

Alan Walker's Song "Who I Am": It's Deixis and English Students' Perception of It's Content

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Abstract

This research is aimed at identifying (a) the majority of deixis found in the song lyrics of Alan Walker's "Who I Am" and (b) the perceptions of English students of the song about the content of the song, the message that the songwriter wants to convey, and people to address in the song lyrics. This research uses a qualitative method. The needed data were gained by (a) accessing the song and its lyrics on the internet and (b) interviewing five English students who were in the eighth semester of a private university in West Java, Indonesia. The data from the song lyrics were computed using Microsoft Excel. Meanwhile, the data from the interview was analyzed qualitatively using Miles & Hubberman's (2014) concept of qualitative data analysis. Based on the data, we found that the dominant deixis was the first person personal deixis as a subject pronoun (the pronoun "I") consisting of 16 words, referring to the songwriter as the main subject, experiencer, doer, and performer of what is talked about in the song. Furthermore, regarding the content of the song, the participants mostly had the same view that the songwriter tried to tell listeners about his strong determination, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and efforts in achieving his dreams. In addition, the songwriter expected the listeners to take some positive lessons of how to achieve success.

Keywords: Deixis; Pragmatic; Self Confidence; Self-efficacy; Song Lyrics

INTRODUCTION

In English songs, deixis is commonly used by songwriters. Listeners of songs or other spoken texts or readers of a text can derive meaning from the context of a speech or text situation. In language classrooms, they can be used for various purposes. It can be used for facilitating fun learning, expanding cultural understanding, promoting tolerance and respect for differences (Bsharat et al., 2021), enhancing learners' motivation (Chou, 2014), learning lexis (Odo, 2021), and learning vocabulary (Mannarelli & Serrano, 2024). Therefore, to understand the content of song lyrics, deixis is one of the important things to learn. To uncover the meaning of the deixis used in any communication, listeners or readers are suggested to have good sensitivity and knowledge of it, especially pragmatics. Pragmatics is a study focusing on what a speaker implies and how the listeners interpret the utterance based on the situated context (Nordquis, 2019).

However, previous studies dealing with deixis along with the songwriter's intended meaning and listeners' interpretation on the song are almost not found. Previous studies focused merely on various types of deixis used in English songs. For example, Ilma & Sabbath (2023), Rachmawati & Santoso (2023); and Saputra & Apsari (2021) found personal, spatial, and temporal deixis in the English songs that they analyzed. Moreover, Kusumadewi & Anggraeni (2020) found the deixis of personal, spatial, and temporal in the song lyrics "I Want to Break Free" by Queen. They focused on the types of deixis used in the lyrics of the songs without examining the listeners' understanding of the content of the song, their comments, and so on. Therefore, this research aims to investigate both the types of deixis found in song lyrics and the

perception of the listeners of the song "Who I Am" including the content of the song, the message that the songwriter wanted to convey, and the addressee of the songwriter.

Deixis is an important field studied in pragmatics, semantics, and linguistics. Levinson (1983, c.f. Stapleton, 2017) stated that deixis comes from the Greek word 'to point directly' or 'to show'. It refers to particular things like people, time, location, and objects depending on whose source and when the word was spoken. Further, he maintained:

Deixis refers to the phenomenon wherein understanding the meaning of certain words and phrases in an utterance requires contextual information. Words or phrases that require contextual information to convey meaning are deictic. The contextual information of the utterance consists of information about the speaker, the addressee, the time and the place. For example, if we take a close look on the sentence I am leaving tomorrow, who does I, am, and tomorrow refer to? We cannot identify the meaning of this utterance, unless we know the time of the utterance, the place, and who the speaker is, in other words the context of the utterance (Levinson, 1983; c.f. Stapleton, 2017).

Lyons (2012) defined different types of deixis as follows. The first is personal deixis. A personal deixis is a deixis that points to a person. References in personal deixis are indicated by the use of pronouns, but pronouns do not remain appropriate to the role of the speaker. Personal deixis includes subject pronouns (I, you, he/she, we, they), object pronoun (me, you, him/her, it, us, you, them), possessive adjectives (my, your, his/her, their, our, its), possessive pronoun (mine, yours, his/hers, ours, theirs), and reflexive pronoun (myself, yourself, himself/herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves). Personal deixis are generally divided into three categories namely first person deixis like me, us. The next is the second person deixis, for example, you. The last is a third-person deixis, like them. After personal deixis, the second is spatial deixis. Spatial deixis could be a deixis that shows the position between the speaker and the audience. Spatial deixis is additionally called locative deixis/locative expression. The adverbs that fall into the most common spatial categories of deixis are "here", and "there". There is also "this", and "that" that serve to determine the position of the speaker object. The third is temporal deixis. Temporal deixis is used to indicate time. The temporal deixis is called the time deixis. Words that fall into the category of temporal deixis are "now", "tomorrow", "today", "yesterday", "then", "tonight", and more specific times. More specific examples of time, such as "day," "year," "date," and "time." The fourth is social deixis. Social deixis is different from other deixis. Social deixis does not refer to time, put, or person, but rather to the social status and position between speakers and receivers within the society that employments the dialect. Commonly used words include various forms such as nicknames, titles, recipients, polite pronouns, bloodlines, and honorific designations. Examples of social descriptive words are: "grandfather", "grandmother", "president", "student", "daughter", etc. The last is discourse deixis. Discourse deixis is a type of discourse that refers to "this" or "that" discourse. This usage is intended to indicate elements of future discourse and is also intended to refer to elements of past discourse.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach since its purpose is to describe a phenomenon and discover new ideas (Heigham & Crocker, 2009) that aims to (1) identify the dominant deixis in the lyrics of the songs "Who I am" by Alan Walkers, Putri Ariani, Peder Elias, and (2) to describe the perception of music lovers, especially "Who I am" songs, regarding their opinions about: (a) the content of the song, (b) the message that the song writer wants to convey, (c) people to address in the song lyrics. Meanwhile, to obtain data needed to identify English students' perception of the content of the song, an interview was conducted. The participants were five senior students of English department at a private university at West

Java, Indonesia. To identify deixis, the concept of deixis Lyons (2012) was used in this research. Further, to analyze the verbal data from the interview, Miles, Huberman, & Saldana’s (2014) framework for analyzing qualitative data was employed. It included data reduction, data display, and data verification. Data reduction was carried out to determine relevant, meaningful, and important data based on the research conducted and to obtain the data that researchers need. Meanwhile, in the step of data reduction, tables and descriptions were formed to show the results of each data discovery carried out during data. Finally, in the last step, we verify the data and draw conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The song “Who I AM” was written by Allan Walker. It was sang by two singers, a young male (Peder Elias) and a young female (Putri Ariani). In the song, there are two participants, the “I” and the “You”. In the song, the singers are represented as successful people who did their extraordinary efforts with their strong determination, self-efficacy, and self-confidence. This can be seen from the lyric, “I won’t break just like that. I’ll make my one mistakes till I’m wrong in all the right ways” (verse 1, lines 4-6). In addition, the singers are also represented as visionaries people. This can be seen in the lyrics “This is just the way that I am head in the clouds”. In the English language, the idiom “heads in the clouds” can be interpreted negatively as it means daydreaming, fantasy thoughts (<https://oxfordlanguageclub.com>), and having improbable ideas about achieving success (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com>). Yet, having big dreams is one of the characteristics of visionary leaders. They are dreamers. They view a space that needs to be filled, even though not everyone can see it (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2023/09/27/>). That is the reason why they do not suit most common people, “I do not fit in to the crowd” (verse 2, line 6)

1. Deixis

The researcher found that three types of deixis in the lyrics of this song were personal deixis, temporal deixis, and discourse deixis. The results are in Table 1.

Table 1. Deixis types in the song

NO.	GROUP OF DEIXIS	TYPES	NUMBER OF DEIXIS	LOCATION
1.	I	Personal deixis (First person deixis as subject pronoun, referring to the speaker/singer him/herself)	15	V ₁ , L ₂
	We			V ₁ , L ₄
V ₁ , L ₅				
V ₁ , L ₆				
V ₂ , L ₃				
V ₂ , L ₄				
V ₂ , L ₆				
V ₂ , L ₈				
V ₂ , L ₉				
V ₃ , L ₁				
V ₃ , L ₂				
V ₃ , L ₄				
V ₃ , L ₅				
V ₃ , L ₇				
V ₃ , L ₉				
			1	V ₃ , L ₆

2.	Me	Personal deixis (First person deixis as object pronoun, referring to the speaker/singer him/herself)	1	V ₂ , L ₂
3.	My	Personal deixis (First person deixis as a possessive adjective, referring to the speaker's/singer's belonging)	1	V ₁ , L ₅
4.	You	Personal deixis (Second person deixis as subject pronoun, referring to the interlocutor participating in the song)	4	V ₂ , L ₂ V ₃ , L ₃ V ₃ , L ₇ V ₃ , L ₈
5.	You	Personal deixis (Second person deixis as object pronoun, referring to the interlocutor participating in the song)	3	V ₁ , L ₃ V ₃ , L ₉ V ₃ , L ₄
6.	Your	Personal deixis (Second person deixis as a possessive adjective, referring to the speaker's/singer's belonging)	1	V ₂ , L ₁
7.	They	Personal deixis (Third person deixis as subject pronoun, referring to the "rules" being talked by the speakers/singers of the song)	1	V ₁ , L ₃
8.	Them	Personal deixis (Third person deixis as object pronoun, referring to the interlocutor's tears) Personal deixis (Third person deixis as object pronoun, referring to other people not participating in the story/song)	2	V ₂ , L ₂ V ₂ , L ₃
9.	June	Temporal deixis (referring to a time in June)	1	V ₃ L ₇
10	Next to	Spatial deixis (referring to a certain place which is near the interlocutor)	1	V ₃ , L ₄
11.	This	Discourse deixis (referring to a previous discourse)	3	V ₁ , L ₁ V ₂ , L ₃ V ₂ , L ₈
12	That	Discourse deixis (referring to a previous discourse)	2	V ₁ , L ₁ V ₁ , L ₄
13	It	Discourse deixis (referring to a previous discourse)	1	V ₂ , L ₇

Notes:

V= Verse

L= Line

Table 2. Types of Deixis in the lyric song "Who I Am"

No.	Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Personal deixis:		78,37%
	I, we (First person deixis as subject pronoun)	16	
	Me (First person deixis as object pronoun)	1	
	My (First person deixis as possessive adjective)	1	
	You (Second person deixis as subject pronoun)	4	
	You (Second person deixis as object pronoun)	3	

	Your (Second person deixis as possessive adjective)	1	
	They (Third person deixis as subject pronoun)	1	
	Them (Third person deixis as object pronoun)	2	
2.	Spatial Deixis	0	0%
3.	Temporal Deixis (Juni, next to)	2	5,41%
4.	Social Deixis	0	0%
5.	Discourse Deixis (this, that, it)	6	16,22%
	Total	37	100%

Based on the data in the table 2, the types of deixis contained in this lyric song were personal deixis, temporal deixis, and discourse deixis. The highest percentage of all was personal deixis at 78,37%.

2. Listeners' Perceptions on the Song

The researcher found that there were several deixis can be seen in the song "Who I am" namely personal deixis, temporal deixis, and discourse deixis. The results were in the table below:

Table 3. Respondents of the song Who I am

No.	Question	Answer
1	What is the content of Alan Walker's song "Who I Am"?	R1 Freedom and own strength.
		R2 To love ourselves and not to be easily influenced by other people.
		R3 Believe in yourself and about a couple who assumed him that he will remain faithful.
		R4 Freedom and accepting yourself.
		R5 Be yourself, and about Putri Ariani who has a disability. But disability also has the same rights as normal people.
2	What do you think is the message that the songwriter wants to convey to the listeners?	R1 The listener must be him/herself, and always believe in himself.
		R2 Listeners should not be easily influenced by other people's decisions; we can achieve success without being influenced by negative statements from others.
		R3 Listeners must have confidence.
		R4 Listeners should be themselves, not influenced by others.
		R5 Listeners should be themselves. Don't force yourself to change just for the pleasure of others.
3	In your opinion, who is the addressee or the focus of attention of the song?	R1 someone who doesn't believe in themselves.
		R2 fans who currently feel in the position described in the song's lyrics, namely doesn't believe in themselves.
		R3

	Putri Ariani, a singer who once sang this song duet with Alan Walker.
R4	someone who doesn't want to be under the pressure of others who love freedom.
R5	people who have never been themselves, and trying to change just to get what they want

a. Content of the song "Who I am"

Regarding the content of the song "Who I Am", the researcher interviewed five respondents. Here are the answers from the five respondents:

Respondent #1 stated that the song tells us about a person who puts his/her freedom first by not being influenced by others, but by his/her effort and strength. This is proved by her statement, "In my opinion, the song tells about who does not want to be influenced by other people and prioritizes personal freedom and own strength". The above response is also supported by the respondent #2. She thought that the song tells about the importance of loving self and not being easily influenced by others. This is proved by her statement, "I think this song has a meaning about the need for us to love ourselves, and not to be easily influenced by other people". It is also stated by Respondent #3 who said that the song tells us about someone who believes in himself/herself rather than people who want to bring her/him down. This is proved by his statement that " the song tells of someone who really believes in himself/herself. Even though many people say this and that to him, he/she remains firm in his stance, being himself/herself and showing who he/she is". Likewise, respondent #4 stated that the song tells about someone who has freedom and can accept himself/herself in any circumstances. This is proved by his statement "In my opinion, The content of the song tells about freedom and accepting yourself." The above response is also supported by respondent #5. She thought that the song tells about someone who accepts himself/herself as he/she is. Someone who is not easy to change himself/herself just for the pleasure of others. This is proved by her statement that "In my opinion, the song 'who I am' is a form of being ourselves. Other people can't change us into what they want. and we also don't want to change into them just for other people's wishes".

b. The Message That The Song Writer wants to Convey

Regarding the message that the songwriter wants to convey, the researcher has interviewed five respondents. Here are the answers from the five respondents:

Respondent #1 stated that the message that the songwriter wanted to convey was the importance of a person to be himself/herself even though there are many people out there who want to control and influence our lives. This is proved by her statement that "The song tells us so that we must be our selves even though many people to push, or to control us with their rules we must believe in our self and our power". The above response is also supported by respondents #3, #4, and #5. They thought that the message that the songwriter wanted to convey was that we have to believe in ourselves and not think of other people's words that might make us fallen. Don't let us change just for the pleasure of others. This is proved by respondent #3 who said, "I think the songwriter wants to convey a message to the listener that you have to believe in yourself. If you are sure that what you are doing is right and good, do it, don't let other people's words about you bring you down". Then, respondent #4 described, "What I got seems to be that the songwriter wants to tell the listeners to be themselves, Don't want to be influenced by what other people said, let us meet our expectations by ourselves. We have the freedom to control

ourselves, not because of other people but because of our own willingness". The last, respondent #5 stated, "I think the songwriter wants the listener to be themselves. Don't force ourselves to change just for their pleasure".

c. People to Address in the Song Lyrics

Regarding the people to address in the song lyrics, we have interviewed five English students. The following are their responses:

Respondent #1 stated that the people to address in the song lyric was about someone who has no confidence and someone who doesn't like if his/her life is suppressed by others. This is proved by her statement, "I think the song focuses on someone [listener] who doesn't believe in himself/herself. Also, it may be addressed to some people dislike to live amidst pressure from people around them". The above response is also supported by respondent #2 who thought that it focused on people who have disbelief in themselves. This is proved by her statement, "In my opinion, it is addressed to their [the singers'] fans of course, especially to their fans who are currently having no self-confidence".

Respondent #3 stated that the people to address in the song lyric was about the singer's experience, she is the focus of attention in this song. This is proved by his statement that "In my opinion, Putri Ariani is the focus of attention in this song because she is a talented Indonesian singer, who has succeeded in making the world admire her. In this song, Putri Ariani managed to collaborate with famous musicians such as Alan Walker and Peder Elias. That's why Putri Ariani is the center of attention in this song". The above response is also supported by respondent #5 who said that the singers of the song are the addressees. She is represented as someone who had less confidence but then she changed the situation successfully as what she wants it to be. She also said, "I think the focus of attention is Alan Walker. But for the song, I think this song is to enlighten people who never believe in their own strengths and to invite them to change it to get their dreams". Respondent #4 also stated that the people who are addressed in the song are those who do not want their life under the pressure of others, and those who prefer freedom. This is proved by her statement, "I think the song is intended to encourage people who refuse to live under the pressure of others, to people likes freedom".

Discussion

1. Deixis

After conducting research, the researcher found that the types of deixis in the lyrics of the song "Who I Am" were personal, temporal, and discourse deixis. The total number of the three deixis above was 37 deixis. The dominant deixis found in the lyrics of the song "Who I Am" is the personal deixis first person as a subject pronoun. Examples of first-person deixis as subject pronouns are (I) and (We). It indicates that personal deixis appears in almost every lyric of the song. Based on Lyons (2012), first-person deixis is used by writers or speakers who refer to themselves as subjects in a specific context.

The researcher concluded that the content of the song "Who I Am" tells about the songwriter's experience (Alan Walker's) in finding his identity. The songwriter's courage and confidence are an inspiration for someone to be able to find his true identity and also the songwriter describes that he/she has a shortcoming, namely not liking crowds. However, the songwriter has his way of dealing with his shortcomings. It teaches us that besides shortcomings, there must be ways to overcome them because humans have their weaknesses and strengths.

2. Listeners' Perceptions on the Song

a. Content of the song "Who I am"

We have analyzed the students' answers regarding the content of the song *Who I Am*. They said that the song is about someone who doesn't want to be influenced by others and prioritizes their own personal freedom and power. As the third respondent said, "This song tells the story of someone who truly believes in himself./herself Although many people say this and that to him, he/she remains steadfast in his/her stance, being himself/herself and showing who he/she is". In addition, we believe that the content of the song is about songwriters' experiences who have both strengths and weaknesses. However, they have their own way of dealing with these weaknesses since they possess self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. According to Rosenberg (1965, c.f. Reskiani, 2021), self-esteem is as a positive or negative attitude towards oneself to feel that oneself is valuable and that one respects oneself for who it is. It reflects how a person values and feels about themselves. Having strong self-esteem allows a person to face obstacles with more confidence and accept themselves for who they are. In addition, according to Hakim (2005, c.f. Tunnisa, 2021), self-confidence is a person's belief in all aspects of their possession, and this belief makes a person feel capable of achieving various goals in life. By having high self-confidence, a person can overcome their fears and reach their full potential. The last one is self-efficacy. In addition, according to Bandura (1997, c.f. Brown, 2015), self-efficacy is a feeling, an assessment of a person's abilities and competencies to complete the tasks given to him. Self-efficacy refers to the extent to which a person is confident in their ability to achieve a particular goal. High self-efficacy increases a person's motivation to take action and allows a person to face challenges with a positive attitude.

In addition to the above three foundations (self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy), heart sincerity in accepting self himself/herself is true perfection (Musman, 2021). Silva & Deutchman (2019) mention, "comparing yourself to flowers, each blooms at its own pace and shows its unique beauty. Keep reaching for the light, and let yourself be preserved like a flower, your life will bloom in time". This can mean that we are like flowers that bloom at their own pace and have a unique beauty. We can turn challenges and obstacles into opportunities to grow and develop. By remaining resilient and focused on the light of life, we can achieve growth and success that can only be found in our own time and uniqueness. Therefore, it is important to prioritize personal freedom, motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and sincerity.

b. The Message That The Song Writer wants to Convey

We have analyzed the participants' statements about what message the songwriter wanted to convey to the listeners of the song. They had similar main point about it, that the songwriter wanted to convey a message to the listener to have self-confidence. It is because whenever a person believes that she/he can do something and be in the right way, it can drive him/her to be a risk-taker despite negative words and behaviors received from others. Moreover, they said that the songwriter may try to raise the listeners' awareness of their freedom to manage themselves for the sake of their success. Adhya (2018) mentioned that with confidence, we have won before starting. In addition, Musman (2021) said that our greatest victory is not because we never fall, but because we get up every time we fall.

In short, self-confidence is one of the keys to success and victory in life. As said by Widarso (2005, c.f. Tunnisa, 2021), a person who believes in himself/herself allows us to be able to complete tasks or work according to the stage of development well, feel valued, have courage, and the ability to improve performance, consider various options, and make decisions on their own are behaviors that reflect confidence.

c. People to Address in the Song Lyrics

Based on the data, the participants believed that the message of the song is addressed to those who distrust themselves, to whom where self-confidence has no place in their lives. The songwriter wanted them to change it to self-confidence. The participants also perceived that the

songwriter (Alan Walker) also tried to tell the listeners that what is told in the song is his experience in achieving his dreams. As said by the fifth respondent, "I think the focus of attention is both the songwriter and people who never being themselves. It must be changed/repared so that the dreams can be achieved". The thing we need to do to regrow confidence is to change the way we think, feel, speak, act, and start to change our world (King, 2018). Be who you are, but without haste, without impatience (Masuno, 2019).

To conclude, the way to overcome self-doubt is to change the pattern of thoughts, emotions, words, and actions. Through this change, a person can regain confidence and change the dynamics of his life to achieve success. Confidence is the main key to facing challenges. Without self-confidence, an individual will easily waver and be afraid to take the bold steps necessary to achieve success (Bantara, 2023). Another message is the importance of being yourself, and never have resentment in your weaknesses because everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. With consistency and perseverance, one can find true faith and live according to one's values and identity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, the researcher concluded that in the lyrics of the song "Who I Am" there are five types of deixis found are such as personal deixis, temporal deixis, and discourse deixis. The dominant deixis found was personal deixis first person as a subject pronoun which consists of 16 deixis words. The dominant word is "I" which refers to the songwriter as the main subject, experiencer, the doer, and a performer of what is told in the song. Furthermore, the content of the song is about self-confidence, motivation, and efforts to make dreams come true. In short, the songwriter wanted to encourage people to believe in themselves that they have chances and capability to reach their aspirations. In addition, the songwriter tried to convey a message to the listener about his experience and efforts in achieving his dreams. Strong determination, perseverance, self-confidence, and risk-taking are the keys to his success.

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