

**DEIXIS ANALYSIS OF MOTAZ AZAIZA'S  
INSTAGRAM POSTS**

**A GRADUATING PAPER**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining  
the Bachelor's Degree in English Department



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**2025**

## MOTTO

“And He found you lost, then guided you”

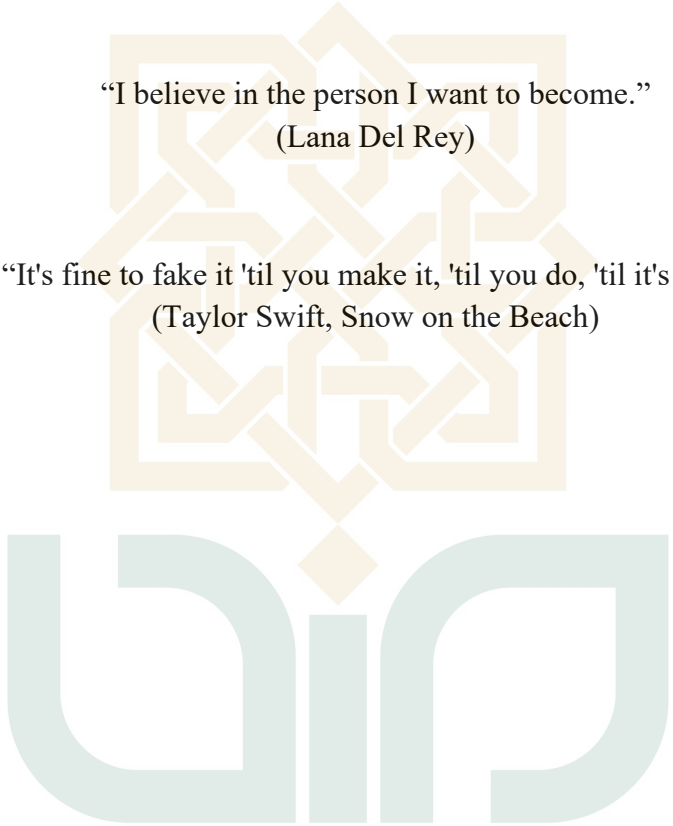
(Qur'an 93:7)

“I believe in the person I want to become.”

(Lana Del Rey)

“It's fine to fake it 'til you make it, 'til you do, 'til it's true.”

(Taylor Swift, Snow on the Beach)



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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and myself, for doing what needed to be done.





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Kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang munaqosyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatian Bapak Dekan, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

*Wassalamu'alaikum Warohmatullahi Wabarakatuh.*

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## A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, all praises be to Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for the countless blessings and strength that have enabled me to complete this thesis. My utmost respect and gratitude also go to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who has guided us from darkness into light. This thesis represents not only a requirement for my undergraduate degree but also a journey of learning and growth. It would not have been possible to complete this work without the help, support, and encouragement of many individuals. Therefore, with deep appreciation, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

1. Rector of UIN Sunan Kalijaga: Prof. Noorhaidi, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.
2. The Dean of Adab and Cultural Sciences Faculty, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Prof. Dr. Nurdin, S.Ag., SS., M.A.
3. The Head of English Department, Dr. Ulyati Retno Sari, S.S., M.Hum.
4. The author's Thesis Advisor, Bambang Hariyanto, S.S., M.A., Ph.D.
5. The author's Academic Advisor, Dr. Ulyati Retno Sari, S.S., M.Hum.
6. The rest of English Department Lecturers, Aninda Aji Siwi, S.Pd., M.Pd., Anisah Durrotul Fajri, SS., M.Hum., Dr. Arif Budiman, S.S., M.A., Dr. Danial Hidayatullah, SS., M.Hum., Dr. Dwi Margo Yuwono, M.Hum., Febriyanti Dwiratna Lestari, SS., MA., Fuad Arif Fudiyartanto, S.Pd. M.Hum., M.Ed., Ph.D., Harsiwi Fajar Sari, SS., M.A., Dr. Ubaidillah, S.S., M.Hum., Dr. Witriani, S.S. M.Hum.
7. Thank you to my beloved parents, Agung Prihananto and Sri Hartanti, for the endless love, prayers, and unwavering support throughout my academic journey. I am deeply grateful for your sacrifices, encouragement, and belief in me.
8. To my younger brother, Ananda Tito Aditya, thank you for being a source of joy and motivation. Thank you for always reminds me to stay strong and keep moving forward.
9. Thank you to all my family, especially to Vien Abdi Pratiwi and Vita Pusyawati, for the generous support and care throughout my study. Your kindness that helps me during my college years, means the world to me. Thank you for believing in me.
10. To my dearest friends during college, Putri Annafi, Farah Rizki Aulia, Jihan Nurhanifah, and Farida Azzahro, I am truly grateful to have met all of you. Thank you for the laughter, support, and companionship throughout this

academic journey. Your presence made the hard times bearable and the good times unforgettable.

11. I also want to express my heartfelt thanks to Istianah Khoiriah and Annisa Isnaini Nurfaiza, for always being there for me through every phase of life. Thank you for the constant encouragement, love, and understanding.
12. To all my friends in the English Literature, especially Class A, thank you very much for the support, laughter, and togetherness throughout these years.
13. To all people who have supported and helped me during this journey, thank you very much for your kindness. May Allah always bless you with health, happiness, and success.
14. Last but not least, to myself, thank you for not giving up, even when things got tough. This thesis is a reminder that I am capable of more than I thought.

Finally, I am truly thankful for every moment, challenge, and lesson throughout this process. This thesis marks the end of my undergraduate journey, but also the beginning of many more to come. May this work be a small contribution to the field of linguistics and inspire future research.

**Yogyakarta, 12 July 2025**



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# DEIXIS ANALYSIS OF MOTAZ AZAIZA’S INSTAGRAM POSTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of deixis in the Instagram posts of Motaz Azaiza, a Palestinian photojournalist whose work gained global attention during the Gaza conflict in October–November 2023. The research focuses on identifying the types of deixis present and analyzing their referential meanings. Employing Levinson’s (1983) deixis typology and a descriptive qualitative method, the researcher analyzed 30 posts consisting of captions and accompanying visuals. The findings reveal that four types of deixis—person, temporal, spatial, and discourse deixis—were found in the data. Person deixis was the most frequent, reflecting how Motaz positioned himself both as an individual eyewitness and as part of a collective identity, often referring to Palestinian civilians through “we” and “they.” Temporal deixis situated events in time, while spatial deixis grounded the narrative in specific locations in Gaza. Discourse deixis guided readers through the flow of the narrative across captions and posts. Social deixis was absent, which aligns with the informal, emotionally direct style of communication used by the author.

**Keywords:** *Deixis, Instagram, Palestine, Motaz Azaiza*

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# DEIXIS ANALYSIS OF MOTAZ AZAIZA'S INSTAGRAM POSTS

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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji penggunaan deiksis dalam unggahan Instagram milik Motaz Azaiza, seorang jurnalis foto asal Palestina yang karyanya mendapat perhatian dunia selama konflik Gaza pada Oktober–November 2023. Fokus penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis deiksis yang digunakan serta menganalisis makna referensialnya. Dengan menggunakan tipologi deiksis Levinson (1983) dan metode deskriptif kualitatif, peneliti menganalisis 30 unggahan yang terdiri dari teks keterangan (caption) dan visual pendukung. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat empat jenis deiksis—persona, temporal, spasial, dan wacana—dalam data. Deiksis persona merupakan yang paling dominan, mencerminkan bagaimana Motaz memposisikan dirinya baik sebagai saksi mata individu maupun sebagai bagian dari identitas kolektif, misalnya melalui kata “kami” dan “mereka” yang merujuk pada warga sipil Palestina dan. Deiksis temporal digunakan untuk menempatkan peristiwa dalam kerangka waktu, sedangkan deiksis spasial mengaitkan narasi dengan lokasi spesifik di Gaza. Deiksis wacana digunakan untuk memandu pembaca melalui alur narasi dalam satu unggahan maupun antar unggahan. Deiksis sosial tidak ditemukan, sejalan dengan gaya komunikasi informal dan emosional langsung yang digunakan oleh penulis.

**Kata Kunci:** *Deiksis, Instagram, Palestina, Motaz Azaiza*

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Language as a communication tool plays an important role in human interaction. Language allows humans to convey their ideas, desires, feelings, and experiences to others (Nasution & Tambunan, 2022). Crystal (2011) as cited in Prudencio & Bolger (2023) states that language plays a key part in the creation of online identities and has an impact on social interaction and communication. In the digital movement, language also acts not only as a tool to convey information but also as a means of building emotional bonds between influencers and their audiences.

The advent of social media has amplified the role of language as a tool for communication and transformation. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook enable individuals and organizations to voice their perspectives, share information, and advocate for social causes on a global scale. Ivane (2022) explains that the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made it easier for people to stay connected and support each other across different locations and times. Social media has thus become a significant platform for raising awareness and mobilizing support for pressing humanitarian issues.

One important issue that has become a topic of discussion on the international stage is the Palestinian issue. The long-standing conflict has led to many human rights violations, population displacement, and loss of life. For many years, many in the Western world paid little or no attention to or expressed support

for Palestine. However, the scale of violence and the severity of the conflict in the last six months have changed the attitude of indifference towards the Palestinian cause, as more and more people have begun to show their concern and express their support (Moqbel, 2024). This shift in public opinion is closely tied to the effective use of social media as a platform for advocacy.

Various social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook allow people to voice information about what is happening in Palestine to the world. Several top influencers and artists have also voiced their support for Palestine. For instance, Bella Hadid that voiced her concern for Palestine on her social media. One journalist who also plays a very important role in this is Motaz Azaiza. He is a journalist from Gaza. Through his Instagram account, which has approximately 18.5 million followers, he shares the daily conditions experienced by the Palestinian people through photos/videos and captions.

Ayu and Muslim (2023) explain that deixis can cause misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener if the listener does not understand what the speaker is talking about or is not present at the time of the utterance. This highlights the importance of context in interpreting deictic expressions in social media communication. The references and intentions embedded in Motaz's writings are closely related to the socio-political context of the situation in Gaza. Therefore, analyzing the language's usage cannot be separated from its context. This is where pragmatics becomes an important approach to understanding the language used.

One of the studies in pragmatics is deixis, a linguistic element that refers to things that cannot be fully understood without looking at the context. According to

Levinson (1983), deixis includes pronouns of person, time, and place that are used to establish a personal relationship between the speaker and their audience. These deictic expressions help to place the events and referents in a certain context, which is important for understanding the intended meaning.

Referring to Masyhur & Santoso (2023, p. 3), deixis plays a crucial role in both spoken and written language by allowing speakers or writers to avoid repeatedly mentioning specific names, places, or times. Instead, they can use pronouns or other referring expressions, making their language more concise and efficient. However, according to Masyhur & Santoso (2023, p. 3), the meaning of an utterance can only be fully understood when the listener or reader knows who is being referred to, where the reference points to, and when the utterance takes place. In this way, deixis helps clarify meaning and reduces ambiguity in communication. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the use of deixis, identify its types, and explore its referential meaning within written texts.

This study focuses on the analysis of deixis found in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts. Social media has become an inseparable part of human life, and platforms like Instagram are not only used for personal expression but also for sharing important information and raising awareness. Motaz Azaiza, a photojournalist from Gaza, often shares updates, thoughts, and documentation on the current situation in Palestine through his Instagram posts. However, despite the strong emotional and political context, readers—especially those who are not familiar with the background of the issue or region—may have difficulty understanding the exact meaning of the deictic elements used.

Understanding deixis in this context is important to fully understand the messages conveyed in his posts. Thus, studying deixis in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram account photo captions becomes relevant and meaningful. This study not only analyzes the use of personal deixis but also spatial, temporal, and social deixis. These types of deixis reflect how Motaz positions himself, his audience, and the people and events he refers to in his posts. By examining these elements, this study hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of how language functions in digital activism and public awareness.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

This study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What types of deixis are used in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts?
2. What are the referential meanings of the deixis expressions in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the types of deixis used in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts.
2. To analyze the referential meanings of the deixis expressions used in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the use of deixis found in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts regarding the Palestine issue. The analysis includes all types of deixis—personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis—as proposed by Levinson (1983). The research examines how these deictic expressions function within the

context of both captions and visual elements such as photos or videos accompanying the posts. This study applies the theory of deixis in pragmatics to explore how meaning is constructed and how language interacts with context in digital communication. The scope is limited to selected posts shared during the period of heightened conflict, in which Motaz Azaiza actively documented and shared content related to the situation in Palestine.

### **1.5 Significance of Study**

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically.

Theoretical Significance:

This study contributes to the field of linguistics, especially in the area of pragmatics, by analyzing the use of deixis in digital communication. While deixis has often been studied in face-to-face or literary contexts, this study expands the scope by analyzing its use in social media, specifically Instagram. By examining Motaz Azaiza's posts related to the Palestinian issue, the study provides insights into how deictic expressions help construct meaning, represent identity, and reflect social and political realities in an online setting.

Practical Significance:

1. For readers, this research can enrich their understanding of how deixis operates in real-world discourse, particularly on digital platforms.
2. For English department students, this study can serve as a reference for analyzing deixis in pragmatic studies, especially in relation to current issues and social media discourse.

3. For English teachers, the findings of this study can serve as additional material to vary the teaching of pragmatics and deixis, incorporating current and relevant topics into the classroom.
4. For future researchers, this research can be used as a foundation for conducting further studies on deixis in different media, contexts, or genres, such as videos, interviews, or other social media content related to social and humanitarian issues.

### **1.6 Literature Review**

Research on deixis has been widely conducted with various focuses, such as the fields of journalism, literature, music, film, and political discourse. Previous studies provide an important theoretical and methodological basis for this study, which focuses on the analysis of five types which in line with Levinson's (1983) theory.

Febriza (2020) in her article, conducted a deixis analysis on online news from The Jakarta Post. Using qualitative descriptive methods and Alan Cruse's deixis theory, this study identified and classified the types of deixis found in news articles. The findings show that personal deixis is the most dominant, and this is related to the topic and background of the article. This study shows the importance of the role of deixis in building reader engagement and understanding of journalistic texts. Although the focus is on journalistic discourse, this study serves as a reference for this research in seeing how deixis plays a role in shaping the meaning of discourse, even on a different digital platform, namely Instagram.

Damanik and Amri (2023) examined the use of deixis in the novel *Kala* by Syahid Muhammad and Stefani Bella. With a qualitative descriptive approach, this study identified five types of deixis in the novel text, namely person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Their findings show that person deixis is the most dominant, but the five types interact with each other to form the narrative, character, and setting in the story. This study makes an important contribution to the understanding of deixis in fictional discourse. This study is relevant as a comparison, because this study also analyzes the five types of deixis, but in the context of a digital platform that combines text and visuals.

Jupriaman et al. (2023) in their article examined deixis in Indonesian political discourse through the speeches of presidential candidates. They found that personal deixis, especially the use of pronouns such as “we” and “us,” is used to build a sense of togetherness between the speaker and the audience. This study shows how deixis can shape the speaker’s self-image and influence public perception. Although the context is one-way and formal communication, this study shows the power of personal deixis in creating a relationship between the speaker and the audience, which will also be explored in this study, but on Instagram.

Safitri (2024) in her thesis examined the use of deixis in twelve songs on the *Nicole* album by singer NIKI. Using George Yule's deixis theory and a qualitative descriptive approach, this study found that personal deixis was the most dominant (88%), followed by spatial deixis (5%) and temporal deixis (7%). Although it does not cover discourse and social deixis, this study still provides insight into the dominance of person deixis in creative media. This study is a basis

for comparing the distribution of types of deixis in other discourses, such as social media.

Fitrianti (2021) in her undergraduate thesis analyzed deixis in the film *The Age of Adeline*. Using qualitative descriptive methods and data sources in the form of film dialogue, the researcher found three types of deixis, namely person deixis (81.10%), spatial deixis (13.56%), and temporal deixis (5.34%). Person deixis, especially the pronoun "you", is the most dominant. This study shows the importance of deixis in building interpersonal interactions in film dialogue. Although it does not discuss discourse and social deixis, this study still provides insight into the tendency of using deixis types in audiovisual discourse.

Jirani (2024) in his thesis specifically examines social deixis in the film *The King's Man* (2021). This study uses Levinson's (1983) social deixis theory and qualitative descriptive methods. The focus is on the form and function of social deixis in the characters' dialogues. The findings show that social deixis plays an important role in showing social hierarchy, power relations, and politeness in film discourse. This study is very relevant because it is one of the references that explicitly discusses one of Levinson's five types of deixis which will also be analyzed in this study.

Ifatihah (2021) in her thesis examines the use of deixis in Billie Eilish's song lyrics. This research is a pragmatic study using a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were taken from eight popular songs, such as *Ocean Eyes*, *Bad Guy*, and *Everything I Wanted*. The theory used is Levinson's (1983) deixis theory, focusing on three main types: person deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis. The results

of the analysis show that person deixis is the most dominant type used, especially first and second-person pronouns such as I, you, and me. This dominance strengthens the personal and emotional nuances in the song and creates an imaginative relationship between the singer and the listener. Meanwhile, spatial and temporal deixis are found in smaller amounts and function to build a narrative background in the song. This study makes an important contribution in showing how deixis functions in personal and expressive musical discourse. These findings are relevant for comparison because they show the dominant role of person deixis in building emotional closeness, an aspect that is also important in digital communication such as social media.

Based on these previous studies, it can be concluded that most of them tend to focus on the dominance of personal deixis in various types of discourse, such as in print media, literary texts, music, films, and political speeches. However, there is a gap in the existing literature regarding the comprehensive analysis of all five types of deixis as classified by Levinson (1983), namely person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. In addition, previous studies have rarely examined deixis in the context of social media, particularly on Instagram—a platform that combines textual, visual, and socio-political elements simultaneously. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap by analyzing the use of deixis in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts related to the Palestinian issue.

### **1.7 Theoretical Approach**

This study tries to examine the types of deixis and referential meaning in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts about the Palestine issue using the theory of deixis

by Levinson (1983). Levinson's theory is fundamental in understanding how deixis functions within language and how it reflects the relationship between language and context. Deictic expressions depend on the situational context in which they occur, making them essential for interpreting meaning in discourse. According to Levinson, deixis is about how languages build or structure features of the context, like who is speaking, when, and where (Levinson, 1983, p. 54).

According to Levinson (1983, p. 62), deixis can be classified into five types: person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Each type functions as follows, person deixis refers to pronouns that indicate the speaker (first person), the addressee (second person), and others not directly involved in the speech event (third person) (Levinson, 1983, p. 68). In Azaiza's posts, first-person deixis (e.g., *I, we, my*) expresses his personal experience and solidarity with the Palestinian people, while second-person deixis (*you, your*) directly addresses the audience, often engaging them emotionally. Spatial deixis indicates location relative to the speaker (e.g., *here, there*). Proximal terms like *here* refer to places close to the speaker, while distal terms like *there* indicate locations farther away (Levinson, 1983, p. 79).

Temporal deixis refers to time expressions that are interpreted based on the moment of speaking (e.g., *now, yesterday, tomorrow*) (Levinson, 1983, p. 73). Discourse deixis is used to refer to parts of a discourse, such as a previous or upcoming statement (e.g., *this, that*) (Levinson, 1983, p. 85). Social deixis encodes social relationships between the speaker, the addressee, and other referents. This can be expressed through honorifics, pronouns, or other linguistic markers that

indicate social hierarchy, familiarity, or group identity (Levinson, 1983, p. 89). By applying Levinson's theoretical framework, this study aims to identify the types of deixis used in Azaiza's Instagram posts and analyze their referential meanings. Understanding these deixis types helps to uncover how language is used to construct narratives in the discourse surrounding the Palestinian struggle.

## **1.8 Research Methods**

This section provides a structured overview of the research methods used to examine the use of deixis in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts. Kothari (2004, p. 7) states that research methods are all the ways or techniques used to conduct research. Kothari (2004, p. 8) further states that all methods used by researchers when researching their research are called research methods. The researcher explains the research methods in this section, including the type of research, data sources, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques. By outlining these components, this study ensures clarity and coherence in the research process, allowing for systematic data analysis.

### **1.8.1 Types of Research**

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2023, p. 39), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This aligns with the objective of this study, which seeks to explore how Motaz Azaiza uses deictic expressions in his Instagram posts to construct personal, spatial, temporal, and social meanings in the context of the Palestinian issue. The

analysis is carried out inductively by identifying patterns and interpreting their referents meaning through a pragmatic lens.

In this study, a descriptive qualitative approach is applied to identify and interpret the five types of deixis used in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram captions: personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis, as classified by Levinson (1983). The data are analyzed by first identifying deictic expressions in the text, then classifying them according to their type, and finally interpreting their referents and pragmatic functions based on the context of each post. For example, personal deixis such as "I" or "we" is examined to determine who is being referred to—whether Azaiza himself, victims, or a collective group—while spatial deixis such as "here" or "there" is interpreted in relation to the geographic context of Gaza or other affected areas and so on.

### **1.8.2 Data Sources**

The data for this research consists of 30 Instagram posts made by Motaz Azaiza (@motaz\_azaiza) during the period between October 7, 2023, and November 2023. This time frame was selected because it marks the beginning of the Gaza War, an event that attracted significant global attention to the Palestinian cause and Motaz actively shared content documenting the conflict. The data were selected using purposive sampling, a technique used to determine data sources based on specific criteria. According to Sugiyono (2017, p. 85), purposive sampling is a technique for determining samples with particular considerations, such as relevance to the research objectives. In this study, the Instagram posts were selected

based on the posts that contain various types of deixis, such as personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis.

According to Kothari (2004, p. 95), when determining the method of data collection for research, a researcher needs to consider two types of data, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data that is obtained directly and for the first time, so it has an authentic nature. Meanwhile, secondary data is data that has been collected by other parties and usually has been analyzed or processed statistically. This study only uses primary data which consists of Instagram posts (the photos and the caption) made by Motaz Azaiza. These posts serve as the main source of information, providing direct insight into Azaiza's language choices, use of deixis, and the narrative he constructs regarding the Palestinian issue. Additionally, several news articles and reports are used to provide context and background information related to the events discussed in the post.

### **1.8.3 Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection technique is the process of collecting information through various forms of data such as observation, interviews, documents, audiovisual materials, and materials from social or digital media (Creswell, 2023, p. 228). This study uses the documentation method as the technique for data collection. As explained by Sugiyono (2017, p. 240), documentation involves collecting data from written or visual materials such as books, newspapers, reports, or online sources.

In this study, the data were taken from the Instagram account of Motaz Azaiza, a Palestinian photojournalist. The researcher observed and examined the content of the posts, particularly the captions, to identify the use of deixis. A total

of 30 posts were selected based on their relevance to the study's objective, namely the presence of deictic expressions. These selected posts were then documented in a table that includes the posting date, caption, photos and the identified types of deixis. Only posts that clearly contained deixis were included to ensure the data would be analyzable in line with the research questions.

#### **1.8.4 Data Analysis Techniques**

As stated by Creswell (2009, p. 185), data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes; and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. In this study, preparing and organizing the data was carried out by compiling 30 Instagram posts by Motaz Azaiza, selected based on the presence of deictic expressions. These posts—primarily in the form of captions—were transcribed and arranged in a table for systematic analysis. The next step was reducing the data by identifying and classifying all deixis expressions found in the captions, based on Levinson's (1983) typology, which includes person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Once categorized, the data were coded according to deixis type and labeled for each occurrence. This coding process enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns and dominant forms of deixis within the dataset.

Following this, the data were interpreted by analyzing the referential meaning of each deictic expression. This step involved determining what or whom each deixis referred to by examining the surrounding linguistic and situational context of the Instagram posts, including the uploaded photo and, if necessary,

related news from the same date to understand the background. The situational context is drawn by Yule's (1996) theory, which emphasizes the role of shared knowledge, speaker-hearer roles, and spatiotemporal context in deictic reference. Finally, the results of the analysis were presented in descriptive form through explanation and discussion, supported by representative examples from the data. The findings were structured to directly address the research questions: (1) identifying the types of deixis used and (2) analyzing their referential meanings.

### **1.9 Paper Organizations**

This research paper consists of four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction, which includes the background of the study, research questions, objectives, scope, and significance of the study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research (including the type of research, data sources, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques), and paper organization. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework, offering a comprehensive explanation of the theories in this study. In the third chapter is findings and discussion, the researcher demonstrates how the theoretical framework is applied to analyze the types of deixis used in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts. This chapter also explores the referents of the deixis. Finally, the fourth chapter provides the conclusion of the study and offers recommendations for readers as well as future researchers interested in pursuing related topics.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### 4.1 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the types of deixis used in Motaz Azaiza's Instagram posts and to analyze the referential meanings behind those deixis expressions. Using Levinson's (1983) deixis typology and a descriptive qualitative method, the researcher examined 30 posts shared by Motaz between October and November 2023 during the Gaza conflict.

The findings showed that four out of five types of deixis were present in the data: person deixis, temporal deixis, spatial deixis, and discourse deixis. Among these, person deixis was the most dominant, with pronouns such as "I," "we," "you," and "they" frequently appearing. These expressions reflected how Motaz positioned himself both as an individual eyewitness and as part of a collective identity, while also directly engaging the audience and referring to others involved in the events. The referents of these deixis expressions varied depending on the context of each post, with "we" often referring to Palestinian civilians, and "they" typically pointing to opposing forces. Temporal deixis included references like "now," "today," and "after," which helped to situate events in time and reflect the urgency of the conflict. Spatial deixis, such as "here" and "there," referred to specific locations in Gaza or surrounding areas, often clarified by the accompanying photos. These expressions served to ground the narrative in the physical environment of the conflict. Discourse deixis was used to refer to parts of Motaz's own narrative, which in the earlier statements within the same caption, guiding the

reader through the unfolding story. Meanwhile, social deixis was not found in the data, which aligns with the informal, emotionally direct style of Motaz's communication that avoids hierarchical markers.

## 4.2 SUGGESTIONS

For future research, the study can explore deixis in different contexts, such as in other digital activism campaigns, political speeches, or journalistic reports. Analyzing how deixis is used by different public figures across various platforms may provide deeper insights into its role in shaping narratives. Additionally, instead of examining all types of deixis, future research could focus on a single category, such as social deixis, to allow for a more in-depth exploration of its implications and functions.

Another potential area of research is investigating audience responses to deictic expressions in digital communication. Understanding how readers interpret and react to deixis could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of linguistic strategies in persuasion and advocacy. Furthermore, incorporating multimodal analysis by examining both textual and visual deixis could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how social media content constructs meaning.

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