# Deixis in English Textbook Used for Business Management Students: A Pragmatic Analysis

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**Abstract**   The study aims to measure how well the textbook supports students in attaining pragmatic proficiency in context-dependent professional communication. Applying a descriptive qualitative research, the study analyzes samples of text in the textbook according to the five deixis categories: person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis. The findings reveal that textbooks include diverse deictic expressions, but their pragmatic nature and context are not necessarily emphasized. Person deixis features prominently, as they are frequently used in business communication. However, other categories are still underrepresented, possibly limiting students from engaging with complex, hierarchical, and implicit relationships. These findings highlight the need for more pragmatically enriched material within ESP materials in order to better equip studentss for professional communication tasks.

**Keywords:** Business Communication; Deixis; English Textbook; Pragmatic Analysis

**Abstrak**   Penelitian ini menyelidiki representasi kata-kata deiksis dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggris yang digunakan untuk mengajar mahasiswa Manajemen Bisnis di Politeknik Negeri Medan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengukur sejauh mana buku teks tersebut mendukung mahasiswa dalam mencapai kecakapan pragmatik dalam komunikasi profesional yang bergantung pada konteks. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis contoh teks dalam buku tersebut berdasarkan lima kategori deiksis: persona, tempat, waktu, wacana, dan sosial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa buku teks mencakup berbagai ekspresi deiktik, namun sifat pragmatis dan konteks penggunaannya tidak selalu ditekankan. Deiksis persona muncul secara dominan karena sering digunakan dalam komunikasi bisnis. Namun, kategori lainnya masih kurang terwakili, yang kemungkinan membatasi kemampuan mahasiswa dalam memahami hubungan yang kompleks, hierarkis, dan implisit. Temuan ini menyoroti perlunya materi ESP yang lebih kaya secara pragmatik agar dapat membekali mahasiswa dengan lebih baik untuk tugas-tugas komunikasi profesional.

**Kata Kunci**: Komunikasi Bisnis; Deiksis; Buku Teks Bahasa Inggris; Analisis Pragmatik

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world of professions and academia, effective communication skills have become ever more important. Communication skills are crucial to success in business management education; thus, language skills (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2018; Sarudin et al., 2013) are an essential part of students' learning experiences. The aim of English through textbooks for business management students is to equip them with both subject knowledge and linguistic competence (Al Ghazali & Al Shamsi, 2024; Rahmadani et al., 2024). An understanding of deictic words and their appropriate usage is a valuable part of language competence since they serve a crucial function in creating meaning in context-dependent communication.

Deixis as a linguistic phenomenon anchors language in its situational context (Abdulameer, 2019; Ayyub & Tyas, 2023; Levinson, 1983; Natalia & Santoso, 2020). The expressions are essential for meaning interpretation in written and verbal communication, especially workplace communication when situational appropriateness, accuracy, and clarity are crucial. Deictic terms establish a connection between the text and its inferred meaning, which cannot be detached and must be conveyed in its contextual setting (Sari & Kurniawan, 2024). For business management students, studying deixis is not an abstract endeavor, but rather a practical skill that facilitates their competence to communicate professionally, negotiate meaning, and decipher implicit information in various communicative contexts (Qin & Uccelli, 2019). The types of deixis include person, time, place, discourse, and social relations (Levinson, 1983).

Person deixis deals with the conversational participants, distinguishing between the speaker (first person), receiver (second person), and others (third person), as Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996) stated. Place deixis has an interest in the location of the participants, with Levinson (1983) describing it as a reference to spatial location within the conversational context and Yule (1996) pointing out its connection to the position of the participant and the place of objects in the vicinity. Time deixis deals with temporal references, indicating the relative time of utterances or written messages, as explained by Levinson (1983). Discourse deixis is used in expressions that direct attention to areas of the discourse itself, enabling spoken or written text navigation Levinson (1983). Social deixis, lastly, deals with social relationships or distinctions among participants, expressing their identities or statuses within the conversational context Levinson (1983).

Business Management students at Politeknik Negeri Medan learn learn English from the first year to the third year, and there is an English textbook provided by the lecturer, especially in the first semester. It is important to look at how well the English textbook helps

students contextualize language use (Febriani & Guettaoui Bedra, 2023; Fitria, 2022; Usman et al., 2019) and whether it accurately reflects the demands of business communication in the actual world (Medriano & Bautista, 2020; Musdariah et al., 2021; Varol, 2023). This is with a view to helping prepare more extensively and pragmatically oriented study material for business management students. It is necessary to include pragmatic elements, like deixis, in language training as a means of filling the gap between scholarly research and usage.

This study differs from previous research because it is focused on deixis in English textbooks specifically designed for Business Management students. previous research has employed pragmatic analysis to examine deixis in any field of study, the research has not been on specific kinds of resources. For instance, Artelu & Indah (2023) explained the five types of deixis in the Cruella film based on Levinson's theory and how deixis functions in movie stories. Similarly, Sahusilawane et al. (2023) studied the pragmatic qualities of deixis and reference in Taylor Swift's song lyrics and the interaction among linguistic attributes and creative expression. Al-Hamzi et al. (2023) studied the common deictic words used by Yemeni-Arab preachers in Friday Islamic sermons and the function of deixis to support religious discourse, similar to the work of Alkhawaldeh (2022).

Contrary to the aforementioned studies, centered on deixis in entertainment and religious communication, the present study focuses on its pedagogical presentation in courseware and coursebooks and explains its role in preparing students with context-aware communication skills for professional business worlds. This new perspective bridges the gap between language teaching and pragmatic theory to facilitate pragmatically grounded learning materials. Such studies on deixis in certain textbooks have been conducted by several scholars (Josephine et al., 2021; Purba et al., 2024) on high school textbooks. However, this present study is unique in that it aims at studying the textbook used to teach English among Business Management students at Politeknik Negeri Medan with the view to understanding its efficacy in preparing the students to conduct professional communication in business.

The objective of the current study is to analyze the use and depiction of deixis in the English textbook used for Business Management students in Politeknik Negeri Medan, inlcuding the frequency. By examining the ways in which various types of deixis are embedded into the textbook content, the study attempts to evaluate whether or not the content actually enables students' ability to be context-sensitive and professionally appropriate in their communication.

**METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design in analyzing the use of deixis in English textbook for Business Management students studying English as a foreign language in their first semester at Politeknik Negeri Medan. Descriptive qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study since it allows for an in-depth exploration of linguistic phenomena in their naturalistic setting with a focus on the meaning and pattern of deictic expressions as they are presented in the textbook. The study seeks to explore how deixis is represented in the textbook by analyzing the examples of conversation to bring out the types, frequency, and contextual usage of deictic expressions. The analysis involves five categories of deixis proposed by Levinson (1983). These are person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis. The study, through these categories, focuses on determining the manner in which guide students in the use and understanding of deictic expressions effectively in professional contexts.

Data collection involves a close textual analysis of the textbook. Relevant deictic expressions are identified and categorized according to type (i.e., personal pronouns under person deixis, temporal adverbs under time deixis). Contextual information, such as surrounding discourse and communicative purpose of the deictic expressions, is also recorded to facilitate interpretation. Peer-debriefer was also employed to minimize bias on the analysis. Lincoln & Guba (1985) characterize this trustworthiness approach as a process in which researchers engage in a structured analytical argument with a disinterested peer. This technique is designed to expose covert aspects of the research question or objectives and, concurrently, reduce potential biases in data analysis.

**RESULT**

This study suggests the use of deixis in an English textbook for first-semester business management courses. Based on the analysis of conversation examples, researchers have concluded trends in the frequency of occurrence of deictic expressions and their distribution within categories. Look at following table:

**Table 1. Distribution of Deictic Expressions in the English Textbook**

| Category | Instances | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Person Deixis | 176 | 65.43 |
| Place Deixis | 31 | 11.52 |
| Time Deixis | 23 | 8.55 |
| Discourse Deixis | 19 | 7.06 |

| Social Deixis | 20 | 7.44 |
|---|---|---|
| **Total** | 269 | 100 |

The analysis of the deictic expressions illustrates that the most frequent category is person deixis, which appears 176 times, revealing the central role participants play in communication. Place deixis appears 31 times, and it refers to locations. Time deixis appears 23 times, illustrating an intermediate level of frequency for temporal references. Discourse deixis, which functions in organizing conversation by references to the components of the discourse itself, appears 19 times. Finally, 20 instances of social deixis reveal the importance of social relations and social roles in language use. The evidence also leads to the conclusion that person deixis is used most frequently, since people are the main subject of talk most of the time, whereas place, time, discourse, and social deixis are employed for narrow aims in communication. See the following excerpts:

1. **Person Deixis**
   a. "Good morning, students!": ['students' refers to the addressees.]
   b. "I'd like to introduce myself to you": ['I' refers to the speaker; 'you' refers to the audience.]
   c. "My name is Ratna Angel": ['My' refers to the speaker.]
   d. "Thank you, Madam": ['You' is implied and refers to 'Madam'.]
   e. "Raina, can you go shopping for me, please?": ['You' and 'me' reflect the roles of addressee and speaker, respectively.]

2. **Place Deixis**
   a. "I live on Jalan Mongonsidi, Medan": ['on Jalan Mongonsidi, Medan' specifies the speaker's residence.]
   b. "Where are you living now?": ['Where' is a deictic term requiring contextual interpretation.]
   c. "On Fifth Avenue in an apartment": ['On Fifth Avenue' specifies the current location.]
   d. "The supermarket is on the fifth": ['on the fifth' depends on the building's structure.]
   e. "It's on the thirteenth floor": ['on the thirteenth floor' refers to a specific part of the building.]

3. **Time Deixis**
   a. "What day is it today, Pram?": ['Today' indicates the current day.]
   b. "Well, yesterday was Wednesday": ['Yesterday' refers to the day before the utterance.]
   c. "Tomorrow is Friday": ['Tomorrow' refers to the day after the utterance.]

d. "It's October the thirteenth": ['October the thirteenth' refers to the specific date in relation to the time of speaking.]

e. "It's 7.30": ['It's' referencing the current time.]

4. **Discourse Deixis (References within the text or discourse)**

a. "What does that word mean?": ['That' points to a previous part of the discourse.]

b. ""That's Dedy Syaifulloh."": ['That' explains the person they are talking about.]

c. "What about that one on the shelf?": ['That' specifies one particular thing on a specific place.]

5. **Social Deixis (References indicating social relationships or roles)**

a. "Good morning, Madam": ['Madam' indicates a polite or formal address and acknowledges social roles.]

b. "Yes, Sir": ['Sir' is a formal address showing respect.]

c. "You're welcome": [The polite response reinforces social norms of interaction.]

These findings point out the importance of deixis in designing conversations and making interaction natural. The universality of person deixis reveals how important the employment of deixis is for speakers to establish relationships and connect to others. Place and time deixis, on the other hand, help to provide meaning by situating conversation in places and times. Discourse deixis sustains the continuity of the conversation, ensuring ideas relate to each other, while social deixis expresses respect and formality—two key ingredients for formal communication. Overall, the application of deixis in the textbook simulates authentic conversations for students.

This study aims to determine the type of deictic expressions used in the English textbook for Business Management students based on the theory proposed by Levinson (1983). Based on the findings, person deixis is the most common category with 176 occurrences. This result aligns with findings of previous studies (Josephine et al., 2021; Purba et al., 2024), which state that person deixis is the most common form of deixis in the textbook. This is a characteristic of the interpersonal and dialogic nature of the discussions, whereby participants usually address themselves and each other by employing the use of pronouns such as I, you, he, she, and we. This is typical in spoken interactions where individuals frequently address or refer to each other (Artelu & Indah, 2023; Sahusilawane et al., 2023). The preponderance of person deixis points to the importance of addressing others appropriately while engaging in conversation. Students of business management must understand the appropriate use of pronouns and terms of address in ensuring rapport building, negotiation, and professional

relationships. For instance, the use of I, you, and we in speech can set the tone of collaboration or domination in business discourse.

Place deixis appears 31 times, indicating spatial references used to direct actions or describe locations (e.g., here, there, this, and that). While this result has indicated that place deixis is the second most frequent deictic expressions utilized in the textbook, findings from Josephine et al. (2021) and Purba et al. (2024) shows that it is the third most frequent. While less prominent than person deixis, it helps in giving instructions or pointing to objects and places with regards to the topic of conversation (Al-Hamzi et al., 2023). Place deixis is especially critical in business contexts, especially in meetings, presentations, and workplace interactions, where spatial indicators are commonly employed. Use of words like here, there, this, and that allows for giving exact directions, referring to office layouts, or pointing to specific documents or items. Business students must skillfully utilize place deixis to avoid confusion when marking out physical or virtual space.

Time deixis is used 23 times, primarily to reference temporal aspects relative to the speaker's moment of speaking (e.g., now, later, and then). This result differs from the findings of the previous study conducted by Purba et al. (2024) which shows that time deixis is the second most frequent deictic expressions found in the textbook. Its usage highlights the dynamic nature of conversations, where time frames are often mentioned to sequence actions or events (Al-Hamzi et al., 2023; Artelu & Indah, 2023). On-time planning and organization are crucial in business settings. Use of time deixis such as now, then, and later reflects the way speakers organize actions or predict deadlines and timelines. For business students, being familiar with time deixis is essential for the coordination of meetings, project scheduling, and appropriate talk about schedules in oral and written language.

Discourse deixis appears 19 times, functioning to refer to parts of the discourse itself, such as previous or upcoming statements (e.g., this, that). This result is consistent with the findings of previous studies, which indicate that discourse deixis is not prominently represented in the textbook (Josephine et al., 2021; Purba et al., 2024). This is less frequent but still relevant for maintaining coherence in conversations. Discourse deixis helps speakers organize conversations and presentations by referring to parts of the discourse itself (Artelu & Indah, 2023; Levinson, 1983). For example, in a business meeting or report, referring back to a previous point or introducing a new one ensures coherence and structure. This is a skill the students have to develop if he or she wants to be proficient at writing business reports, giving presentations, and discussing professionally.

Finally, social deixis, repeated 20 times, reflects the social hierarchies and relations among the participants. It contrasts to the findings of previous study (Josephine et al., 2021)

that shows social deixis as the second most used deictic expressions in the textbook. Titles and terms of address like sir, Mrs. Jackson, and madam demonstrate respect, formality, or familiarity based on the context. Social deixis demonstrates the importance of respecting social hierarchies and cultural norms in communication (Artelu & Indah, 2023; Levinson, 1983; Sari & Kurniawan, 2024). Phrases such as sir, Mrs. Jackson, and madam in the text illustrate how speakers refer to others depending on their relationship or rank. Business students must learn how to control formal and informal social relationships with the use of titles and honorifics to express respect and become credible in the modern international business environment.

Though the textbook provides examples of deixis under all five categories, it is not an even breakdown with the person deixis happening most often. This limited description of the other types of deixis could impact students' ability to fully grasp pragmatic aspects of business communication, particularly in handling hierarchical relationships, referring to discourse constituents, and governing spatial as well as temporal contexts. Nevertheless, the existing deictic expressions on the textbook can help students to understand the meaning and the message conveyed (Josephine et al., 2021; Purba et al., 2024). In order to enhance pragmatic competence of the students further, greater balanced incorporation of all types of deixis in the textbook would be beneficial.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings indicate that although textbooks possess a variety of deictic expressions, they do not always foreground their pragmatic and contextual roles. Person deixis is decidedly reinforced in line with their typical use in business communication. Place, time, discourse, and social deixis are, comparatively, less foregrounded and may discourage students from effectively managing complex interactions involving hierarchical structures and implicit reference. The findings from the analysis of deixis underscore its importance in the development of communicative competence for business management students studying English. By understanding and applying different types of deixis, students are able to develop their ability to communicate effectively in workplaces, thus ensuring their success in the corporate world. There are certain areas that can be explored by future researchers to build on these findings. Studies can examine the impact of direct teaching of deixis on the communicative competence of learning students in business English. Experimental studies contrasting traditional textbook-based instruction with teaching that includes pragmatic and contextual deixis training could uncover effective pedagogical strategies.

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