium for expressing personal emotions, experiences, and perspectives. Furthermore, this study highlights that deictic expressions play a significant role in constructing contextual meaning and assisting readers in interpreting poetic texts effectively. This research contributes to pragmatic studies in EFL contexts by demonstrating how learners employ deictic resources to develop meaning, establish relationships between textual elements, and enhance their pragmatic competence in creative writing.
Accepted: 20 June 2026	
Published: 06 August 2026	
Keywords: Deixis, Pragmatic Analysis, Deictic Expressions, EFL Students, Poetry	

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s)

Published by CV Wahana Publikasi.

This article is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

1. Introduction

Language serves as the primary tool for conveying ideas and messages in communication. Understanding language involves interpreting meaning, which is closely related to context. Therefore, Pragmatics examines meaning in relation to context, with deixis as one of its main areas of study. Deixis refers to the act of pointing through language (Yule, 1996) and helps participants identify who is being referred to, where an event takes place, and when an utterance occurs.

In everyday communication, deictic expressions are used naturally in both spoken and written language, often without speakers realizing it. Their meanings depend on contextual factors such as the speaker, time, and place of the utterance. Consequently, studying deixis is essential for understanding how meaning is constructed and interpreted, as well as for helping language learners use deictic expressions appropriately.

Furthermore, deixis is realized through several categories. Levinson (1983) identifies five types: person, place, time, social, and discourse deixis. Person deixis refers to participants in communication (e.g., *she, we, they*), place deixis indicates spatial location (e.g., *in the room, in the mall*), and time deixis expresses temporal references (e.g., *yesterday, now, two months ago*). Meanwhile, social deixis reflects social relationships and status (e.g., *Mr., Prof., Ma'am*), whereas discourse deixis points to parts of a discourse or text (e.g., *these, those, that*). Together, these categories demonstrate the important role of context in shaping and interpreting meaning in communication.

Considering the essential role of deixis in communication, numerous studies have examined its use across various forms of discourse. Using Levinson's (1983) theory, Indriastuti et al. (2023) found that all types of deixis appeared in senior high school students' descriptive texts, with spatial deixis being the most dominant. Likewise, Vrika et al. (2022) demonstrated that understanding deictic expressions is essential for interpreting meaning in written discourse, while Widiari et al. (2022) showed that person, place, time, social, and discourse deixis each perform distinct communicative functions in movie dialogues. Similarly, Raputri (2021) identified all five types of deixis in narrative texts and concluded that each serves different functions in written and spoken communication. In addition, Putri et al. (2026) reported that all types of deixis were used in selected songs from *Being Funny in a Foreign Language*, with person deixis occurring most frequently, highlighting the importance of deixis in enriching contextual meaning. Furthermore, Hartanti (2022) identified all five types of deixis in Nizar Qabbani's poem *Asyhadu An La Imra'ata Illa Anti*, although the analysis primarily focused on the frequency of deictic expressions. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that deixis plays a fundamental role in constructing contextual meaning across various forms of discourse, including descriptive texts, written discourse, movie dialogues, narrative texts, song lyrics, and poetry. The findings also reflect the continuing development of linguistic research, in which the study of deixis constitutes one important area within the broader fields of pragmatics, semantics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis.

Previous studies have substantially advanced linguistic scholarship across these domains. Pragmatic research has predominantly examined conversational implicatures (Sofyan et al., 2022), illocutionary speech acts (Sofyan et al., 2022), politeness strategies in educational and religious settings (Haryono et al., 2023; Muta'allim, 2025), and the pragmatic functions of lexical categories in regional dialects (Muta'allim et al., 2020; Muta'allim et al., 2021). Meanwhile, semantic and stylistic studies have explored figurative language in media discourse (Muhammadiyah et al., 2023), associative meaning in commercial naming practices (Ago et al., 2024), hyperbolic expressions in social media advertising (Zainal et al., 2024), and

gender representation in literary and sociocultural contexts (Daulay et al., 2024; Tiwery et al., 2024). Sociolinguistic investigations have likewise examined code-mixing (Yudistira & Muta'allim, 2023), linguistic landscapes in Islamic boarding schools (Sofyan et al., 2022), language and religious moderation (Muta'allim et al., 2022), and the role of language in fostering social harmony (Yudistira et al., 2022). These studies collectively indicate the expanding scope of linguistic inquiry and highlight the importance of contextual meaning as a central concern across linguistic disciplines.

Despite these contributions, previous studies have primarily conceptualized language as a medium of social interaction, public discourse, or cultural representation, with limited attention to the pragmatic mechanisms underlying meaning construction in literary texts written by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. EFL writing research has likewise focused mainly on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, rhetorical organization, and writing proficiency, while the pragmatic aspects of students' creative writing remain underexplored. Yet, poetry relies heavily on contextual interpretation, in which meaning is shaped through linguistic forms and deictic expressions, including person, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis.

Accordingly, little empirical research has examined how these deictic resources function in EFL students' poetry to construct meaning and reflect learners' pragmatic competence. To address this gap, the present study investigates the use of deictic expressions in students' poems by integrating deixis theory with literary discourse analysis. The study contributes theoretically by proposing a systematic framework for interpreting contextual meaning through deictic categories and pedagogically by demonstrating how pragmatic competence can be fostered through creative writing in EFL education. Specifically, this study aims to identify the types and frequency of deictic expressions in students' poetry and to interpret their meanings and contributions to contextual meaning construction. Based on these objectives, the research questions were formulated to guide the data collection, analysis, and discussion presented in this study.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design complemented by quantitative frequency analysis to examine the use of deictic expressions in EFL students' poetry. A qualitative approach was adopted because the primary objective was to identify, classify, and interpret deictic expressions within their contextual and literary environments, thereby revealing how these linguistic elements contribute to the construction of meaning. To enrich the qualitative findings, frequency analysis was incorporated to quantify the occurrence of each deictic category and identify dominant patterns across the corpus. This mixed analytical strategy enabled a more comprehensive understanding of both the distribution and pragmatic functions of deixis in students' literary production. The corpus consisted of twelve poems purposively selected from the anthology *Voices of 23C1 Class*, collaboratively written by 23 second-semester undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program. The participants were taking an Introduction to Literature course, in which poetry writing constituted a major creative writing assignment intended to foster literary appreciation, creative expression, and interpretative competence. Based on classroom assessment and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the students' English proficiency ranged from A2 to B1, representing elementary to intermediate EFL learners. Although the anthology contained poems written by all participants, only twelve poems were selected through purposive sampling because they met three predetermined criteria: (1) they

were original works produced independently by the students; (2) they contained diverse instances of person, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis that were suitable for pragmatic analysis; and (3) they exhibited sufficient thematic and contextual richness to support an in-depth interpretation of meaning construction. Accordingly, the selected corpus was considered sufficiently representative to address the objectives of the present study.

Data were collected using a documentation technique, which is widely employed in qualitative linguistic research to examine naturally occurring written texts. The researcher first obtained the students' poems from the course assignments with permission from the course instructor and the student authors. Each poem was subsequently digitized and organized into a research corpus. To ensure familiarity with the textual context, the poems were read repeatedly and holistically before the identification process began. Repeated reading enabled the researcher to recognize contextual references, determine the referential relationships of deictic expressions, and minimize potential misinterpretation arising from isolated linguistic forms.

The data were analyzed using Levinson's (1983) theory of deixis, which classifies deictic expressions into person, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis. The analysis was conducted through four systematic stages. First, all linguistic units functioning as deictic expressions were identified within each poem. Second, each expression was classified according to Levinson's five deictic categories. Third, the frequency of each category was calculated to determine its distribution and relative dominance within the corpus. Finally, each deictic expression was interpreted pragmatically by considering its linguistic co-text, thematic context, and referential function in constructing meaning. Rather than treating deixis merely as a grammatical marker, the analysis emphasized its role as a contextual mechanism through which poets establish perspective, negotiate interpersonal relationships, organize discourse, and create temporal and spatial orientation within literary texts.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were implemented. The coding process was conducted systematically using a predefined analytical framework derived from Levinson's taxonomy, ensuring consistency throughout the identification and classification stages. Following the initial coding, the researcher revisited the entire corpus to verify the accuracy of categorization and contextual interpretation. Ambiguous cases were re-examined by considering the surrounding linguistic context and the overall thematic structure of each poem, thereby reducing subjective bias and strengthening interpretative validity. Furthermore, representative excerpts from the poems were retained during the analysis to provide textual evidence supporting each interpretation, allowing readers to evaluate the analytical reasoning transparently. The integration of qualitative pragmatic interpretation with quantitative frequency analysis enabled this study to reveal not only the distributional patterns of deictic expressions but also the ways in which EFL learners employ deixis as a linguistic resource for constructing meaning in poetry. Consequently, the methodological framework provides a systematic and reliable basis for investigating the relationship between deictic reference, contextual interpretation, and pragmatic competence in EFL literary writing.

3. Research Result

This study was designed to identify the types of deixis employed in students' poetry and to determine the dominant deictic category based on Levinson's (1983) classification of deixis. The analysis was conducted on twelve poems written by undergraduate students enrolled in the Introduction to Literature course. The findings demonstrate that all five categories of deixis proposed by Levinson—person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis—were

represented in the corpus, although their frequencies varied considerably. The frequency distribution of each type of deixis identified in the students' poems is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of Deixis Types in Students' Poetry

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentage
Person Deixis	145	67,76%
Place Deixis	27	12,6%
Time Deixis	20	9,35%
Discourse Deixis	20	9,35%
Social Deixis	2	0,93%
Total	214	100%

As shown in Table 1, a total of 214 deictic expressions were identified across the twelve poems. Person deixis emerged as the predominant category, accounting for 145 occurrences (67.76%), indicating that students primarily constructed meaning through references to participants and personal perspectives. Place deixis ranked second with 27 occurrences (12.62%), suggesting a relatively limited use of spatial orientation in the poems. Time deixis and discourse deixis each occurred 20 times (9.35%), reflecting a balanced use of temporal references and textual cohesion in organizing poetic discourse. In contrast, social deixis appeared only twice (0.93%), making it the least frequent category. This distribution suggests that students relied predominantly on interpersonal reference rather than social status or hierarchical relationships when expressing ideas and emotions in their poems, highlighting the central role of person deixis in constructing meaning within EFL literary writing.

a. Person Deixis

Person deixis can be defined as deictic expression represented to participants involved in the speech event, such as speaker, listener, and other individuals being referred to. In this research, the person deixis appeared 145 times (67,76%). It is the most deixis used in the students' poetry. Person deixis divided into three types as follows:

1) First Person Deixis

First person deixis refers to the writer or speaker who produces the utterances or statement. It includes member of pronoun for instance I, me, my, mine, etc. Based on the investigation, first person deixis is the most deictic expression occurred because the students tended to express experience, personal feeling, personal emotions, and thoughts through their creating. The representative first person deixis found in the stanzas of the poems as follows:

"I used to hide from it,... (Poem 1)

*"But, the future reminds **me**.. (Poem 3)*

*"May **we** all learn from these altruists,...(Poem 6)*

Excerpt 1

"I used to hide from it, ... " (Poem 1)

This excerpt contains person deixis (I) and discourse/anaphoric deixis (it). The first-person pronoun I refers to the poetic speaker, namely the student who positions himself or herself as the narrator of the poem. The pronoun establishes a personal perspective through which readers experience the emotional narrative. Meanwhile, the pronoun it functions as an anaphoric deictic expression referring to the problem, fear, or emotional burden introduced in the preceding lines of the poem. Rather than explicitly repeating the referent, the poet employs it to maintain textual cohesion while encouraging readers to interpret the referential meaning from the surrounding context. Together, these deictic expressions create an intimate narrative voice and strengthen the poem's emotional coherence.

Excerpt 2

"But, the future reminds me..." (Poem 3)

This expression illustrates time deixis through the noun phrase the future. The referent of the future is not a specific chronological date but a projected period beyond the speaker's present moment. Pragmatically, the expression functions as a temporal anchor that shifts the reader's attention from the speaker's current condition toward anticipated experiences, aspirations, or uncertainties. The first-person pronoun me simultaneously functions as person deixis, referring to the poetic speaker. The interaction between temporal and personal deixis constructs a reflective perspective in which the speaker evaluates the present by imagining what lies ahead, thereby enriching the poem's interpretative meaning.

Excerpt 3

"May we all learn from these altruists, ..." (Poem 6)

This excerpt contains person deixis (we) and discourse deixis (these). The inclusive pronoun we refers to both the poetic speaker and the intended audience, inviting readers to share a common moral reflection rather than positioning them as external observers. The demonstrative adjective these refers to the altruists mentioned in the same clause and emphasizes their immediate relevance within the discourse. Its referent is the group of individuals portrayed in the poem as role models whose selfless actions deserve appreciation and emulation. Through the combination of inclusive person deixis and demonstrative discourse deixis, the poet establishes solidarity with readers while directing attention toward exemplary figures that reinforce the poem's ethical message.

2) Second Person Deixis

Second person deixis means the person being addressed or addressee in an utterance. The pronoun categorized into the second person deixis such as you, your, and yours. The second person deixis also appeared in students' poems. It was applied to show someone who became the target of emotions or important thing delivered by the writer or speaker. The representative second person deixis found in stanzas of the poems as follows:

"You and I, between silence and the sky..(Poem 8)

*"Doesn't mean he is **your** destiny...(Poem 9)*

*"I wish I live in the front lines of **your** thoughts...(Poem 11)*

Based on the stanzas above, the word *you* indicates to another person being addressed or the listener in the poem. Meanwhile, the word *your* refers to a possessive adjective showing ownership. The meaning of *your* depends on the context because its reference may change based on who is being addressed in the students' poem.

3) Third Person Deixis

Third person deixis means entities or individuals other than listener or speaker. The pronoun categorized into third person deixis such as *she*, *he*, *her*, etc. Third person deixis was employed when students illustrated other people to external participants in their poems. The representative third person deixis found in the stanzas of the poems as follows:

*"Just because **he** held the door open...(Poem 9)*

*"Doesn't mean you were meant to fall for **him**" (Poem 9)*

*"I always find a pause in the memories of **them**" (Poem 10)*

According to stanzas above, the word *he* shows another person outside the direct interaction between the speaker and listener. The use of third person deixis consents students to present additional participants and enlarge the narrative elements in their poems.

In short, the appearance of first person deixis was more frequent than second person and third person deixis in the students' poems. This finding shows that students tended to position themselves as the central participants in their poem. The frequent use of first person pronouns suggests that students preferred to show their own feelings, thoughts, and experiences through poetry. Therefore, it can be inferred that the students more focused on delivering their individual emotions and personal experiences rather than highlighting interactions with others.

b. Place Deixis

Place deixis refers to deictic expressions that show positions or spatial locations in relation to the speaker. According to Levinson (1983), place deixis functions to identify locations whose meanings depend on the context of the utterance. Common examples of place deixis include words such as *here*, *there*, *near*, etc. In this research, place deixis appeared 27 times (12.62%), creating it the second most frequent type of deixis found in the students' poems. The findings suggest that students used place deixis to establish settings, create imagery, and help readers visualize the situations and environments represented in their poems. The representative place deixis found in stanzas of the poems as follows:

*"**here** dwell the guardians of the heart..(Poem 5)*

This excerpt exemplifies place deixis through the adverb *here*. Pragmatically, the deictic expression *here* refers to the symbolic place portrayed in the poem as the dwelling of "the guardians of the heart." Rather than indicating a precise geographical location, its referent is the immediate conceptual or emotional space constructed within the poetic discourse, which may represent a home, a community, a sacred environment, or an inner psychological realm where values such as love, compassion, and protection are nurtured. The interpretation of *here* is therefore dependent on the surrounding textual context rather than on an objectively identifiable physical setting. By employing this proximal deictic expression, the poet positions readers within the same imagined space as the speaker, creating a sense of immediacy and

shared experience. Consequently, here functions not only as a spatial reference but also as a pragmatic device that anchors the poem's emotional setting and reinforces the symbolic meaning of the "guardians of the heart."

"for the love that grows in our little house" (Poem 10)

The phrase *our little house* is categorized as place deixis because it refers to a particular location associated with the speaker and its meaning depends on the context of the poem. The expression indicates a place where emotions and experiences are connected to a specific setting. In this line, *our little house* may not only represent a physical location but can also symbolize warmth, togetherness, and emotional attachment. The use of this place reference helps readers imagine the setting and understand the emotional meaning conveyed in the poem. Therefore, place deixis in this expression contributes to creating imagery and strengthening the contextual and emotional aspects of the poem.

"behind two tiny lense..." (Poem 12)

The word *behind* is categorized as place deixis because it indicates a spatial position relative to a particular object or point of reference. The meaning of *behind* depends on the context since readers need additional information to determine what specific location is being referred to in the poem. In this expression, *behind* suggests a position that is not directly visible and may symbolically represent hidden thoughts, emotions, or perspectives. The use of this spatial reference helps readers visualize the scene and interpret the deeper meaning delivered by the writer. Therefore, place deixis in this line contributes to creating imagery and strengthening the contextual understanding of the poem. Briefly, the findings indicate that place deixis played an essential role in the students' poems by providing spatial references and contextual information. The use of place deixis related to expressions helped readers identify locations and visualize the situations described in the poems. Furthermore, place deixis contributed to the creation of imagery and supported the emotional atmosphere delivered by the writers. The presence of place deixis also demonstrates that students attempted to connect their ideas and feelings with particular settings. Therefore, place deixis functioned not only as a linguistic element but also as an important device in constructing meaning.

c. Time Deixis

Time deixis discusses to deictic expressions that identify temporal references whose meanings depend on the time of utterance. According to Levinson (1983), time deixis purposes to identify points or periods of time relative to the moment when an utterance is produced. Common examples of time deixis include words such as *now*, *today*, *tomorrow*, *yesterday*, etc. In this research, time deixis appeared 20 times (9.35%) in the students' poems. The findings show that students used temporal expressions to create chronological contexts and indicate when certain events, feelings, or experiences occurred within their poems.

Time deixis played an important role in facilitating readers understand the temporal background of the situations described by the students. Through the use of time references, readers could find whether events occurred in the past, present, or future. Additionally, temporal expressions contributed to the organization of ideas and allowed emotional

experiences to be presented within specific time frames. The representative time deixis found in stanzas of the poems as follows:

"And now, with a softer heart and a little courage..." (Poem 1)

This excerpt illustrates time deixis through the adverb *now*. Pragmatically, *now* refers to the speaker's present state at the moment of reflection, contrasting with an earlier period described in the preceding lines of the poem. Its referent is not merely the chronological present but the speaker's current emotional and psychological condition following a process of personal growth. The temporal deictic expression establishes a transition from the past, when the speaker experienced fear or vulnerability, to the present, where the speaker has developed greater emotional resilience, symbolized by "a softer heart and a little courage." By anchoring the narrative in the present moment, *now* functions as a contextual marker that highlights transformation and invites readers to interpret the poem as a journey of self-development. Consequently, the temporal deixis not only situates events within a specific timeframe but also reinforces the poem's central theme of emotional healing, hope, and personal renewal.

"I study in the morning and afternoon" (Poem 3)

The phrases *in the morning* and *afternoon* are categorized as time deixis because they indicate temporal references related to specific periods of time. Their meanings depend on the context in which the utterance occurs because they refer to particular times within a day. In this case, these expressions provide information about when the activity takes place. The use of time deixis helps readers understand the sequence and timing of the events being described. Henceforth, time deixis contributes to constructing temporal context and making the message clearer for readers.

"In the quiet that wraps the night" (Poem 8)

The word *night* is classified as time deixis because it refers to a particular period of time whose interpretation depends on the temporal context of the poem. The expression indicates when the situation or event described by the speaker takes place. In this line, *night* not only functions as a temporal marker but also contributes to creating an emotional and atmospheric setting within the poem. Therefore, time deixis in this line plays an important role in establishing context and strengthening the imagery conveyed in the poem.

In inference, the findings designate that time deixis played an important role in the students' poems by providing temporal references and contextual information. The use of time-related expressions helped readers understand when particular events, emotions, and experiences occurred within the poems. Furthermore, time deixis contributed to organizing ideas and establishing the sequence of situations described by the writers. The presence of temporal expressions also supported the creation of emotional atmosphere by connecting feelings with specific moments in time.

d. Social Deixis

Social deixis refers to deictic expressions that indicate social relationships, social status, or levels of formality among participants in an utterance. According to Levinson (1983), social

deixis functions to reflect the social identity and relationship between speakers and listeners within a particular context. Common examples of social deixis include terms of address and expressions indicating respect or social hierarchy such as *Sir*, *Professor*, *Mother*, and other honorific expressions. In this study, social deixis appeared only 2 times (0.93%), making it the least frequent type of deixis identified in the students' poems.

The low occurrence of social deixis suggests that students focused more on expressing personal emotions and experiences rather than emphasizing social relationships or status distinctions. The limited use of social deixis also indicates that hierarchical relationships and formal expressions were not dominant features in the poems analyzed in this study. Therefore, social deixis played a relatively minor role compared to other types of deixis identified in the students' poems. The representative time deixis found in stanzas of the poems as follows:

*"is the one that brings us closer to **God**, not only to each other"* (Poem 8)

*"**God** allowed me to meet"* (Poem 8)

The word *God* is categorized as social deixis because it reflects a social-spiritual relationship and indicates respect toward a higher entity. The interpretation of *God* in this context is associated with a figure that occupies the highest position within a religious and spiritual framework. In this line, the expression emphasizes not only interpersonal relationships among individuals but also the relationship between humans and a higher power. The use of *God* contributes to the social and emotional meaning conveyed in the poem by highlighting values of faith and spiritual connection.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that social deixis appeared as the least frequent type in the students' poems. The limited use of social deixis suggests that students focused more on expressing personal emotions and experiences. Furthermore, the identified social deixis tended to occur in spiritual contexts, particularly in expressions referring to a higher entity. The use of social deixis contributed to conveying values, beliefs, and emotional connections within the poems. Therefore, although social deixis occurred only in a small number of instances, it still played an important role in enriching the contextual and meaningful aspects of the poetic texts.

e. Discourse Deixis

Discourse deixis refers to deictic expressions that point to parts of the discourse itself, either to preceding or following information within a text or utterance. According to Levinson (1983), discourse deixis functions to show linguistic elements that refer to certain segments of discourse in order to establish connections between ideas. Common examples of discourse deixis include words such as *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. In this research, discourse deixis appeared 20 times (9.35%) in the students' poems. The findings indicate that students employed discourse deixis to organize ideas and maintain coherence within their poems. Through the use of discourse-related expressions, students connected one idea to another and created relationships between different parts of the text. This use helped readers follow the flow of meaning and understand the intended message more clearly. In addition, discourse deixis contributed to textual cohesion by linking previous or upcoming information in the poems. Shortly, discourse deixis played an important role in supporting the organization and interpretation of meaning. The representative time deixis found in stanzas of the poems as follows:

*"my mind is filled with shadow of payday, the little fire **that**" (Poem 4)*

The word *that* is classified as discourse deixis because it refers to another element or idea within the discourse and connects one part of the expression to another. The interpretation of *that* depends on the surrounding textual context since readers need additional information to identify what specific idea is being referred to. In this line, *that* functions as a connector that guides readers toward the continuation of meaning expressed in the poem. The use of discourse deixis helps establish cohesion by linking related ideas within the text. Therefore, discourse deixis in this line contributes to organizing meaning and improving readers' understanding of the poem.

*"**These** altruists are not heroes from stories" (Poem 6)*

The word *these* is categorized as discourse deixis because it refers to particular individuals or ideas being highlighted within the discourse. The interpretation of *these* depends on the surrounding context since readers need additional information to identify who the altruists being referred to are. In this line, *these* functions to direct readers' attention toward a specific group mentioned by the writer. The use of discourse deixis helps establish connections between ideas and guides readers in understanding the intended meaning within the poem. Briefly, discourse deixis in this expression contributes to maintaining textual cohesion and strengthening the contextual interpretation of the poem.

*"remember **this**: we met not by coincidence" (Poem 8)*

The word *this* is categorized as discourse deixis because it refers to information within the discourse itself. The interpretation of *this* depends on the textual context since it points to the statement that follows in the poem. The use of discourse deixis helps connect ideas and creates coherence between different parts of the poem. In short, discourse deixis in this line contributes to organizing meaning and strengthening readers' understanding of the message conveyed in the poem.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that discourse deixis played an important role in the students' poems by connecting ideas and maintaining textual coherence. The use of discourse-related expressions helped readers understand relationships between different parts of the poems and follow the flow of meaning more effectively. Furthermore, discourse deixis guided readers' attention toward specific information or messages conveyed by the writers.

4. Discussion

The findings of this research revealed that all five types of deixis proposed by Levinson (1983), namely person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis, were identified in the twelve students' poems. A total of 214 deictic expressions were found, with person deixis appearing as the most dominant type (67.76%), followed by place deixis (12.62%), time deixis (9.35%), discourse deixis (9.35%), and social deixis (0.93%). The findings indicate that students frequently relied on contextual references in expressing ideas, emotions, and experiences through poetry. The predominance of person deixis indicates that the students consistently positioned themselves as the central participants in their poems. According to Levinson (1983), person deixis refers to linguistic expressions that identify

participants in a speech event, including speakers, addressees, and other referents. The frequent use of first-person forms such as I, me, my, and we suggests that the students employed poetry as a medium for articulating personal emotions, reflections, and lived experiences. This pattern is characteristic of lyric poetry, in which the poetic voice commonly serves as the primary perspective through which thoughts, feelings, and identity are constructed.

Consequently, the prevalence of first-person deictic expressions reflects not only the students' linguistic choices but also the introspective and expressive nature of poetic discourse. These findings are consistent with those of Raputri (2021), who reported that person deixis was the most frequently occurring category in narrative texts, as well as with the studies by Amouzadeh and Diyanati (2024), McEntee and Vessey (2025), and Putri et al. (2026), which identified person deixis as the dominant type in song lyrics. The similarity across these studies can be attributed to the shared communicative characteristics of poetry, narratives, and songs, all of which foreground the speaker's subjective perspective, emotional involvement, and personal identity. Because these genres are inherently expressive, they naturally encourage the frequent use of first-person deictic references to establish intimacy and engage the audience. In contrast, the present findings differ from those of Indriastuti et al. (2023), who found spatial deixis to be the dominant category in students' writing. This discrepancy is likely attributable to differences in genre, communicative purpose, and writing context. While the present study examined poetry, a literary genre that privileges emotional expression and self-reflection, Indriastuti et al. investigated students' writing that emphasized the description of places, events, or environments. Such descriptive texts require writers to orient readers spatially, thereby increasing the frequency of place deictic expressions. These contrasting findings suggest that the distribution of deictic categories is shaped not only by linguistic competence but also by the rhetorical purpose, discourse genre, and communicative function of the text.

Place deixis, time deixis, and discourse deixis were also identified in the poems and contributed to contextual meaning construction. Place deixis helped establish settings and imagery, while time deixis provided temporal information related to events and emotions described in the poems. Discourse deixis functioned to connect ideas and maintain textual coherence (Al-Hamzi, 2023). These findings support Vrika (2022), who stated that understanding deictic expressions is essential for interpreting the intended meaning of texts. Similarly, readers require contextual understanding to interpret deictic references in students' poems. The findings also align with Widiari et al. (2022), who found that each type of deixis performs a specific communicative function. In the present research, person deixis functioned to identify participants, place deixis referred to locations, time deixis indicated temporal references, discourse deixis linked ideas within the text, and social deixis represented social relationships. Social deixis appeared as the least frequent category, which is consistent with (Salliyanti et al., 2023; McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey 2025; & Putri et al., 2026;). This finding suggests that students focused more on expressing personal experiences and emotions rather than emphasizing social hierarchy or formal relationships. Therefore, the findings support Levinson's theory that the interpretation of deictic expressions depends heavily on context. Furthermore, the findings are also consistent with Hartanti (2022), who identified all types of deixis in poetry. However, the current research specifically examined students' poems, which provides a better understanding of how learners use deictic expressions in literary writing. Briefly, the use of deixis in students' poems demonstrates that linguistic elements function not only as grammatical features but also as important devices for conveying emotions, contextual

meanings, and communication purposes. Therefore, deictic expressions contribute significantly to readers' understanding and interpretation of literary texts, particularly poetry.

5. Conclusion

This research purposed to identify the types of deixis used in students' poems and examine how deictic expressions contribute to meaning construction in poetic texts. Based on the analysis of twelve students' poems, all five types of deixis proposed by Levinson (1983), namely person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis, were identified in the data. A total of 214 deictic expressions were found, with person deixis appearing as the most dominant type, while social deixis occurred least frequently. The dominance of person deixis indicates that students tended to use poetry as a medium for expressing personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences. In contrast, the limited occurrence of social deixis suggests that students focused more on individual perspectives rather than social relationships or hierarchical interactions. Furthermore, each type of deixis performed different functions in constructing meaning and providing contextual information within the poems. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of how deictic expressions function in literary texts, particularly in students' poetry writing. This research also highlights the importance of contextual understanding in interpreting poetic meanings and messages. Future researchers are suggested to investigate deixis in different literary genres or larger data sets to provide broader insights into the use of deictic expressions in various contexts.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution

The authors jointly conceived and designed the study, developed the research methodology, and established the analytical framework. The research process included selecting the corpus of students' poems, determining the purposive sampling criteria, collecting the data through documentation, and conducting the identification, classification, frequency analysis, and pragmatic interpretation of deictic expressions based on Levinson's (1983) taxonomy. The authors verified the coding process and contextual interpretations to ensure analytical consistency and reliability. They contributed to the interpretation of the findings, critically reviewed and revised the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication.

Statement of the use of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to improve English language grammar and readability. The authors reviewed, verified, and take full responsibility for the manuscript.

References

- Ago, Gordius, Anna Gustiana Zaenal, La Mahidin, Noviatu Sa'diyah, and Muta'allim. 2024. "Associative Meaning of Consumers in the Names of Trade Commodities: A Social Semantic Perspective." *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa* 10 (3): 1080-1101. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.10.3.2024.1080-1101>

- Al-Hamzi, A. M. S., Sumarlam, Santosa, R., & Jamal, M. (2023). A pragmatic and discourse study of common deixis used by Yemeni-Arab preachers in Friday Islamic sermons at Yemeni mosques. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 10(1), Article 2177241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2177241>
- Amouzadeh, M., & Diyanati, M. (2024). Alternating mechanism of person deixis in Persian interactions: A cognitive-dialogic account. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 225, 87–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2024.03.008>
- Badrudin, A., Sofyan, A., Salikin, H., Muta'allim, & Wijaya, R. (2023). Kyai and his family's criticism and praise toward santri at pesantren. *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture*, 31(2), 350–374. <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v31i2.10940>
- Daulay, P., Muta'allim, Sayfullah, H., Rohmah, A., & Hafsah, H. (2024). Rebel Yell: Exploring gender resistance in women's punk subculture. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 10(1), 336–400. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.10.1.2024.336-400>
- Hartanti, Z. (2022). Speech acts and deixis in the poem "Asyhadu An Lā Imra'ata Illā Anti" by Nizar Qabbani: A pragmatics analysis. *ISLAH: Journal of Islamic Literature and History*, 3(2), 97–108. <https://doi.org/10.18326/islah.v3i2.97-108>
- Haryono, A., Wibisono, B., Sofyan, A., & Muta'allim. (2023). The use of speech levels by Madurese students as implementation of politeness principles in Islamic boarding school in Bondowoso, East Java. *Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University*, 58(2), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.35741/issn.0258-2724.58.2.9>
- Indriastuti, M. O., Pulungan, A. H., & Natsir, M. (2023). The use of deixis in students' writing of descriptive texts. *Randwick International of Education and Linguistics Science Journal*, 4(4), 995–1004. <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v4i4.862>
- Levinson, S. C. (2018). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511813313>
- McEntee-Atalianis, L., & Vessey, R. (2025). Putting negotiation on a 'principal-ed' footing: A corpus-informed discourse analysis of person deixis in diplomatic debates. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 247, 42–56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2025.07.013>
- Muhammadiyah, M., Muta'allim, Nawiruddin, Susanty, L., & Zarkasi. (2025). The role of linguistics on influencing community associations on social media: A socio-semantic study of commodity advertisements. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 11(1), 191–209. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.11.1.2025.191-209>
- Muhammadiyah, M., Wijaya, R., Irsyadi, A. N., Rosyidi, M. H., & Zarkasi. (2023). Exploring figurative language: Expressions and metaphors in sports reporting of *Java Pos* (Edition, June 1, 2018). *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 9(2), 193–202. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.9.2.2023.193-202>
- Muta'allim. (2025). KH. Hasyim Muzadi's language politeness strategies in responding the different perspective between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah: A sociopragmatic study. *Muslim Heritage: Jurnal Dialog Islam dengan Realitas*, 10(1), 54–77. <https://doi.org/10.21154/muslimheritage.v10i1.10951>
- Muta'allim, Alfani, F. R., Mahidin, L., Agustin, Y. D., & Wicaksi, D. (2021). Fungsi adjektiva komparatif dalam bahasa Madura dialek Kangean dan dampaknya bagi masyarakat Kangean: Kajian pragmatik. *TOTOBUANG: Jurnal Ilmiah Kebahasaan dan Kesastraan*, 9(2), 257–271. <https://doi.org/10.26499/ttbng.v9i2.299>

- Muta'allim, M., Munir, M., Pathollah, A., Nawiroh, L., & Muhalli, M. (2022). Concepts of religious moderation education at Tapal Kuda: Linguistic analysis and local wisdom. *Proceedings of Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars*, 6(1), 798–811. <https://doi.org/10.36835/ancoms.v6i1.425>
- Muta'allim, M., Sofyan, A., & Haryono, A. (2020). Superlative adjectives of Kangean dialect of Madurese language: A pragmatic study (Adjektiva superlatif bahasa Madura dialek Kangean: Sebuah kajian pragmatik). *Leksema: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 5(1), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.22515/ljbs.v5i1.2057>
- Putri, A. O. S., Budiman, T. C. S., & Setyorini, A. (2026). A pragmatics analysis of deixis in selected songs from the album *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* for ELT. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 6(1), 313–324. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v6i1.4653>
- Raputri, E. (2021). Pragmatics study on deixis analysis in narrative texts in a textbook of SMP Nasima Semarang. In *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Science, Education and Technology (ISET 2020)* (pp. 570–575). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211125.072>
- Salliyaniti, Dardanila, & Marsella, E. (2023). Pragmatic study of persona and temporal deixis in Minangkabau language in the Bromo area. In *Proceedings of the International Seminar SEMANTIKS & PRASASTI 2023 Theme: Language in the Workplace (PRASASTI 2023)* (Vol. 797, pp. 291–297). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-162-3_39
- Sofyan, A., Badrudin, A., Fitriani, D. N., & Muta'allim, M. (2022). Types and functions of illocutionary speech acts on inter-character dialogue in *Tilik* short films. *Lingua: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 18(2), 148–156. <https://doi.org/10.15294/lingua.v18i2.36163>
- Sofyan, A., Firmansyah, M. B., Muta'allim, Solissa, E. M., & Rosikh, F. (2022). Islamic boarding school linguistic landscape in the development of Arabic language skills and Islamic knowledge. *International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences*, 3(6), 2178–2185. <https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v3i6.563>
- Sofyan, A., Salikin, H., Badrudin, A., & Muta'allim. (2026). The dynamics of criticism and praise among kyai's family members in pesantren environment. *International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v7i1.1010>
- Sofyan, A., Yudistira, R., Muta'allim, Alfani, F. R., & Ghaffar, A. A. (2022). The analysis of conversational implicature between students and teachers at Al-Azhar Islamic boarding school. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 8(1), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.8.1.2022.65-72>
- Sudi, M., Naim, Z., Zunaih, A. I., Alfani, F. R., & Muta'allim. (2025). The role of *Èngghi-Bhunten* Madurese language communication in shaping children's morals: Parental preferences in rural communities. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 11(1), 176–190. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.11.1.2025.176-190>
- Suryanti, Saud, J., Rachman, A., Muta'allim, & Amiruddin. (2023). Semantic language skills in 2-year-old children: A case study of universal substantive acquisition at Kampung Baru. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 9(2), 203–210. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.9.2.2023.203-210>
- Tiwery, W. Y., Muta'alim, Yunus, M., Siallagan, J., & Muhalli. (2024). Gender representation in the novel *Tarian Bumi*: A study of feminism and masculinity. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 10(3), 1037–1056. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.10.3.2024.1037-1056>
- Vrika, R., Fauziah, M., & Mudinillah, A. (2022). The use of pragmatics deixis in the e-paper “Advantage #4: Meaningful engagement.” *Jurnal Education and Development*, 10(2), 201–206. <https://doi.org/10.37081/ed.v10i2.3601>

- Widiari, N. L. D., Malini, N. L. N. S., & Parthama, G. N. (2024). An analysis of deixis in *Beauty and the Beast* movie. *ELTIN Journal: Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia*, 12(2), 357–366. <https://doi.org/10.22460/eltin.v12i2.4711>
- Yudistira, R., & Muta'allim. (2023). Code mixing as an anti-political indiscretion among farm laborers at Ajung, Kalisat, Jember. *LiNGUA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra*, 18(1), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.18860/ling.v18i1.20312>
- Yudistira, R., Muta'allim, Nurcaya, Julhadi, & Pattiasina, P. J. (2022). The role of linguistics and local wisdom on knowing harmony between religions at Tana Toraja. *Muslim Heritage: Jurnal Dialog Islam dengan Realitas*, 7(2), 409–431. <https://doi.org/10.21154/muslimheritage.v7i2.5023>
- Yudistira, R., Rafiek, M., Herdiani, R., Saputra, M., Muta'allim, M., Irmayani, I., & Asfar, D. A. (2024). A bibliometric analysis of sociolinguistic research in the past decade: Trends, challenges, and opportunities. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 3065, 030026. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0225229>
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Zainal, A. G., Besar, I., Fitria, A., Rezeki, F., & Pratama, A. P. (2024). The role of hyperbolic figures in influencing consumers on social media: A stylistic study on shampoo advertisements. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 10(3), 752–765. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.10.3.2024.752-765>