

Deixis types found in Islamic songs by Maher Zain

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ABSTRACT

These days, music has a huge impact on its listeners who come from a wide range of backgrounds. Sadly, very few listeners are aware of the hidden and implicit meanings contained in the song lyrics. Thus, investigating deixis found in Islamic music by Maher Zain is crucial to provide the listeners with precise interpretations. This current study attempts to discover the varieties of deixis found in lyrics of the songs by Maher Zain ("Thank You Allah" album). This library study used Maher Zain's English lyric transcripts of 16 songs as the object of the investigation. Several procedures were done to analyze the data, namely data reduction, data display, as well as drawing conclusion and verification. The results revealed five varieties of deixis found in Maher Zain's Islamic songs, namely 191 data for place deixis, 43 data for relative-time deixis, 27 data for place deixis, and several names related to The Prophet Muhammad SAW that referred to social deixis. In this study, there was no data found related to absolute-time deixis. These current findings are expected to give deeper understanding related to implied meanings of the artwork, especially song lyrics in which the song can be used as source of motivation in life.

Keywords: analysis; deixis; lyric; pragmatics; song

First Received:

July 1st, 2024

Revised:

November 6th, 2024

Accepted:

November 11th,
2024

Published:

November 12th,
2024

How to cite (in APA style):

Nuraini, E. I., Karimah, R., Virgiyanti, D. F., Fachriza, A., & Dipta, D. (2024). Deixis types found in Islamic songs by Maher Zain. *Journal of Research on English and Language Learning (J-REaLL)*, 5(2), 260–268. <https://doi.org/10.33474/j-reall.v5i2.22161>

INTRODUCTION

Language is used by human beings to connect and communicate with one another. Besides, language can be used to express art works in everyday life contexts, for examples advertisements poetry, drama, and music. Music, specifically, is a global entertainment accepted by almost all people in the world in which music is also used as a basis of effective and enjoyable experiences to moving people both in terms of physical and emotional. Music, nowadays, has had a massive influence in various fields in which music has become primary literature that shows the identity of the singer and can be used to transform the social order of people through the various values conveyed through the lyrics. It was supported by Shen et al. (2020) who stated that music has had a lot of influence on listeners all over the world, starting from social media and internet users or traditional music lovers.

Islamic music is becoming increasingly popular. The genre, which is not limited to traditional forms of *nasheed* and *qasidah*, has swiftly expanded to incorporate pop and R&B music. This is driven

by the debut of outstanding *Muslim* singers who are easily accessible through internet platforms, heightened spiritual awareness, and a high demand for Islamic content (Naralita & Azis, 2020). The rise in popularity of Islamic music, even on a worldwide scale, has an unbreakable connection to the debut of famous, clever artists among *Muslims* around the world. Middle Eastern and Western musicians such as Maher Zain, Raef, Sami Yusuf, Humood Akkhuider, and Mustafa Atef have written a variety of religious songs that cover various themes and express global moral values about Islam (Hurford et al., 1998). Maher Zain is a well-known Swedish *nasheed* singer. The Islamic elements of his song encourage spirituality, love, and peace. Maher Zain mixes elements of traditional Islamic music with contemporary pop and R&B. The remarkable quality of his music stems from his capacity to delve into the experiences of people of European, Arab, and *Muslim* heritage within the contemporary political, social, and economic context.

A song lyric is any brief poetry that is uttered by a singer or speaker that conveys a feeling, perspective, or cognitive process (Abrams, 2008). Consequently, the song lyrics contain hidden and implied meanings. Thus, analyzing song lyrics is crucial in a pragmatics view since music is the one of literature form aims for delivery some feelings, opinion, idea, or values from the artist (Vuust et al., 2022). Pragmatics views on how language interpretation is influenced by context. It was in line with Yule (1996) who defines pragmatics as a field of linguistics that examines how a writer or speaker expresses themselves and how a listener or reader interprets it. The study of pragmatics focuses on the speaker's utterance context, which includes vocabulary structure and the speaker's most significant meaning in words. The study of pragmatics looks at how people use their words to convey the intended meaning.

In pragmatics, deixis is the most fundamental and important concept. Consistent with Levinson (1983), deixis implies the language phenomena where the meaning of a particular linguistic phrase relies on the utterance's context. The five distinct varieties of deixis (Levinson, 1983) cover person deixis, which pertains to the utilization of individuals to convey meaning; place deixis, which involves the use of place to convey meaning; time deixis, which depends on the use of time to convey meaning; discourse deixis, which pertains to terms that denote the relationship between a speech and previous or subsequent discourse; and social deixis, which pertains to a specific social situation in which the speech act appears. Shared knowledge, situational factors, and cultural background between the speaker and the listener all play a role in the perception of deixis.

There has been a lot of research discussing deixis as a branch of pragmatic analysis, whether in films, music or books. One of them is research on films by Karimah and Luthvia (2023) that used qualitative library research methods with a content analysis model. This study examined the deixis in the *Fantastic Beast* movie, which helped to clarify the relationships between the actors and the characters as well as their motivations. In addition, the researcher attempted to decipher the film's most common form of deixis as well as the moral lesson concealed in the speech. The percentages for 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person, time, and discursive deixis were 23,08%, 20,51%, 35,90%, and 12,82%, respectively, according to the results.

Irawan (2021) conducted additional research, looking at the deixis in Sami Yusuf's song. Three categories of deixis were identified by the results: place, time, and personal. Next, Akmal (2019) investigated the deixis and cited the album "*The One*" by Maher Zain. Akmal employed a descriptive method using a qualitative model. Ultimately, Akmal came to the conclusion that the deixis types employed in the "*The One*" album were discourse, social, spatial, temporal, and person deixis.

After looking through those earlier studies, the current study identified a research gap and addressed it by focusing on Levinson's theory of deixis in songs belonging to Maher Zain (from the album "*Thank You Allah*"). This inquiry was done at libraries. Investigating the many deixis in Islamic music is essential since it would provide the audience with precise interpretations. Thus, the study aims at identifying the deixis varieties that may be heard in Songs by Maher Zain (from the "*Thank You Allah*" album).

METHOD

The researchers utilized qualitative descriptive design in the form of library research. A qualitative research is a procedure in which the research results are presented in a descriptive form (Moleong, 2020). A qualitative descriptive model aims at revealing the findings in a clear and detailed manner using words and sentences (Reinhart, 1981). This approach is particularly well-suited for analyzing language use in context, especially Pragmatics. By employing a descriptive model, the research can provide a precise and insightful account of the research results. Next, library research is a type of research where data collection is based on various kinds of reading materials, such as books, journals, current data, and prior studies pertaining to the topic.

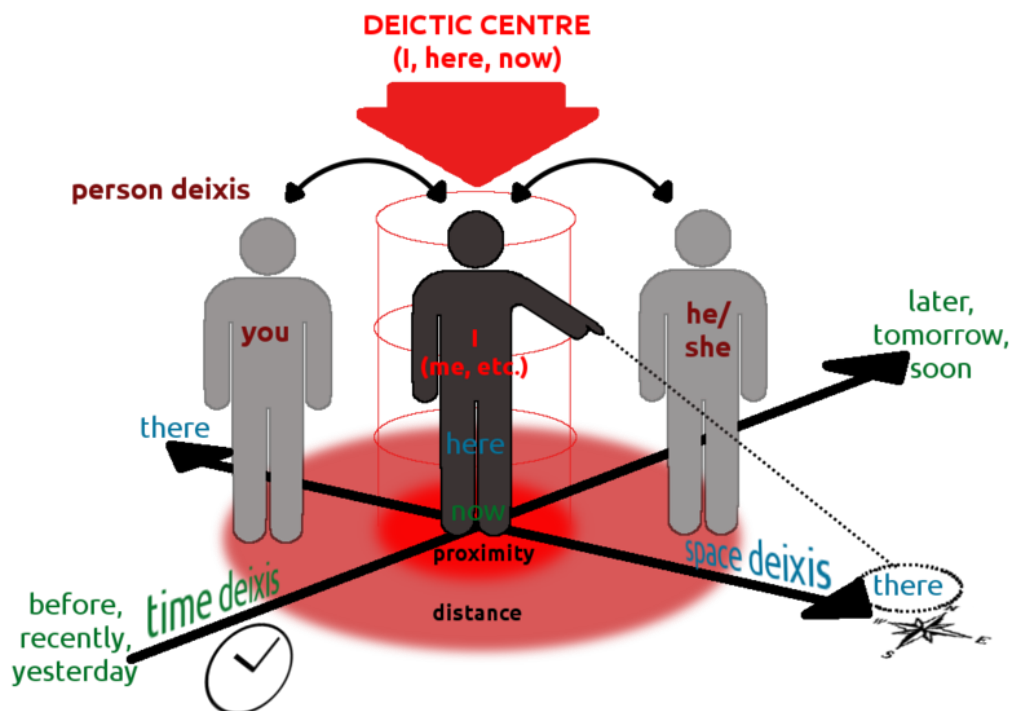
In this research, the primary objects were 16 Maher Zain's song lyrics from "*Thank You Allah*" album. Several procedures were conducted in analyzing the data by using Miles and Huberman (1984), namely data reduction, data display, as well as drawing conclusion and verification. Firstly, the researchers went through the entire song lyrics in order to identify the different types of deixis. Following that, they categorized all of the data based on the different varieties of deixis and counted the most common uses of the data. Finally, they came to a conclusion related to the results. Levinson's theory was applied to the data analysis in this study in which they would categorize the varieties of deixis.

FINDINGS

Reviewing those Maher Zain' song lyrics in the "*Thank You Allah*" album that consisted of sixteen songs, the researchers found several deixis which referred to situational context in which allowed its listeners to interpret actual meanings in the setting in which the song was written and listened to. To better appreciate the meaning of a song, listeners can consider time, place, culture, and their own background (Karimah & Luthvia, 2023).

Figure 1

Concept of person, place, and time deixis in Pragmatics



(<https://risussite.wordpress.com/2018/01/05/deixis/>)

Some types of deixis found in Maher Zain's song lyrics were personal, place, time, discourse, and social deixis.

Personal Deixis

The first findings of the deixis varieties of songs by Maher Zain were personal deixis which were classified into three categories, namely: first, second, and third type of personal deixis.

Table 1

Most frequently personal deixis varieties in song lyrics by Maher Zain

Personal Deixis	Single	Plural
1 st Person	I (14), me (18), my (16), I am (1)	We (20), us (11), our(9)
2 nd Person	You (37), your (17)	
3 rd Person	He (6), him (1), Allah (26), Muhammad(2)	They(3)

From the [Table 1](#), Maher Zain often used **I**, **me**, **mine**, **my**, and **I am** for the first singular personal deixis. He also used **We**, **us**, and **our** for the first plural personal deixis. Besides, he utilized the word **You**, **your**, and **yours** for the second singular personal deixis. Moreover, Zain also employed the word **He**, **she**, **him**, **her**, **Allah**, and **Rasulullah** for the third singular personal deixis and the word **they** for the third plural personal deixis. Here were some of the lyric transcripts from Maher Zain's Islamic songs.

*If **you** ask **me** about love
And what **I** know about it
My answer would be
It's everything about **Allah***

In the fragment of the song lyrics above ("*Always Be There*"), several personal deixis had been found that there were variations in the personal deixis used in which they consisted of the first to third personal deixis. In these lyrics, "**Me**, **I**, **My**" might refer to Maher Zain who wanted to explain a message that the source of love is Allah. In this case, Maher Zain intended to convey the message that Allah is the source of love for everything. The word "**You**" in these lyrics referred to the listener in general and "Allah" is the third personal which referred to God Almighty who is the source of all love and strength.

Time Deixis

The next deixis variety of songs by Maher Zain was time deixis. The time deixis was an important type of deixis that must be considered in full awareness related to the concepts of absolute and relative time references because it greatly influenced the understanding of implied changes in time. Time deixis in the context of social interaction was divided into two major part, absolute and relative. Time deixis is a linguistic concept used as words or phrases to indicate current time in a speech. In time deixis, the speaker or writer used certain words or phrases to show the particular time related to the expression and speaking's utterance or writing. In this case, the context of time deixis explained the relationship between the speaker's expression and the current time setting.

Some sample of time deixis in songs by Maher Zain could be found in the lyric fragments of the "*Palestine Tomorrow Will Be Free*".

*Palestine **tomorrow** will be free
Every day we tell each other
That **this day** will be **the last**
And **tomorrow** we all can go home free
And all this will finally end*

Palestine tomorrow will be free

In the lyrics above, **tomorrow**, **every day**, and **this day** belonged to relative time deixis. Deixis relative was subjective or referred to the closeness of the speaker and interlocutor relationship in a social context. The researchers found that Maher Zain used time deixis in relative type to build intimacy and latitude with his listeners. In Maher Zain album, the researchers found 43 data of the time deixis in the form of relative type in song lyrics by Maher Zain. In contrast, the researchers found nothing for absolute time deixis.

Deixis of Place

The third deixis variety in songs by Maher Zain was place deixis which referred to expressions related to elements of place or location in a conversation or situation. In this present study, the researchers found that place deixis was divided into three types based on the distance between speaker's place and the object of speaker conversation. The three types of place deixis were **proximal** (close range distance), **medial** (medium range distance), and **distal** (far range distance).

The most impressive example of place deixis in songs by Maher Zain could be seen in the fragments of “*Thank You Allah*” song.

*I was **so far from you***
*Yet to me you were always **so close***
*I wandered lost **in the dark***
I closed my eyes toward the signs
You put in my way
*I walked everyday **Further and further away from you***
O Allah, you brought me home
I thank You with every breath I take
 الحمد لله الحمد لله, *All praises to Allah, All praises to Allah*

Based on the above fragments, the researchers found that Maher Zain used various place deixis, such as “close” referred to the deixis of proximal dimension because it was close in distance. Next place deixis found in the lyric was “Further away” which referred to the distal dimension because it was far away. The word “**opened the doors for me**” referred to a movement or changed state which belonged to a medial dimension type. The following table shows several place deixis found in Maher Zain’s song lyrics.

Table 2*The most frequently place deixis in song lyrics by Maher Zain*

No	Deixis Place	Type of Deixis Place	Frequently
1	By your side, My heart, In the dark, way, here, near, Behind, World, place, Inside, Aside, Nowhere, Earth, Ground, In front of, Close to, there, around	Proximal Deixis	18
2	Home, Palestine, River, Sea, Shop, West	Medial Deixis	6
3	Heaven, Distal, further away, far from you, <i>Jannah</i> , Paris, Costal del shop, Planet, Orbits	Distal Deixis	9

Maher Zain through his song intended to express and share spiritual communication. God is considered a sought-after place for everyone to return home, the most comfortable home and the source of all guidance. Maher Zain confessed those fragments in good manner to utilize place deixis

which gave the listeners an impression of many things. The most impressive one of the fragments described a spiritual journey from feelings of loss to the most comfortable place of return, Allah SWT. In those fragments, Maher Zain intended to express gratitude and invited listeners to be aware of the presence of Allah SWT in their lives.

Deixis related to Discourse

The other type of deixis in songs by Maher Zain was deixis in discourse. Discourse deixis referred to use of certain expressions in speech or writing which included the use of words or phrases in the purposes of pointing some different parts of the conversation or text which carried the intended meaning of the statement. Discourse deixis used language referring to specific things within a conversation or written piece. The examples of discourse deixis found in songs by Maher Zain could be seen in the fragments of the song entitled “*So Soon*.”

*Every single day may you be shaded by His mercy
But life is not the same, and it will never be the same
But I'm so thankful for every memory I shared with you
'Cause I know **this** life is not forever
You went so soon, so soon
You left so soon, so soon*

In those above fragments, the researchers found the use of demonstrative words of “**this**” in language provided clarity and focused on a particular object or concept. In this case, “**this life**” was the primary focus and the singer tried to convey the importance of time and the temporary of his life journey. The word “**This**” indicated discourse deixis in which the speaker referred to something that was introduced or discussed later in the conversation of the lyrics “not forever”. Maher finally used several purposes to emphasize life, highlight the importance of his message about the brevity of life and to inform that life is great opportunity for all humans. The following chart showed the frequency of discourse deixis found in Maher Zain’s song lyrics.

Table 3

The most frequently discourse deixis in song lyrics by Maher Zain

No	Discourse Deixis	Frequently
1	This	5
2	That	2

Social Deixis

The final variety of deixis in a song by Maher Zain was social deixis which showed an honorific referring to the person whom speakers are talking to. It referred to an indication of the speaker’s social status in a speech or statement. Social deixis focused on how speakers used language to create and constructed social relationships and roles within them. Social deixis could be divided into two: absolute and relational. Relational referred to the social relationship between the speaker, listener such as “**dad, sister, brother, and etc.**” and third person mentioned in the conversation. Meanwhile, absolute referred to a person’s social status or social role without regard to their relationship to the speakers or listeners, such as **Sir, Your majesty, Prof**, etc.

The researchers found that the statements of social deixis in songs by Maher Zain were rare. The writer of the song seemed to consider social deixis because it was a very noble title which was incomparable. Besides, he did not mention social status or differentiating between one level from another. The most fascinating finding in this present research was the highest title in the whole world; no creature can match this.

Rasoola Allah, The Chosen One, and the messenger were all the titles which were attributed or title to the most perfect human being on the whole world that referred to the Prophet Muhammad

SAW bin Abdullah bin Abdul Mutthalib. In contrast, the researchers did not find any other social deixis in this album.

DISCUSSION

According to the data analysis taken from the deixis varieties in Maher Zain's lyrics, the researchers had categorized data into five deixis types, specifically deixis for personal, places, times, discourse, and society. The exploration was done to understand the singer's pattern of using deictic elements in each song creation. The findings aligned with [Akmala's \(2019\)](#) who also found personal, discourse, and social deixis varieties. It happened because of the similar objects of the study which employed Maher Zain's song lyrics. Yet, the difference lied on the theory used in which the current findings were based on [Levinson's \(1983\)](#) theory and [Akmala's \(2019\)](#) findings were based on Cruse's theory. Moreover, the current results were in line with Irawan (2021) who discovered personal, time, and place of deixis yet from Sami Yusuf's song lyrics.

Besides, the present findings found similarities to [Khasanah](#) and [Rahmat \(2024\)](#) who detected five varieties of deixis, namely person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. It occurred because of the similar objects of the study which used Maher Zain's song lyrics. However, the current study used "Thank You Allah" album which was comprised of 16 songs while [Khasanah](#) and [Rahmat \(2024\)](#) used "Forgive Me" album which comprised of 6 songs. The present results and Khasanah & Rahmat's results illustrate the complexity of language and the way in which situational context is used to convey the meanings found in song lyrics.

The present research found that the singer frequently used person deixis, such as **"I," "you," and "we"** to build emotional relationships between singers and listeners. The quality of the relationship between the singer and the listener would influence the impression of the moral message conveyed in Maher Zain's lyrics. Then, the type of time deixis in this present study covered two main findings, namely absolute and relative in which singers were trying to build emotional closeness to their listeners. This data was proven by using the relative type more frequently than the absolute type. The relative was the most flexible and showed the general closeness between the listener and the speaker. The data was supported by [Khasanah](#) and [Rahmat \(2024\)](#) who said that the use of deixis adds to the song's vitality and relevance by enhancing the audience's emotional bond with the performance.

The use of place deixis, such as **"Here," "Jannah," and others**, has given the listeners a real impression of the existence of a metaphysical world besides human physical world. This type of deixis emphasized the strong connection that created a shared space between the natural and spiritual worlds. Maher Zain tried to go beyond the limits of what surrounds the listeners by allowing them to explore the places they need to know as Muslims. This data was appropriate with [Khasanah](#) and [Rahmat \(2024\)](#) who stated that the location and distance were used to convey meaning in a song.

Furthermore, the use of deictic types of discourse, such as **"this" and "that,"** proved in helping listeners an impression of the overall messages of the discourse elements mentioned previously. However, this type of deixis-built coherence in each lyric of the songs. On the other word, Maher Zain could attract listeners on the titles he had created.

The last but not the least, the social deixis could be described as the most interesting thing throughout the present research. The researchers did not find social deixis that was commonly used, such as **"Mr," "Madam," "Commander,"** and so on. However, researchers found the greatest title for the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the last Prophet of Islam and also a messenger sent by Allah as a blessing for the whole world in several segments of song lyrics, such as the titles "The chosen one," "Rasol Allah" and "The messenger." The Prophet Muhammad SAW was described as a good role model who always motivate and invite his followers to do goodness. This current finding was also linked to previous findings which tried to reveal lexical cohesion in motivational speech. The similarity was lied on the in-depth language analysis section, that in both, there is an invitation and motivation to do good action ([Nuraini et al., 2024](#)).

The researchers found that the patterns in social deixis have been largely replaced by personal deixis which used the pronouns **"I," "You," "We"** and so on. This strategy aimed at adding

personalization to Maher Zain's closeness to listeners. It happened because social deixis which was almost too formal in nature would not be as close as the impression used in personal deixis. The usage of deixis strengthens the audience's emotional connection to the performance (Khasanah & Rahmat, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The present study focuses its discussion on analyzing the varieties of deixis found in Maher Zain's Islamic songs (*Thank You Allah* album) using library approach. The results displayed five varieties of deixis that covered person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis. The use of person deixis consisted of 59 data 1st person-singular, 40 data of 1st person-plural, 54 data of the 2nd person-singular, 35 data of the 3rd person-singular, and 3 data of the 3rd person-plural. The researchers found 43 data of relative-time deixis yet there was nothing related to absolute-time deixis data. The data related to place deixis, the researchers revealed that there were 18 data for proximal, 6 data for medial, and 3 data for distal. Further, the results showed that several names; **Rasoola Allah, The Chosen One, and the messenger** associated to the Prophet Muhammad SAW were the data for social deixis.

The present findings gave important implication towards pragmatic discussion in which deixis gave the song-listeners the contextual and accurate meanings. It means that the speaker (source-information) and the listeners share knowledge, situational factors, and cultural background related to the song-lyrics. However, this study limited the discussion merely on the varieties of deixis in terms of the data's frequency appeared which not complete enough to catch the literal Islamic values contained in the songs. Therefore, it was suggested to the future researchers to deepen their analysis in broader area of discussion related to the hidden messages of the songs.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this paper.

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