



EXPLORING DEIXIS IN BBC NEWS: ANALYSIS OF PRAGMATICS

MENJELAJAHI DEIXIS DI BBC NEWS: ANALISIS PRAGMATIK

Najmi Naila^{1*}, Zea Jelika Dewanda², Tatu Siti Rohbiah³

UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

Email: najminaila12@gmail.com^{1*}, zeadewanda2004@gmail.com², tatu.siti.rohbiah@uinbanten.ac.id³

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Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki penggunaan deixis dalam artikel BBC News berjudul "Trump blames Zelensky for starting the war after Russia's massive offensive" untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana bahasa membangun narasi dalam pelaporan konflik politik. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif yang didasarkan pada analisis pragmatis, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dan mengkategorikan lima jenis deixis: orang, tempat, waktu, wacana, dan deixis sosial. Analisis mengungkapkan bahwa person deixis adalah yang paling sering digunakan, menekankan peran dan tanggung jawab aktor politik, diikuti oleh deixis tempat dan waktu yang menyusun konteks spasial dan kronologis berita. Wacana dan deixis sosial, meskipun lebih jarang, berkontribusi pada kohesi tekstual dan representasi peran kelembagaan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa deixis berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai referensi linguistik tetapi juga sebagai alat strategis untuk membingkai makna, memposisikan tokoh politik, dan membentuk persepsi publik. Temuan ini menyiratkan bahwa jurnalis dan pembaca sama-sama harus menyadari kekuatan pragmatis deixis dalam wacana berita, mendorong literasi media kritis dan pelaporan reflektif, terutama dalam konteks konflik politik internasional.

Kata Kunci : BBC News, Deixis, Analisis Media

Abstract

This study investigates the use of deixis in a BBC News article titled "Trump blames Zelensky for starting war after massive Russian attack" to explore how language constructs narratives in political conflict reporting. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in pragmatic analysis, the research identifies and categorizes five types of deixis: person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis. The analysis reveals that person deixis is the most frequently used, emphasizing the roles and responsibilities of political actors, followed by place and time deixis that structure the spatial and chronological context of the news. Discourse and social deixis, though less frequent, contribute to textual cohesion and the representation of institutional roles. The study concludes that deixis functions not only as a linguistic reference but also as a strategic tool for framing meaning, positioning political figures, and shaping public perception. These findings imply that journalists and readers alike should be aware of the pragmatic power of deixis in news discourse, encouraging critical media literacy and reflective reporting, especially in the context of international political conflicts.

Keywords: BBC News, Deixis, Media Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Language serves multiple functions in communication, especially in written media. Jakobson's model identifies six key functions of language: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic (Hébert & Tabler, 2019). In the context of news media, language commonly performs informational, influential, and interpretive functions, often incorporating both explicit and



implicit evaluative elements (Левченко, 2019). Furthermore, on social media platforms where written language predominates, users employ diverse forms of discourse and functions, particularly interaction as a central communicative aim (Pitoyo Amrih, 2013). In a broader sense, language is vital for human survival and collaboration, serving at least five fundamental purposes: expression, information, exploration, persuasion, and entertainment (Mailani et al., 2022). Consequently, in mass media, language becomes a powerful medium to convey thoughts, emotions, and intentions, facilitating effective interaction among individuals and communities (Amrih et al., 2013; Mailani et al., 2022). This diversity in language functions reflects a society's complex needs and communicative goals.

Building upon this linguistic foundation, the field of pragmatics offers deeper insight into how language operates within context. Pragmatics is concerned with the relationship between language, meaning, and usage, analyzing how contextual factors such as tone, gesture, and social norms influence communication beyond literal interpretation (Dey, 2023). It plays a pivotal role in language learning, enabling learners to develop communicative competence through contextual awareness. In applied domains like advertising, politics, and legal discourse, pragmatic analysis proves instrumental in interpreting speaker intent and ensuring communicative effectiveness (Dey, 2023). Furthermore, pragmatics encompasses both theoretical frameworks and practical applications, making it essential for understanding the deeper layers of linguistic interaction (Ruzibaeva, 2023; Weisser, 2018). Its interdisciplinary nature enriches linguistic research and contributes to the broader study of human communication.

One of the core concepts within pragmatics is deixis, which refers to expressions whose meanings are context-dependent. Deixis is especially prominent in news discourse, where it serves to engage readers and construct narrative meaning. Previous studies have explored deixis in various online news sources such as *Tribunnews.com* (Siliwangi, n.d.), *The Jakarta Post* (Febriza, 2020), and *CNN International* (Tauchid et al., 2022). These investigations consistently show that person deixis is the most frequently used, followed by temporal and spatial deixis. Notably, news headlines often manipulate tense to establish temporal immediacy with readers (Chovanec, 2014). Moreover, the use of deixis varies across different textual segments and is shaped by the socio-political background of each topic (Chovanec, 2014; Febriza, 2020). In online journalism, hypertextuality adds another layer of complexity to time representation, necessitating a more nuanced analytical approach (Chovanec, 2014). Therefore, understanding deixis in news texts is essential for uncovering how language influences reader interpretation and constructs narrative within media discourse.

In response to this gap, the present study investigates the pragmatic function of deixis in the reporting of war by international media such as *BBC News*, an article titled “Trump blames Zelensky for starting war after massive Russian attack,” which reports on the Russia-Ukraine conflict aims to: (1) identify and categorize the types of deixis used in the article; (2) analyze how these deictic expressions function pragmatically in constructing meaning and point of view; and (3) examine their role in representing political actors and events. Accordingly, the following research questions are proposed: What types of deixis are predominantly used in the article? How do these expressions pragmatically contribute to meaning-making and narrative framing? And what are the implications of these deictic choices for how political roles and actions are represented in the discourse? Through this investigation, the study seeks to offer theoretical insights and practical



contributions to pragmatics, discourse analysis, and media studies, particularly with language use in international conflict reporting.

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Approaches and types of research

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design to examine how deixis is used in a BBC News article about the Russia-Ukraine war. A qualitative approach is suitable because it centers on describing and interpreting linguistic phenomena in their natural setting without employing statistical analysis. The descriptive method provides a detailed examination of the types and functions of deictic expressions as they appear in the text.

2. Source Of Data

The source of data in this research is a BBC News article entitled “Trump blames Zelensky for starting war after massive Russian attack”, published on April 15, 2025. This article was selected purposively because it discusses a significant event involving international political figures and conflict, which is expected to exhibit various types of deixis relevant to pragmatic analysis.

3. Data Collection Procedure

Involves reading and carefully examining the entire text of the article to identify instances of deictic expressions. The researcher manually extracts words, phrases, or expressions that indicate person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis within the article. These expressions are then compiled into a dataset for further analysis.

4. Data Analysis Procedure

The data collection involves reading and carefully examining the entire text of the article to identify instances of deictic expressions. The researcher manually extracts words, phrases, or expressions that indicate person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis within the article. These expressions are then compiled into a dataset for further analysis.

- a. Identification of Deictic Expressions: All deixis-related words and phrases in the article are highlighted and listed systematically.
- b. Classification of Deixis Types: Each identified expression is categorized into one of the five deixis types based on Levinson’s (1983) deixis framework: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis (Levinson, 2024).
- c. Interpretation of Pragmatic Functions: This involves analyzing how each type of deixis functions pragmatically in the news report. The interpretation considers the context of the discourse, particularly how deixis contributes to the way information is framed, how participants are referred to, and how the article constructs its narrative about the war and involved actors.

By applying this method, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how deixis operates in journalistic discourse, particularly in the context of international conflict reporting.



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the findings of a deixis analysis in a BBC News article titled “Trump blames Zelensky for starting war after massive Russian attack”, published on 15 April 2025. The analysis focuses on five types of deixis based on pragmatic classification: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Each type is discussed separately to highlight its function and significance in the context of war reporting. The data were identified manually from the article and are presented in separate tables, accompanied by examples and brief explanations. Through this analysis, the study aims to reveal how language is used to construct perspective, assign responsibility, and build narratives in political news discourse.

Table 1. Classification of Person Deixis in the Article

Example of Person deixis	Description	Frequency
Trump, Zelensky, Putin, Biden, he, you, we, they, someone, people	Refers to participants in the speech event (speaker, hearer, or others).	95

Table 1 presents a classification of person deixis with examples, descriptions, and frequency. Person deixis refers to expressions that identify participants in the communicative event, such as the speaker, hearer, or others involved. In the BBC News article titled “Trump blames Zelensky for starting war after massive Russian attack”, person deixis is the most frequent deixis type, with 95 occurrences. These include proper nouns like Donald Trump, Volodymyr Zelensky, Vladimir Putin, and Joe Biden, as well as personal pronouns such as he, you, we, and they. For example, the sentence “Donald Trump has again blamed Volodymyr Zelensky for starting the war with Russia” clearly identifies specific participants. Additionally, rhetorical use of pronouns can be seen in sentences like “You don't start a war against someone 20 times your size” and “When you start a war, you've got to know you can win”, which emphasize responsibility and challenge the addressee. Person deixis in this article functions to assign roles, distribute blame, and construct political stances.

Table 2. Classification of Place Deixis in the Article

Example of Place deixis	Description	Frequency
Ukraine, Russia, Sumy, Moscow, White House, Kyiv, Odesa, St Petersburg, Washington, Crimea, city, church, street	Refers to spatial locations relevant to the utterance context.	55

Table 2 shows the classification of place deixis found in the article, including examples and descriptions. Place deixis refers to expressions that indicate specific spatial locations relevant to the context of an utterance. In the analyzed BBC News article, place deixis is frequently used to anchor the narrative within the geographical scope of the Russia–Ukraine conflict. Names of cities and countries such as Sumy, Kyiv, Odesa, Moscow, St Petersburg, Ukraine, Russia, and Washington appear throughout the text to provide context for events and political statements. For instance, the sentence “Donald Trump has again blamed Volodymyr Zelensky... in the Ukrainian city of Sumy”



not only identifies the speaker and target, but also emphasizes the location where the attack took place. Another example is “NATO’s secretary general Mark Rutte went to Ukraine on Tuesday in a show of solidarity with Kyiv”, where the deixis establishes international involvement within a defined space. Such spatial references help readers follow the flow of events and understand their geopolitical significance.

Table 3. Classification of Time Deixis in the Article

Example of Time deixis	Description	Frequency
Monday, Tuesday, Sunday, February, 15 April 2025, last month, a week later, before, a day after, this year	Refers to temporal points or periods relevant to the utterance.	35

Table 3 presents the classification of time deixis used in the article, along with examples and brief explanations. Time deixis involves expressions that refer to specific points or periods related to the moment of speaking or writing. In the BBC News article, time deixis serves to construct the chronology of events and situate statements within a temporal framework. Words and phrases like Monday, Sunday, Tuesday, last month, a week later, this year, and 15 April 2025 are used to establish when particular actions or comments occurred. For example, the article states: “Trump on Monday had first described the Sumy attack as ‘terrible’...”, placing the comment within a definite time frame. Another instance is “Russia’s strike on Sumy on Sunday, the deadliest attack on civilians this year”, which links the event to a specific day and underlines its severity. These temporal references help the reader follow the progression of events and align the news report with real-world timelines.

Table 4. Classification of Discourse Deixis in the Article

Example of Discourse deixis	Description	Frequency
This war, the attack, the conflict, talks, decisions, negotiations, invasion, events, blasts, contacts, agreement	Refers to parts of the discourse/text itself (previous or following utterances).	25

Table 4 outlines the types and examples of discourse deixis identified in the article. Discourse deixis refers to expressions that point to parts of the spoken or written discourse itself, such as earlier or upcoming segments of the text. In the BBC News article, discourse deixis is used to refer to events, actions, or statements within the report. Terms like this war, the conflict, the attack, the talks, and the event function as referents to previously mentioned or assumed parts of the discourse. For instance, in the sentence “Trump has repeatedly blamed Zelensky and Biden for the war, despite Russia invading Ukraine first in 2014...”, the phrase “the war” points to an ongoing narrative discussed earlier in the article. Another example, “Trump further argued on Monday that... Putin should have never started it”, uses the pronoun it to refer back to the war or conflict already introduced. This type of deixis allows the text to maintain coherence and refer back to shared context without unnecessary repetition.

**Table 5. Classification of Social Deixis in the Article**

Example of social deixis	Description	Frequency
President, Secretary General, Leader, Envoy, Administration, Regional Chief, Officials, Military, Rocket Brigade	Refers to social relationships or roles between participants.	20

Table 5 presents the classification of social deixis found in the article, including examples and their contextual functions. Social deixis refers to expressions that encode social relationships or roles between speakers, hearers, or people mentioned in the discourse. In the BBC News article, social deixis appears in terms that denote titles, positions, or ranks which reflect formality, authority, or social status. Examples include the president, secretary general, envoy, regional chief, officials, and military. These deixis markers highlight hierarchical relationships and roles within the political and military spheres. For instance, the phrase “NATO’s secretary general Mark Rutte went to Ukraine...” not only identifies the speaker’s name but also his social and institutional status. Another example, “Zelensky sacked Sumy’s regional chief on Tuesday...”, indicates a relationship of power and authority within Ukraine’s domestic structure. Such deixis elements contribute to the formality and credibility of the report and signal power dynamics between individuals and institutions

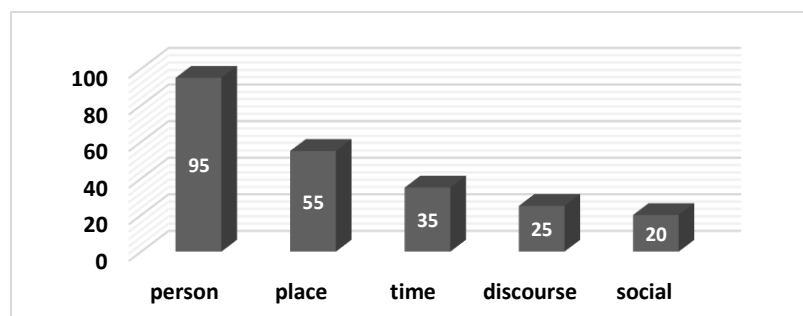
**Graphic 1. Comparison of Deixis Types by Frequency**

Figure 1 shows the frequency of each type of deixis identified in the BBC News article. The data reveal that person deixis is the most dominant, appearing 95 times, reflecting the article’s strong emphasis on individual actors such as political leaders and public figures. This is followed by place deixis with 55 instances, indicating the significance of geographical context in reporting the war. Time deixis appears 35 times, helping structure the chronology of events. Discourse deixis has 25 occurrences, respectively, and social deixis is less frequent with 20 occurrences, yet still contributes to textual cohesion and the representation of social hierarchies. Overall, the diagram highlights how deixis is used pragmatically to shape narrative, assign blame, and position events within space and time.

Bagian ini berisi paparan hasil, analisis data serta pembahasan dari penulis. Pembahasan berisi pemaknaan hasil dan perbandingan dengan teori dan/atau hasil penelitian sejenis. Hasil penelitian dapat dilengkapi dengan tabel, gambar, dan/atau bagan. Judul tabel ditulis rata kiri kanan-bold-11, gambar ditulis rata tengah-bold-11 dan semua kata diawali huruf besar, kecuali kata



sambung. Hasil dan pembahasan ditulis dengan font Times New Roman-12, spasi 1,15. Tiap paragraf diawali kata yang menjorok ke dalam sekitar 1 cm dari tepi kiri tiap kolom.

Discussion

1. Types of deixis are predominantly used in the article

The analysis revealed that person deixis was the most dominant type found in BBC News articles, with 95 incidents. These findings are in line with the nature of political and war reporting, which often centers around key figures and stakeholders. The frequent use of names and pronouns such as *Trump*, *Zelensky*, *him*, *you*, *us*, and *they* shows a narrative emphasis on individual actors, their actions, and their ideological positions. The high frequency of deixis people shows how language is used not only to reference participants, but to establish their roles and responsibilities in conflict. In addition, the place of deixis (55) and the time of deixis (35) appear frequently, underscoring the importance of establishing spatial and temporal frameworks in the narrative. The presence of deixis (25) and social deixis (20) discourses, though less frequent, supports cohesion and highlights the role of institutions, demonstrating the multi-layered and multi-dimensional use of Deixis in shaping news.

2. Expressions pragmatically contribute to meaning-making and narrative framing

The deictic phrases identified in the article serve not only as a referential tool but also as a pragmatic device that frames the reader's interpretation. For example, person deixis is used to blame and position actors ideologically. Trump's use of second-person deixis in statements such as "You didn't start a war..." It functions rhetorically to direct accountability and evoke emotional engagement. Place deixis bases the narrative in specific geopolitical contexts such as *Sumy*, *Kyiv*, and *Washington*, reinforcing the proximity and international scope of the conflict. Time deixis, by marking specific events ("on Monday", "last month", "the day later"), helps the reader follow a coherent timeline and evaluate causality. These deixis discourses, such as *war and conflict*, enhance textual cohesion, allowing the narrative to flow without excessive repetition. Finally, social deixis frames hierarchical relationships and institutional credibility, as seen in titles such as *President*, *Secretary General*, and *Military*, which signify power dynamics and influence the perceived authority of statements.

3. The implications of these deictic choices for how political roles and actions are represented in the discourse

The use of deixis in articles serves as a strategic mechanism to build political narratives, shape perceptions, and subtly influence audience alignment. The remarkable use of person deixis reflects a personalized reporting approach that frames conflict through the lens of individual responsibility, especially highlighting the roles of Trump and Zelensky. This can lead the reader to interpret the war not only as a geopolitical conflict but also as a matter of personal decisions and leadership failures. In addition, spatial deixis emphasizes the international dimension of the crisis, embedding Western involvement (e.g., the White House, NATO) alongside local scenes (e.g., Sumy, Kyiv), thus framing the conflict as globally significant. Temporal markers place actions in development that can imply urgency or error. Social deixis, through an emphasis on roles and ranks, gives credibility to sources and strengthens institutional authority. Collectively, these deixic strategies contribute to ideological



framing, making audiences more accepting of certain interpretations of causes, consequences, and moral positions in conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the use of deixis in a BBC News article titled *“Trump blames Zelensky for starting war after massive Russian attack”*, focusing on five types of deixis: person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis, based on Levinson's pragmatic framework. The findings revealed that person deixis was the most dominant, followed by place and time deixis, while discourse and social deixis appeared less frequently but remained functionally significant.

The analysis shows that deixis in the article serves not only as a linguistic reference but also as a pragmatic tool for framing meaning, shaping narratives, and positioning political actors. Person deixis was used to emphasize responsibility and ideological stance, while spatial and temporal deixis provided contextual grounding and narrative coherence. Discourse deixis maintained textual unity, and social deixis highlighted institutional roles and power dynamics.

Overall, the study demonstrates that deixis plays a vital role in constructing political narratives in news discourse. It reflects how language is strategically used by media to influence audience perception, build alignment or opposition, and reinforce ideological interpretations of complex global conflicts. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how pragmatic elements operate in journalistic texts and affirm the importance of critical discourse analysis in media literacy.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is suggested that further research expand the object of study to various media platforms such as television news, podcasts, or social media to understand how the function of deixis varies in various formats and modes of communication. Comparative research between international media can also reveal broader patterns of ideological bias. For educators and linguists, it is important to include deixis analysis in pragmatic learning and discourse so that students are able to think critically about news texts and understand how language can shape perceptions and ideologies. Meanwhile, for journalists and media practitioners, awareness of deixis is crucial because the choice of language used can implicitly convey a certain perspective or bias. The use of more reflective language can help maintain a balance of reporting and strengthen the credibility of the media, especially in the context of reporting on political conflicts and wars.

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