



Deixis Analysis Of Webtoon Comic *Your Letter* By Hyeon A Cho

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Abstract

Deixis is a linguistic term that functions as referring to or showing something based on the context by using a word. This study aims to find the types of deixis, analyze the functions of each deixis, and identify how context of situation can strengthen the type and the function of deixis in the webtoon comic "Your Letter" by Hyeon A Cho by applying the theory of deixis by Levinson (1983) and the theory of context of situation by Halliday and Hasan (1991). The data were collected from the webtoon comic "Your Letter" by Hyeon A Cho. This study is deskwork research that employs purposive sampling, a non-probability technique. The data were collected using note-taking techniques. A qualitative method and content analysis technique are used to analyze the data found in this study. The data analysis is presented in a descriptive narrative format and an informal method. It is presented using a textual form or a collection of words.

The results showed that all deixis types are present in the webtoon, each functions as pointing to the speaker, the addressee, and the third person, time and the location of the event, the portion of the ongoing discourse itself, social relationship. Furthermore, the study revealed that the context of situation explains how those deictic words function dynamically within field, tenor, and mode. The field helps to explain how deixis helps represent a clear background of the utterances. The tenor helps to clarify how deixis encodes the speaker, addressee, and the third-person relation of each participant, as well as the role of each participant. The mode helps to show how deixis is strengthened through expression and speech.

Keywords: *Deixis, Levinson, Webtoon, Context of Situation.*

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is the act of transferring messages, including ideas, information, and beliefs, from one individual to another or a group (Sallis and Sallis, 1988). It is essential to human interaction because it allows people to communicate, connect with one another, as well as aware of their surroundings. Through gestures, written, or spoken words, or even visual media communication acts as a link between people and societies. Interpreting meaning, context, and intention belongs to communication, which is a more comprehensive definition of communication than just exchanging words. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how to see and interact with the world.

In linguistics, one important branch of the study of communication is pragmatics. One of the core components of pragmatics is deixis. Deixis refers to a language where some expressions need context in order to convey meaning which is derived from the Greek language means 'to point' or 'to indicate' (Levinson, 1983). Words like "this", "that", "now", "then", "I", and "mommy", are some kinds of deictic expressions which have meanings that vary based on the speaker's location, point of view, and time. Deixis is a vital element of everyday discourse since it helps speakers to effectively refer to objects, and acts within the context of their surroundings.

Understanding deixis is one of the key elements that need to be understood when analyzing the meaning of the context comprehensively especially when analyzing varied forms of communication, such as that found in webtoons, a form of digital comics combining text and visuals. In recent years, digital comics, such as comics that exist in webtoons, have become a popular kind of reading. It is supported by the article from Forbes that said that in 2021, Webtoon drew over 72 million monthly active users, while now, according to the Webtoon article itself said that by June 2025, there are around 155 million monthly active users. However, despite the growing popularity of webtoon comics, research on them remains limited, especially from the perspective of deixis. Whereas in multimodal platforms like comics on Webtoon, deixis takes on a unique form, blending both visual and textual elements to create meaning. Nevertheless, the detailed dynamics of Deixis's role in these visual narratives have not yet been fully investigated. This is a particularly significant issue since a deeper comprehension of how deixis works may bring an understanding of wider features of communication in multimodal storytelling, which contributes to both linguistic and literary studies.

A large gap exists between what has been researched which mostly focused on traditional texts like novels, audio media like songs or albums, or audiovisual media like movies, and the reality of varied forms of storytelling in webtoons comics. Previous studies on deixis have mostly focused on media such as dramas, novels, songs, and movies. For instance, the undergraduate thesis entitled "An Analysis of Deixis in *Pride and Prejudice* Movie" written by Mawadah (2022), this study focused on deixis found in the Movie. Very limited studies have been conducted on webtoons comics. That is the reason why the deeper analysis of deixis used in varied forms of storytelling such as the combination of text and visual is the main focus of this study by using deixis theory proposed by Levinson (1983) as the main theory and context of situation by Halliday and Hasan (1991) as a supporting theory to analyze the context of situation to analyze how context of situation helps the interpretation in deixis in webtoon comic. This study chose the webtoon comic authored by Hyeon A Cho entitled "Your Letter" as the data source. This particular webtoon was selected because its story, although involving a relatively small number of characters, is compact, coherent, and effective in achieving its communicative goals. The limited character representation allows the storyline to remain focused, while still conveying meaningful emotional and social messages. Furthermore, the utterance itself demonstrates a frequent and varied use of deixis, which provides a rich source of data that can be analyzed.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative method and content analysis technique are used to analyze the data found in this study. The qualitative method focuses on collecting and analyzing information that is especially non-numerical. It usually focuses on a smaller number of cases or examples that are considered meaningful or important to study. The main aim is to explore the cases in detail so that the study can provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied, rather than just giving a broad or general picture (Blaxter, et.al. 2006). The qualitative method was chosen because this study does not focus on the quantity of the numbers the deixis appears, but on the analysis of the types and functions of deixis in the webtoon. Furthermore, according to Esterberg (2002), content analysis is an analysis method that examines any type of material including books, magazines, letters, diaries, TV show transcripts, and etcetera. This method focuses on interpreting the meanings of deictic words or expressions within their context, examining how textual and visual elements interact to make meaning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and the discussions of this study. The theory of deixis proposed by Levinson (1983), which classified deixis into five types those are personal deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis which each of them has its own function, is used to analyze the findings. In addition, the theory context of situation proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1991) to support the analysis of the type and function of deixis in the webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho. The results and the discussions are explained below, as follows:

Synopsis

A webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho tells about Sori, who is a kind and caring student who always tries to do the right thing. Unfortunately, those qualities are not always appreciated in middle school. At her old school, she was bullied because she defended other students, and soon she became the main target herself. Because of the burden that she gets, she moves to another school to find a better new beginning.

One day, at her new school, she finds a trail of mysterious letters. These letters lead her on a sort of treasure hunt through secret places in her new school. Through these letters, they help her to feel welcome as the letters make her discover secrets, make new friends, get to know the school well, and learn about kindness, nature. However, the question is, who is the person who wrote the letter?

The Types and Functions of Deixis

No.	Type of Deixis	Total
1	Person deixis	858
2	Time deixis	53
3	Place deixis	135
4	Discourse deixis	107
5	Social deixis	38

	Total	1.191
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Table 3.1 The Distribution of the Findings

Based on the findings, there are five types of deixis were identified, namely personal deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Person deixis, including pronouns such as I, you, and they, referring to participants in the discourse occurs 858 times. Time deixis includes temporal expressions like now and tomorrow, indicating the time of the utterance occurs 53 times. Place deixis includes here, there, this, and that, indicating the place of the utterance occurs 135 times. Discourse deixis includes this, that, and it, indicating something in the discourse occurs 107 times. Social deixis includes relational social deixis, such as mom, uncle, and grandma, and absolute social deixis, such as Mrs., and Sir.. which occurs 38 times.

The following provides detailed discussions about the types and functions of deixis proposed by Levinson (1983). In addition, discuss how the context of situation supports the analysis of the type and function of deixis in the webtoon comic “Your Letter” by Hyeon A Cho by using the theory of context of situation proposed by Halliday and Hasan and Hasan (1991). A total of 15 data containing deictic expressions were selected as the main sample. These data samples were selected so that the analysis could be easily understood and avoid repetitive explanations to the reader.

Person deixis

As stated by Levinson (1983), the person deixis is divided into three subcategories, namely first person, second person, and third person which all of them having different functions. Below is the analysis of them.

Data [3-1]



Picture 3.1 The picture of the data [3-1]

Sori’s utterance: *How about you guys?*

Emily’s utterance: *I bring leftovers from home. My family runs a side dish store.*

Sara’s utterance: *I’m part of the school volleyball team, so I’m also on a meal plan.*

Heiley’s utterance: *I just bring whatever I wanna eat. (Episode 3)*

The data above is taken from the Webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho on episode 3. The bold words “you guys” above are person deixis, specifically belonging to the category of second-person plural deixis, since it is followed by the word “guys” that indicates a group or more than one person. In general, the pronoun “you” functions to point to the addressee in the conversation. Moreover, the words “I” and “my” above are person deixis, specifically belonging to the category of first-person deixis. The pronouns “I” and “my” refer depending on the speaker. As Levinson stated, person deixis, specifically first person deixis, functions to point to the speaker, meaning it can be different based on who is the one who talks.

Specifically, the function of the words “you guys,” “I,” “my” in that utterance can be supported through the field, tenor, and mode of the context of situation by Halliday and Hasan (1991). Field, in this context, is an interaction in which a character called Sori asks the reason why the other brings lunch by saying “*How about **you guys**?*” and the others called Emily, Sara, Heiley explain how or the reason why they got food for lunch from home. The tenor shows that there are four female students who can be considered as school classmates or friends, as they talk informally and wear the same uniform. The one student known as Sori asks “*How about **you guys**?*” and the others, Emily answers by saying, “***I** bring leftovers from home. **My** family runs a side dish store.*”, while Sara answers by saying, “***I’m** part of the school volleyball team, so **I’m** also on a meal plan.*” And Heiley answers by saying, “***I** just bring whatever **I** wanna eat.” Based on this context, the role of each person in the communication is different; who says the word is the speaker, while the other is the addressee. The word “you guys” in Sori’s utterance means that she is the speaker, functions as a deictic expression that points to the addressees, namely Emily, Sara, and Heiley as a group. In response, each of the three students uses the pronoun “I” and or “my” in their answers to gesturally nominate themselves as individuals form within the group that has been addressed. For instance, Emily says, “***I** bring leftovers from home. **My** family runs a side dish store.*”, while Sara explains, “***I’m** part of the school volleyball team, so **I’m** also on a meal plan.*” And Heiley adds by saying, “***I** just bring whatever **I** wanna eat.” In this way, the function “I” and “my” shift the focus from the plural addressee, which is “you guys”, to individual self-reference, showing that each student speaks for herself rather than for the group as a whole. In addition, the mode shows that the interaction or communication happens in a face-to-face speech setting, which is portrayed in the picture where Sori, Emily, Sara, and Heiley sit together to eat their own lunch. Through this context of situation, it strengthens the type and function of the deixis “you guys,” “I” and “my” and it helps to show that the specific function of deixis “you guys” is to point to more than one addressee, who are Emily, Sara, and Heiley, while “I” and “my” function to self-reference to each speaker who says the utterance.**

Time deixis

Data [3-2]



Picture 3.2 The picture of the data [3-2]

Yeon's utterance: *Woah, **now** you're hitting the target every time!*
(Episode 6)

The data above is taken from the Webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho on episode 6. The bold word "now" above is time deixis. In general, the adverb "now" refers to the present moment, the moment when the speaker says the utterance.

Specifically, the function of the word "now" in that utterance can be supported through the field, tenor, and mode of the context of situation by Halliday and Hasan (1991). Field, in this context, is an interaction in which a character called Yeon is commenting about how the other character called Eugene is practicing archery in the archery range by saying, "*Woah, **now** you're hitting the target every time!*" The use of the word "now" is used to anchor the evaluation in the present moment performance as Yeon sees it, pointing to Eugene's current success. The tenor shows that there are two male students who can be considered as school classmates or friends, as they talk informally, one who comments about how the other is practicing archery by saying, "*Woah, **now** you're hitting the target every time!*" and the other one who hits the target and is surprised to hear the comment. Based on this context, the role of each person in the communication is different; who says the word or gives a comment is the speaker, while the other is the addressee. Meanwhile mode shows that the interaction or communication happens in a face-to-face speech setting, which is portrayed in the picture where Yeon, as the speaker, gives a comment while looking at Eugene, as the addressee, who hits the target and slightly tries to look at Yeon. Through this context of situation, it strengthens the type and function of the deixis "now" and helps to show that the specific function of deixis "now" indicates to the present moment—the moment Yeon is speaking and the moment when Eugene is successfully hitting the target again and again.

Place deixis
Data [3-3]



Picture 3.3 The picture of the data [3-3]

Sori's utterance: *I think... **this** is for you!* (Episode 6)

The data above is taken from the Webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho on episode 6. The bold word “this” above is a place deixis, specifically belonging to proximal place deixis. In general, “this” functions to locate the thing that is near the speaker as the center of the conversation.

Specifically, the function of the word “this” in that utterance can be supported through the field, tenor, and mode of the context of situation by Halliday and Hasan (1991). Field, in this context, is an interaction in which a character called Sori, hands over an envelope, and the other character, who is the receiver, called Eugene, looks at the giver. The tenor shows that there are two friends as they talk informally and wear the same uniform, one who hands over the envelope together by saying the utterance, “*I think... **this** is for you!*” and the other one who looks at the person who hands over and says something. The use of “this” here is to indicate that the thing is close to someone who says the utterance. Based on this context, the role of each person in the communication is different; who says the word is the speaker, while the other is the addressee. Meanwhile mode shows that the interaction or communication happens in a face-to-face speech setting, which is portrayed in the picture where Sori, as the speaker, hands over the envelope and says the utterance while she looks at Yeon, as the addressee, who also looks at Sori and the envelope. Through this context of situation, it strengthens the type and function of the deixis “this” and helps to show that the specific function of deixis “this” indicates that the object or the envelope is close to the Sori as speaker since she is the one who holds it.

Discourse deixis **Data [3-4]**



Picture 3.4 The picture of the data [3-4]

Eugene's utterance: ... *You know what? You're the amazing one here.*

Yeon's utterance: *What? Say **that** again.* (Episode 6)

The data above is taken from the Webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho on episode 6. The bold word “that” above is a discourse deixis, specifically belonging to anaphoric discourse deixis. In general, the word “that” is a linguistic expression that is used to point back to a previous sentence or idea in the conversation.

Specifically, the function of the word “that” in that utterance can be supported through the field, tenor, and mode of the context of the situation by Halliday and Hasan (1991). Field, in this context, is an interaction in which a character, known as Eugene, thinks that he made a mistake by telling the committee he was the one who made a fire, even though it was actually Sean who caused it. He feels small and sad about his decision. However, another character called Yeon reassures him by saying that he is amazing, that he can make that kind of decision. In response, Eugene tells Yeon, “... *You know what? You're the amazing one here.*” Then, Yeon replies, “*What? Say **that** again.*” The tenor shows that there are two male students called Eugene and Yeon who are having a conversation in a comfortable place founded by a character called Yeon, where they can lie down together. The first speaker is Eugene, who says, “... *You know what? You're the amazing one here.*” As a compliment to Yeon, then the utterance followed by Yeon's comment, “*What? Say **that** again.*” As he wants to hear again the compliment that Eugene gave to him by using the word “that” to point back to a previous sentence or idea in the conversation. Based on this context, the roles of both participants in the communication are the same; when each says the word is the speaker, while the other, who receives the information, is the addressee. In addition, the mode shows that the interaction or communication happens in a face-to-face speech setting, supported by visual gazing toward each other. Through this context of situation, it strengthens the type and function of the deixis “that”, and it helps to show that the specific function of deixis “that” is to point back to a previous sentence or idea in the conversation made by Eugene, which is “*You're the amazing one here.*”

Social deixis

Data [3-5]



Picture 3.5 The picture of the data [3-5]

Sori's utterance: ***Mrs. Kim?*** (Episode 2)

The data above is taken from the Webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho on episode 2. The bold word "Mrs." above is a social deixis, specifically belonging to absolute social deixis, since it encodes a formal title. In general, the word "Mrs." functions to indicate a different social status and professional respect.

Specifically, the function of the words "Mrs." in that utterance can be supported through the field, tenor, and mode of the context of the situation by Halliday and Hasan (1991). Field, in this context, is an interaction in which a character, Sori is helping a cat named Buha who is stuck in the tree. When Buha is finally able to move, he suddenly jumps, startling Sori and causing her to fall to the ground. Right after this, another character, Sunny Kim approaches and thanks Sori for her help. While having eye contact, Sori recognizes that the person is Sunny Kim, even though she has never seen her. Thus, she calls her "***Mrs. Kim?***" with a question mark in the end to make sure that the person in front of her is Sunny Kim, the person whom Yeon introduced to her in the letter. The tenor shows that there are a female student, called Sori, who are sitting on the ground and looking at a woman with her janitor uniform, called Mrs. Kim. Based on this context, the role of each person in the communication is different; who says the word is the speaker, while the other is the addressee. Since the speaker is a student, she uses "Mrs." to call Kim to indicate a different social status and professional respect to the school janitor, who is older than her. In addition, the mode shows that the interaction or communication happens in a face-to-face speech setting, supported by Sori's visual gazing toward Mrs. Kim. Through this context of situation, it strengthens the type and function of the deixis "Mrs.", and it helps to show that the specific function of deixis "Mrs." is to encode a formal title that indicates a different social status and professional respect to the school janitor, Kim, from Sori as a student.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that all of the types of deixis based on Levinson's theory (1983) were found in the webtoon comic *Your Letter* by Hyeon A Cho, such as person deixis in total 858 deictic word, time deixis in total 53 deictic words, place deixis in total 135 deictic words, discourse deixis in total 107 deictic words, and social deixis in total 38 deictic words. In the person deixis, there were three categories that can be found, such as first person deixis, second person deixis, and third person deixis. First-person deixis consists of the pronouns "I" and "we" and their own variations, the second-person deixis consists of the pronoun "you" and its variations, and the third-person deixis consists of the pronouns "she," "he," "it," "they," and their own variations. Time deixis includes words like "now," "today," and "yesterday." Place deixis includes words like "this," "that," "these,"

“those.” Discourse deixis includes words like “this” and “that.” Meanwhile, the social deixis includes words like “Sir,” “Mrs.,” “grandma,” and so on.

Each of the types of deixis above has its own function depending on which category they belong to. In the person deixis, there are functions such as, first-person deixis functions to point to the speaker, second-person deixis functions to point to the addressee, and third-person deixis functions to point to someone who is neither the speaker nor the addressee. Time deixis functions to point to or indicate the time of the event. Place deixis functions to point to or indicate the location of the event. Discourse deixis functions to point to the part of the discourse, whether it is anaphoric or cataphoric. On the other hand, social deixis functions to indicate or point to someone based on their title, formal calls, or family bond.

In addition, the context situation, a theory from Halliday and Hasan (1991), provides an essential framework for interpreting these functions. The field helps to explain how deixis helps represent a clear background of the utterances. The tenor helps to clarify how deixis encodes the speaker, addressee, and the third-person relation of each participant, as well as the role of each participant. The mode helps to show how deixis is strengthened through expression and speech.

By combining Levinson’s theory of deixis with Halliday and Hasan’s context of situation, the analysis demonstrates that deixis is not merely a grammatical category but also a key pragmatic resource. It situates utterances’ relation with time, place, discourse, person, and social relations, while the context of situation explains how those references function dynamically within field, tenor, and mode. This combined perspective makes it possible to explain both the structural type of each deixis and its communicative function in the narrative.

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