



An Analysis of Deixis in the Song 'The Prayer' by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli

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Abstract

This study explores the use of deixis in the song *The Prayer* by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli through a mix method qualitative-quantitative approach. The analysis is centred on three main types of deixis: person, spatial, and temporal. By identifying and classifying deixis within the song's lyrics, the study seeks to determine which type of deixis is most prevalent and how it contributes to conveying the intended meaning and emotional undertones of the song. The findings indicate that person deixis is the most frequently employed, highlighting the song's emphasis on personal connections and spiritual appeals. Conversely, temporal deixis is minimally utilized, suggesting a focus on universal, timeless messages rather than specific chronological references. Person Deixis has the highest occurrence with 32 instances, accounting for 69.5% of the total deixis identified. Spatial Deixis has 11 occurrences, representing 24% of the total. Temporal Deixis is the least frequent category, with only 3 instances, making up 6.5% of the total. This study underscores the importance of deixis in enhancing the communicative impact of song lyrics and provides a framework for further linguistic analysis in musical contexts.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Deixis, Song Lyrics

1. Introduction

Education Songs serve as a medium of communication, bridging the gap between the creator or singer and the listener, much like language itself. Songs contain words and phrases that convey specific meanings, allowing the creator to communicate messages or emotions to the audience. This communication often involves the use of deixis, a linguistic element that situates the meaning of words relative to the speaker, listener, time, and place.

In songs, person deixis (first person, second person, third person) is frequently employed to express personal emotions or perspectives, establishing a connection between the creator and the listener. Temporal deixis, or time deixis, indicates when events within the song occur, guiding listeners to understand the chronological context of the lyrics. Similarly, spatial deixis, or place deixis, denotes the setting or location of events described in the song.

While previous research, such as Puspahaty & Musta'innah (2025), has explored deixis in contemporary pop albums using a broad five-category framework, there is a lack of focused analysis on cross-cultural duet songs that communicate universal themes like hope and peace through deixis. This study addresses that gap by analysing the song 'The Prayer' by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli, focusing specifically on person, time, and place deixis to investigate how deixis contributes

to the emotional and communicative power of the lyrics. By analysing person, time, and place deixis within the lyrics, this study aims to determine how deixis is utilized to convey the song's intended message and emotional nuances.

This study aims to analyse the song *The Prayer* by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli using deixis theory, focusing on these three types of deixis. By examining each stanza, the study seeks to identify the presence and frequency of person, time, and place deixis to determine which type is most prominently used by the songwriter.

2. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in linguistic discourse analysis, particularly using deixis theory as the analytical framework. The objective is to identify and analyze the use of deixis in the song *The Prayer* by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli, with a focus on three types: person deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis.

Data Source

The primary data source is the full English and partial Italian lyrics of *The Prayer*, the translated lyrics.

Data Collection Procedure

The process involved the following steps:

- The song lyrics were segmented into structural units: verses, choruses, and bridges.
- Each unit was examined to identify linguistic expressions that function as deixis (person, spatial, and temporal).

Data Analysis

A three-step procedure, adapted from Puspahaty & Musta'innah (2025), was used:

- Identification: Instances of person, spatial, and temporal deixis were marked in each stanza.
- Classification: Each identified instance was categorized into one of the three deixis types.
- Interpretation: The function and meaning of each deixis were interpreted in the context of the line and the broader theme of the song.

Frequency counts were recorded in tabular form to determine the most dominant type of deixis, and percentages were calculated to assess the relative distribution. The analysis also considered how deixis contributes to the emotional, spiritual, and communicative aspects of the song. This study is limited to three types of deixis (person, spatial, temporal), excluding discourse deixis and social deixis, which are commonly included in other deixis analyses. The analysis focuses on *The Prayer* only and does not extend to the artists' broader discography or other versions of the song.

3. Results

The analysis of deixis in the song *The Prayer* by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli reveals that person deixis is the most frequently employed, underscoring the song's focus on personal appeals

and spiritual connections, while temporal deixis is minimally utilized, indicating a broader, timeless narrative that transcends specific chronological references, and spatial deixis, though present, serves to evoke imagery of seeking divine guidance and protection, reinforcing the overarching theme of spiritual refuge and faith. Further details as follows:

Verse 1

*I pray you'll be our eyes and watch us where we go
And help us to be wise in times when we don't know
Let this be our prayer when we lose our way
Lead us to a place Guide us with your grace
To a place where we'll be safe*

Deixis Analysis of Verse 1

Verse 1 of The Prayer by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli utilizes deixis to convey the speaker's plea for divine guidance and protection. The analysis is categorized into person, spatial, and temporal deixis as follows:

a. Person Deixis

In this verse, person deixis is highly prevalent, with a total of 14 instances identified. These consist of:

- I (1 occurrence): Refers to the speaker, positioning the prayer as a personal supplication.
- You (2 occurrences): Refers to God, establishing a direct appeal to a divine entity.
- Our (3 occurrences): Signifies a collective sense of belonging, indicating a shared experience between the speaker and others.
- Us (4 occurrences): Further emphasizes the collective nature of the prayer, uniting the speaker and others in seeking divine guidance.
- We (4 occurrences): Reinforces the communal aspect, aligning the speaker's personal plea with a broader spiritual appeal.

The use of person deixis in this verse highlights the intimate, personal connection between the speaker, the divine, and the collective group, underscoring the song's focus on spiritual unity and shared faith.

b. Spatial Deixis

Spatial deixis in the verse is employed to create a sense of place and direction, with 4 instances identified:

- This: Refers to the prayer itself, anchoring the act of supplication in the present moment.
- Watch us where we go: Implies divine surveillance and guidance, emphasizing the idea of being watched over regardless of location.
- Lead us to a place: Suggests a journey or destination, reinforcing the notion of being guided to a place of safety.

- To a place where we'll be safe: Conveys the desired destination, a safe haven that symbolizes spiritual refuge.
- The use of spatial deixis establishes a metaphorical journey from uncertainty to safety, reflecting the speaker's desire for protection and direction.

c. Temporal Deixis

Temporal deixis is less prominent in this verse, with only 2 instances identified:

- In times when we don't know: Refers to uncertain periods, emphasizing moments of confusion or lack of clarity.
- When we lose our way: Indicates moments of disorientation, aligning temporal references with emotional states.

Temporal deixis in this verse functions to anchor the prayer in specific yet recurring moments of uncertainty, emphasizing the speaker's desire for divine guidance during times of confusion.

Overall, the deixis in Verse 1 effectively conveys the speaker's personal plea for protection, situating it within a communal and spiritual context while also emphasizing the timeless and universal nature of seeking guidance.

Tabel. 1 Deixis in Verse 1

Deixis	Quantity
Person deixis	14
Spatial deixis	4
Temporal deixis	2

Verse 2

La luce che tu hai (I pray we'll find your light)
Nel cuore resterà (And hold it in our hearts)
A ricordarci che (When stars go out each night)
L'eterna stella sei. (Whoa)
Nella mia preghiera (Let this be our prayer)
Quanta fede c'è (When shadows fill our day).
Lead us to a place guide us with your grace.

Deixis Analysis of Verse 2

Verse 2 of The Prayer continues to explore themes of spiritual guidance and faith, utilizing deixis to convey a deeper emotional and spiritual connection between the speaker and the divine. The analysis is categorized into person, spatial, and temporal deixis as follows:

a. Person Deixis

In this verse, 9 instances of person deixis are identified, emphasizing the personal and collective nature of the prayer:

- I (1 occurrence): Refers to the speaker, who is actively praying and seeking divine light.

- We (2 occurrences): Refers to the collective group involved in the prayer, reinforcing the sense of unity in the supplication.
- You (2 occurrences): Refers to God, the recipient of the prayer, marking the direct address of the divine.
- Our (2 occurrences): Indicates a shared experience or plea, underscoring the communal nature of the prayer.
- It (1 occurrence): Refers to "your light," symbolizing the divine guidance that the speaker seeks to find and hold in their heart.
- Us (1 occurrence): The collective group once again, requesting divine intervention and grace.

These personal pronouns in the verse emphasize the intimate connection between the speaker, the divine, and the group, reinforcing the themes of faith, unity, and shared spiritual experience.

b. Spatial Deixis

In this verse, 3 instances of spatial deixis are used, which help convey the speaker's desire for spiritual direction:

- Your light (1 occurrence): Refers to the metaphorical light of the divine, representing guidance and hope.
- In our hearts (1 occurrence): Indicates an internal space, highlighting the emotional and spiritual depth of the prayer.
- Lead us to a place (1 occurrence): Refers to the destination or goal of the prayer, symbolizing a spiritual or physical place of peace and refuge.

These spatial references contribute to the imagery of seeking guidance, light, and refuge, positioning the divine as a source of direction in both literal and metaphorical spaces.

c. Temporal Deixis

The verse contains 1 instance of temporal deixis:

- When stars go out each night (1 occurrence): Refers to a specific, recurring moment in time, symbolizing the darkness and challenges that people face.

This temporal deixis anchors the prayer in the cyclical nature of time, alluding to the inevitability of difficult moments and the desire for guidance during those times. It connects the prayer to a natural, rhythmic occurrence nightfall while invoking a sense of longing for divine assistance during such times.

Overall, the deixis in Verse 2 continues to emphasize the personal, emotional, and spiritual nature of the prayer, with a clear focus on seeking light, guidance, and faith, both in times of difficulty and as a continual, guiding force.

Table. 2 Deixis in Verse 2

Verse 2	
Deixis	Quantity
Person deixis	9
Spatial deixis	3
Temporal deixis	1

Bridge 1

Sogniamo un mondo senza più violenza (I dream of a world without violence)

Un mondo di giustizia e di speranza (A world full of justice and hope)

Ognuno dia la mano al suo vicino (Everyone holds their neighbor's hand)

Simbolo di pace, di fraternità(A symbol of peace and brotherhood)

Deixis Analysis of Bridge 1

Bridge 1 of The Prayer focuses on the speaker's dream of a better world, emphasizing ideals of peace, justice, and brotherhood. The deixis used in this section of the song highlights the speaker's vision for global unity and a world free of violence. The analysis of person, spatial, and temporal deixis is as follows:

a. Person Deixis

In Bridge 1, 1 instance of person deixis is identified:

- Everyone (1 occurrence): Refers to all people, conveying a universal appeal for collective action and solidarity. It suggests inclusivity, inviting all individuals to participate in the envisioned peaceful world.
- This person deixis emphasizes the universal nature of the speaker's dream, encouraging collective responsibility and cooperation among individuals for a better world.

b. Spatial Deixis

In Bridge 1, 1 instance of spatial deixis is used:

- Hand (1 occurrence): Refers to the physical space where people can engage with each other, symbolizing unity and cooperation. The act of holding hands is a spatial gesture that indicates connection and solidarity.

This spatial deixis functions metaphorically, symbolizing the connection between individuals and the collective effort needed to foster peace and brotherhood.

In summary, the deixis in Bridge 1 contributes to the song's message of global unity and peace. The use of person and spatial deixis reflects the desire for collective action and solidarity, while the absence of temporal deixis reinforces the timeless, universal nature of the speaker's dream.

Table 3. Deixis Bridge 1

Bridge 1	
Deixis	Quantity
Person deixis	1
Spatial deixis	1
Temporal deixis	-

Verse 3

La forza che ci dà (We ask that life be kind)
È il desiderio che (And watch us from above)
Ognuno trovi amor (We hope each soul will find)
Intorno e dentro sé (Another soul to love).

Deixis Analysis of Verse 3

Verse 3 of *The Prayer* delves into the themes of love, kindness, and hope for a better future. The speaker prays for life's kindness and expresses a desire for every soul to find love both within and around themselves. The analysis of person, spatial, and temporal deixis in this verse is as follows:

a. Person Deixis

In the third verse, there are 3 instances of person deixis:

- We (2 occurrences): Refers to the collective speaker(s), emphasizing a shared prayer or wish. It includes both the speaker and the audience, strengthening the collective appeal for kindness and love.
- Each (1 occurrence): Refers to individual souls, indicating that every person is included in the prayer for love and connection. It underscores the personal nature of the wish, but also connects the individual to the larger collective.

This person deixis reinforces the prayer's universal message, addressing both the collective "we" and the individual, thus emphasizing the inclusivity of the desire for kindness and love.

b. Spatial Deixis

In this verse, there is 1 instance of spatial deixis:

- Within (1 occurrence): Refers to an internal, metaphorical space, suggesting that love should not only be found externally but also within one's own heart or being. It indicates an introspective space where love can reside.

This spatial deixis points to the importance of internal space for love, emphasizing the idea that love is not only a physical or external phenomenon but also something that exists within individuals.

In summary, the deixis in Verse 3 enhances the song's message of universal love and kindness. The use of person deixis highlights both the individual and collective nature of the prayer, while the spatial deixis emphasizes the internal, emotional space where love should reside. The absence of temporal deixis strengthens the timeless quality of the prayer's message.

Table 4. Deixis Verse 3

Verse 3	
Deixis	Quantity
Person deixis	3
Spatial deixis	1
Temporal deixis	-

Chorus 3

*Let this be our prayer
 Let this be our prayer
 Just like every child Just like every child.
 Need to find a place Guide us with your grace
 Give us faith so we'll be safe*

Deixis Analysis of Chorus 1

Chorus 1 of The Prayer expresses a deeply emotional plea for guidance, faith, and safety, reinforcing the song's themes of divine protection and support. The analysis of person, spatial, and temporal deixis in this section is as follows:

a. Person Deixis

In Chorus 1, there are 5 instances of person deixis:

- Our (2 occurrences): Refers to the collective speaker(s), emphasizing the shared nature of the prayer. The speakers (and listeners) are united in their plea for guidance and safety.
- We (2 occurrences): Used similarly to “our,” it indicates a shared experience or request, once again linking the speakers to one another and the listener.
- Every child (1 occurrence): Refers to individual children universally, symbolizing innocence and the universal need for care and protection.

The frequent use of person deixis underscores the collective nature of the prayer, emphasizing both the shared plea of the speakers and the universal appeal to protect and guide all individuals, especially the vulnerable (children).

b. Spatial Deixis

In Chorus 1, there are 2 instances of spatial deixis:

- Place (1 occurrence): Refers to a physical or metaphorical location where the speakers seek guidance and safety. It suggests the need for direction and the hope of reaching a safe, nurturing space.
- Guide us with your grace (1 occurrence): While more metaphorical, the phrase still suggests a journey or movement toward safety and peace, implying spatial direction.

This spatial deixis highlights the need for guidance and the movement toward safety, both physically and metaphorically, reinforcing the prayer's appeal for divine direction and protection.

In summary, the deixis in Chorus 1 reinforces the song's central theme of seeking guidance, safety, and faith. The use of person deixis connects the speaker(s) with the audience, underscoring the collective nature of the plea. Spatial deixis highlights the need for direction and a safe space, while the absence of temporal deixis contributes to the eternal, universal quality of the prayer.

Table 5. Deixis Chorus 1

Chorus 1	
Deixis	Quantity
Person deixis	5
Spatial deixis	2
Temporal deixis	-

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage of Deixis in the Song's

Deixis	Quantity	Percentage
Person deixis	32	69.5 %
Spatial deixis	11	24 %
Temporal deixis	3	6.5
Total	46	100 %

The table 6 presents the distribution of deixis types in a specific data set. Person Deixis has the highest occurrence with 32 instances, accounting for 69.5% of the total deixis identified. Person deixis refers to expressions that point to people, such as pronouns ("I," "you," "our," etc.). Spatial Deixis has 11 occurrences of spatial deixis, representing 24% of the total. Spatial deixis involves expressions that indicate location, such as "this," "around," "inside," etc." Temporal Deixis is the least frequent category, with only 3 instances, making up 6.5% of the total. Temporal deixis includes expressions related to time, such as "times" and "when." Overall, the data set consists of 46 instances of deixis, with person deixis being the most prevalent, followed by spatial and temporal deixis.

The analysis of The Prayer by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli reveals significant insights into the use of deixis in song lyrics. The study identifies three primary types of deixis person, spatial, and temporal and examines their distribution and function within the song. The findings indicate that person deixis is the most prominently used, emphasizing the song's focus on personal appeals and spiritual connections. This frequent use of personal pronouns underscores the intimate and

prayerful nature of the lyrics, drawing the listener into the emotional and spiritual context conveyed by the speakers.

In contrast, temporal deixis is minimally employed, suggesting that the song's narrative is not anchored to specific moments in time but rather conveys a timeless, universal message of faith and guidance. This lack of temporal markers allows the lyrics to maintain a broader, more enduring relevance.

Spatial deixis, though present, is employed sparingly, primarily to create a sense of place that reinforces the song's prayerful tone. The use of spatial references contributes to the imagery of seeking divine guidance and protection, aligning with the song's overarching theme of spiritual refuge.

Overall, the findings highlight how deixis serves as a powerful linguistic tool in conveying the song's intended meaning and emotional undertones, demonstrating its crucial role in enhancing the communicative impact of song lyrics.

4. Discussion

The lyrics of *The Prayer* by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli convey a profound sense of hope, faith, and spiritual guidance. The song's narrative unfolds through various verses, each expressing distinct aspects of prayer and supplication. Song can be used as a media to convey messages in vary to the world. A song serves as a means of communication with others, conveying thoughts, feelings, ideas, and emotions (Ilma & Sabat, 2023). This song contains 32 instances of person deixis, 11 of spatial deixis, and 3 of temporal deixis. Consistent with other studies on deixis in songs, person deixis is the most prevalent (Suhair, 2019; Agustina& Hendar, 2022; Lailiyah, 2023; Jabbar, et.al, 2024).

In the first verse, the speaker expresses a heartfelt plea for divine protection, emphasizing the desire for God to watch over and guide them wherever they go. The request for wisdom in moments of confusion further underscores the speaker's reliance on spiritual guidance during uncertain times. The repetition of the phrase *Let this be our prayer* reinforces the significance of prayer as a source of strength and reassurance. Deixis in song lyrics differs from deixis in daily communication settings, which tends to be more straightforward, aiming for message delivery without necessitating repeated reading to fully grasp the content. This aligns with the findings of Azizah et al. (2024), who observed that the language employed in international academic settings is generally accessible, particularly highlighting the role of deixis in facilitating the comprehension of messages. However, some messages, notably direct, minimizing the need for multiple readings.

The second verse continues this theme of seeking divine intervention. Here, the speaker prays for light, a metaphor for strength and clarity from God, to be kept in their hearts. This imagery not only reflects the desire for spiritual fortitude but also conveys a sense of enduring faith, symbolized by the eternal star that serves as a guiding force in times of darkness.

Bridge 1 introduces a broader, more universal perspective. The speaker envisions a world free from violence, characterized by justice and hope. The imagery of neighbours holding hands evokes a sense of unity and brotherhood, highlighting the aspiration for global peace and harmony.

In the third verse, the focus shifts to the enduring strength derived from faith. The speaker expresses hope that every soul will find love, suggesting that the search for love is both a personal and collective journey. The prayer extends beyond the self, encompassing a desire for all souls to experience love and connection.

The first chorus reiterates the theme of prayer as a means of seeking divine guidance and protection. The speaker appeals to God to provide grace and instil confidence, reinforcing the belief that faith will lead them to safety.

The concluding lines emphasize the importance of belief as a sustaining force. The speaker conveys that the faith residing in their heart is a source of salvation, a powerful reminder that unwavering belief can provide a sense of security amidst life's uncertainties. Context helps the listener to grasp the overall message of the song more easily and prevents misunderstandings of the context intended by the speaker (Nisa, et.al., 2020).

5. Conclusions

The analysis of The Prayer using deixis theory reveals that person deixis is the most prominently employed category in the song with 32 instances, accounting for 69.5% of the total deixis identified. The lyrics consistently use personal pronouns to convey the speakers' emotional appeals and spiritual requests, emphasizing the connection between the speaker, the listener, and the divine. In contrast, temporal deixis is minimally present, indicating that the song is more focused on conveying timeless, universal themes rather than situating the narrative within a specific timeframe with only 3 instances, making up 6.5% of the total. Spatial Deixis has 11 occurrences, representing 24% of the total. Temporal Deixis is the least frequent category, with only 3 instances, making up 6.5% of the total. Thus, it can be concluded that The Prayer predominantly utilizes person deixis to convey its central message of faith, guidance, and hope.

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