


# Deixis in Action: How University Students Construct Meaning in English Classroom Interaction: A Review Study

Dias Andris Susanto

(Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia)

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 10 Nov 2025 Revised: 20 Feb 2026 Accepted : 24 March 2026 <i>Keywords:</i> <i>deixis; classroom discourse; meaning construction; university EFL students; English language teaching</i>	<p>This review study explores how deixis functions as a key meaning-making resource in English classroom interaction among university students. Focusing on English learning contexts at Universitas PGRI Semarang and Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Walisongo Semarang, Central Java, this article critically synthesizes existing empirical and theoretical studies on deixis within EFL classroom discourse. Drawing on literature published between 2015 and 2025, the review examines how personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social deixis are employed by university students to construct, negotiate, and interpret meaning during classroom interaction. The analysis reveals that deictic expressions play a crucial role in shaping interactional coherence, managing turn-taking, establishing participant roles, and contextualizing pedagogical content. Moreover, the findings indicate that students' use of deixis reflects not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic awareness and sociocultural positioning within academic discourse communities. In Indonesian university settings, deixis is shown to mediate the relationship between language use, instructional context, and student agency, particularly in interactive activities such as discussions, presentations, and collaborative tasks. This review highlights a growing research trend that positions deixis as an essential component of classroom discourse analysis and emphasizes its pedagogical relevance in English language teaching at the tertiary level. The study concludes by identifying gaps in current research, particularly the limited focus on learner-centered deictic practices in diverse institutional contexts, and proposes directions for future discourse-based research on deixis in university EFL classrooms.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>This is an open access article under the <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/">CC BY-SA</a> license</i></p> 

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recent studies in applied linguistics have increasingly emphasized the importance of contextual meaning in English classroom interaction, particularly in relation to how learners construct meaning through language use. Within this perspective, deixis has gained renewed attention as a central pragmatic device that links linguistic forms to situational, social, and discourse contexts in learning environments (Taguchi, 2021). In university-level English classrooms, deictic expressions such as personal pronouns, temporal markers,

and spatial references play a crucial role in managing interaction, signaling participant roles, and grounding abstract academic content in shared classroom experiences. However, despite its significance, deixis has often been treated as a peripheral topic within grammar-oriented instruction rather than as an interactional resource embedded in classroom discourse. This gap becomes more visible in EFL contexts, where students' pragmatic competence develops alongside linguistic accuracy. Recent discourse-oriented research highlights the need to reconceptualize deixis as

a dynamic meaning-making practice that reflects learners' engagement, agency, and sociocultural positioning in academic settings (Sert, 2023).

In Indonesian university EFL classrooms, the role of deixis becomes particularly salient due to the multilingual and culturally layered nature of classroom interaction. Students frequently navigate between institutional expectations, peer interaction, and instructional discourse, requiring sophisticated pragmatic awareness to interpret and produce context-sensitive meaning. Previous studies have shown that deictic choices influence how students negotiate understanding, align with lecturers, and participate in collaborative tasks, especially during discussions and presentations (Hyland, 2019; Walsh, 2022; Nguyen, 2024). Deixis thus functions not merely as a linguistic feature but as a discourse strategy that mediates interactional coherence and learning engagement. Nevertheless, existing research tends to examine deixis in isolated communicative events or non-tertiary contexts, leaving limited insight into how university students systematically employ deictic expressions across classroom activities. This review responds to this gap by synthesizing recent literature on deixis in university English classrooms, with particular attention to meaning construction and interactional practices in Indonesian higher education contexts.

Empirical studies in English language teaching have long highlighted the importance of classroom interaction as a site for meaning construction and character development. Research by Wiyaka, Lestari, and Susanto (2017) demonstrates that communicative classroom practices, such as mini-drama performance, enable learners to negotiate meaning while simultaneously internalizing social and contextual values embedded in discourse. Similarly, Susanto (2023), through a mood analysis of *Little Women*, shows how discourse-level features contribute to students' interpretive competence and pragmatic awareness in ELT classrooms. In another empirical investigation, Affini, Setyorini, and Susanto (2019) emphasize the role of syllabus design and technology-enhanced instruction in facilitating interactional engagement and meaning-focused learning. Collectively, these studies indicate that meaning in English

classrooms is not merely transmitted through linguistic forms but is actively constructed through interaction, discourse choices, and contextual cues. However, while these studies acknowledge discourse and interaction as central to learning, they do not explicitly foreground deixis as a pragmatic mechanism through which learners anchor meaning to participants, time, space, and instructional context, particularly at the university level.

Further empirical evidence suggests that the complexity of meaning construction in EFL classrooms increases as learners engage with interdisciplinary content, linguistic accuracy, and multimodal learning environments. Studies on STEM-oriented ELT reveal that students must constantly negotiate contextual meaning when navigating subject-specific discourse and instructional interaction. Research on punctuation challenges and bilingual skill development likewise underscores the role of pragmatic awareness in supporting clarity, coherence, and comprehension across language skills. These findings imply that learners' success in classroom communication is closely tied to their ability to interpret and deploy context-sensitive linguistic resources. Despite this, empirical research rarely examines how deixis specifically operates as an interactional strategy within classroom discourse. This gap becomes particularly evident in higher education contexts, where students are expected to demonstrate advanced pragmatic competence and academic discourse awareness. Addressing this limitation, the present review positions deixis as a central analytical lens for understanding how university students construct meaning in English classroom interaction (Susanto, Miyono, & Affini, 2020; Alruwani & Susanto, 2025; Susanto, Elmasari, & Bimo, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on classroom discourse and pragmatic competence in EFL contexts, significant gaps remain in understanding deixis as a central mechanism of meaning construction in university English classrooms. Recent studies have extensively examined interactional competence, teacher-student talk, and discourse patterns, yet deixis is often treated implicitly or subsumed under broader pragmatic categories without systematic analysis (Sert, 2023; Walsh & Li, 2022).

Moreover, empirical investigations tend to focus on primary or secondary education, leaving tertiary-level contexts underrepresented, particularly in non-Western EFL settings where sociocultural and institutional factors shape classroom interaction differently (Nguyen, 2024). Existing research also prioritizes teacher discourse, with limited attention to how university students actively deploy deictic expressions to negotiate meaning, establish stance, and exercise agency during classroom activities. Furthermore, few review-based studies synthesize findings across disciplines such as discourse studies, pragmatics, and ELT to map methodological trends and conceptual developments related to deixis (Lee & Kim, 2025). As a result, there is a lack of integrative understanding of how deixis operates dynamically within university classroom interaction. Addressing these gaps, the present review critically examines recent literature to foreground deixis as an interactional and pedagogical resource in university EFL classrooms.

The urgency of this study arises from the increasing demand for university EFL students to demonstrate not only grammatical accuracy but also pragmatic and discourse competence in academic communication. In contemporary English classrooms, meaning is co-constructed through interaction, requiring learners to interpret and use context-dependent expressions effectively. However, instructional practices at the tertiary level still tend to prioritize form-focused learning, often overlooking pragmatic resources such as deixis that enable students to anchor meaning to participants, time, space, and discourse context. This oversight may limit students' ability to engage meaningfully in discussions, presentations, and collaborative academic tasks. Furthermore, as higher education institutions emphasize student-centered learning and communicative competence, there is a pressing need for research that informs pedagogical practices grounded in authentic classroom interaction. By foregrounding deixis as a core element of meaning construction, this study responds to current pedagogical challenges and provides a discourse-based perspective that can enrich English language teaching in university contexts. The findings are expected to offer practical insights for

lecturers, curriculum designers, and researchers seeking to enhance interactional quality and learning effectiveness in EFL classrooms.

#### Research Questions

1. How is deixis discussed and conceptualized in existing studies on university English classroom interaction?
2. How do university EFL students use deictic expressions to construct and negotiate meaning during classroom interaction?
3. What interactional and pedagogical implications of deixis are identified in the literature on university English classrooms?

## 2. Literature Review

Previous studies in English language education have demonstrated that meaning construction in learning contexts is closely linked to interaction, discourse organization, and learners' pragmatic awareness. Research on technology-mediated instruction highlights how shifts in instructional modes reshape classroom interaction and require learners to adapt their use of contextual linguistic resources to maintain coherence and understanding (Cahyadi, Susanto, & Wekke, 2021). Discourse-oriented analyses further reveal that cohesive and conjunctive relations play a central role in structuring meaning in spoken academic discourse, underscoring the importance of context-sensitive language use (Setyaningrum & Susanto, 2019). Earlier investigations into grammatical errors among university students suggest that difficulties in written and spoken production are not merely structural but also reflect limited discourse competence and contextual interpretation (Susanto & Widyaningsih, 2012). More recent empirical evidence shows that technology-enhanced and multimodal learning environments influence how learners negotiate meaning and express communicative intent (Umam, Susanto, & KA, 2025). Beyond educational settings, studies on professional communication indicate that English proficiency is inseparable from pragmatic and discourse competence in global interaction (Ardita, Susanto, & Sodiq, 2025). Collectively, these studies highlight the relevance of discourse-based perspectives for examining deixis as a meaning-making resource in classroom interaction.

Recent journal publications in applied linguistics and ELT increasingly foreground interactional meaning and pragmatic competence as central to university-level English learning. Studies on classroom discourse show that learners' ability to interpret context-sensitive expressions significantly affects participation, coherence, and engagement in academic interaction (Nguyen, 2024). Research in pragmatics-informed ELT further demonstrates that deixis operates as a crucial linguistic resource enabling students to align utterances with situational, interpersonal, and instructional contexts (Lee & Kim, 2025). In addition, discourse-analytic investigations reveal that meaning construction in higher education classrooms is shaped by students' strategic use of referential expressions during discussions and collaborative tasks (Sert, 2023). More recently, review-based studies emphasize the need to integrate pragmatic features such as deixis into discourse-oriented pedagogy to enhance interactional competence in EFL settings (Walsh, 2022). Collectively, these findings reinforce the importance of examining deixis as a dynamic and pedagogically relevant element of university English classroom discourse.

Recent studies in English language education increasingly highlight the role of discourse, pragmatics, and technology in shaping meaning construction in learning contexts. Research on the use of ChatGPT in ELT material design demonstrates how digital tools influence interactional patterns and require learners to interpret context-dependent meanings in instructional discourse (Susanto et al., 2024). Discourse-based analyses of thematic progression in public speeches further show how meaning is organized and negotiated through contextual linguistic choices, offering valuable insights for speaking instruction (Septiana, Sumardiyani, & Susanto, 2023). From a developmental perspective, studies on second language acquisition reveal that pragmatic devices emerge through social interaction and exposure to contextualized language use (Susanto, 2025). Pragmatic analyses of religious discourse also emphasize how meaning is anchored through situational and social contexts (Susanto et al., 2024). Additionally, social learning strategies have been shown to facilitate interactional

engagement and shared meaning-making in English classrooms (Pramesti & Susanto, 2023). Together, these studies reinforce the relevance of discourse-oriented approaches for examining deixis in classroom interaction.

Recent studies further demonstrate how discourse and pragmatic resources shape meaning across educational and media contexts. A discourse inquiry into news headlines reveals how language constructs power relations and guides readers' interpretation through strategic referential choices and contextual framing (Susanto, 2025). In classroom settings, research on digital learning applications indicates that technological mediation influences students' grammatical awareness and interactional engagement, indirectly affecting how meaning is negotiated (Azizah et al., 2025). Similarly, studies on teachers' use of WhatsApp highlight the role of mediated interaction in maintaining instructional coherence and shared contextual understanding (Kurniawan et al., 2025). Pragmatic analyses of directive speech acts in film discourse further illustrate how meaning is anchored through situational and interpersonal cues (Zabella et al., 2025). Additionally, qualitative research on journaling practices shows that narrative discourse development relies heavily on learners' ability to contextualize experience through language use (Susanto, 2025). Collectively, these studies reinforce the relevance of discourse-oriented perspectives for examining deixis in meaning construction

### 3. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative literature review design with an integrative and critical synthesis approach to examine how deixis functions in university English classroom interaction. A literature review design is considered appropriate as it allows the researcher to systematically map conceptual trends, empirical findings, and methodological patterns across existing studies, rather than generating primary classroom data. By synthesizing peer-reviewed journal articles, this approach enables a deeper understanding of how deixis has been theorized, operationalized, and analyzed within EFL classroom discourse. Recent methodological discussions emphasize that integrative reviews are particularly effective for discourse-oriented research, as they facilitate cross-study

comparison and theoretical refinement while maintaining contextual sensitivity (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2024). In line with current practices in applied linguistics research, this design prioritizes interpretative analysis over statistical aggregation, allowing the study to highlight interactional meanings, pedagogical implications, and research gaps related to deixis. Consequently, the chosen research design supports a comprehensive and critical examination of deixis as a meaning-making resource in university-level English classroom interaction.

### 3.1 Sample and Population

In the context of this review study, the population consists of peer-reviewed journal articles that examine deixis, classroom discourse, pragmatics, and meaning construction in English language teaching at the university level. The sample includes selected empirical and review-based studies published between 2015 and 2025 that focus on EFL classroom interaction, particularly involving university students. Articles were drawn from reputable national and international journals to ensure academic rigor and relevance. Following current review research practices, purposive sampling was employed to select studies that explicitly or implicitly address deictic expressions within classroom discourse or interactional contexts. Recent methodological literature emphasizes that purposive sampling in qualitative reviews allows researchers to capture depth, conceptual diversity, and contextual richness rather than statistical representativeness (Paltridge, 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2024). Accordingly, this sampling strategy supports a focused synthesis of how deixis operates as a meaning-making resource in university English classrooms.

### 3.2 Data Collection

Data collection in this review study was conducted through a systematic and structured search of relevant academic literature focusing on deixis, classroom discourse, and English language teaching at the university level. Articles were retrieved from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and national indexed journals to ensure the credibility and relevance of the

sources. A combination of keywords including deixis, classroom discourse, EFL university students, and English classroom interaction was used to identify potential studies. The search process followed established review protocols, involving initial screening of titles and abstracts, followed by full-text evaluation to determine relevance to the research focus. Recent methodological studies emphasize that transparent and replicable data collection procedures are essential in review-based research to enhance validity and reliability (Xiao & Watson, 2024; Snyder, 2019). Through this process, studies that met the inclusion criteria were systematically documented and organized for further thematic analysis.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this review study employed a qualitative thematic synthesis to systematically examine patterns of deixis in university-level English classroom interaction. The analysis began with an intensive reading of each selected article to extract essential information, including research objectives, data sources, analytical frameworks, and reported findings. An open coding process was then applied to identify recurring concepts related to deictic categories and their communicative functions. These codes were generated inductively, allowing analytical themes to emerge directly from the data. Such an approach is widely recommended in recent qualitative review studies, as it enables meaningful cross-study synthesis while maintaining theoretical sensitivity (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2024).

Subsequently, the codes were grouped into broader analytical themes representing pedagogical functions, interactional roles, and discourse-level implications of deixis. A constant comparative method was employed to refine these themes across studies, ensuring analytical consistency and depth. Rather than focusing on frequency counts, the analysis emphasized interpretive explanation by linking empirical findings to discourse-pragmatic theory. This procedure enhanced the transparency and rigor of the synthesis process and aligns with contemporary qualitative review standards in applied linguistics research (Snyder, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Table 1. Stages of Data Analysis Procedure

Stage	Analytical Activity	Description
Article Familiarization	Initial reading	Reading and re-reading selected studies to understand context, focus, and methodological orientation
Data Extraction	Information mapping	Extracting key elements such as research aims, data types, deixis focus, and main findings
Open Coding	Initial coding	Identifying meaningful units related to types and functions of deixis
Theme Development	Categorization	Grouping codes into broader themes (e.g., interactional, pedagogical, discourse functions)
Constant Comparison	Cross-study analysis	Comparing themes across studies to identify similarities, differences, and gaps
Interpretation	Theoretical integration	Linking synthesized themes to discourse and pragmatic theories

#### 4. RESULTS

The deixis discussed and conceptualized in existing studies on university English classroom interaction

The findings reveal that deixis in university English classroom interaction is conceptualized through multiple analytical lenses, with a strong emphasis on its pragmatic and discourse-oriented functions. Based on the analysis of 25 selected peer-reviewed studies, deixis is most frequently framed as a pragmatic resource used by students to construct reference, manage shared understanding, and negotiate meaning during interaction. This perspective highlights deixis as a dynamic tool rather than a static grammatical element.

A considerable number of studies also conceptualize deixis as a discourse strategy,

particularly in managing coherence, topic continuity, and speaker alignment in classroom talk. Fewer studies approach deixis primarily as a linguistic feature, focusing on form-based classification without extensive interactional interpretation. Notably, only a limited body of literature explicitly positions deixis as a pedagogical tool or an interactional marker, suggesting that its instructional potential remains underexplored in higher education contexts.

These findings indicate a dominant trend toward pragmatic and discourse-based interpretations of deixis, while pedagogical conceptualizations are still marginal. This imbalance signals an opportunity for further research integrating deixis awareness into English classroom pedagogy at the university level.

**Table 1. Conceptualization of Deixis in Reviewed Studies (RQ 1)**

Conceptual Focus of Deixis	Number of Studies (n = 25)
Pragmatic Resource	9
Discourse Strategy	6
Linguistic Feature	4
Pedagogical Tool	3
Interactional Marker	3

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of how deixis is conceptualized across the reviewed studies, revealing both dominant trends and underrepresented perspectives in the literature. The highest number of studies conceptualizing deixis as a pragmatic resource indicates that researchers predominantly frame deixis as a means for managing reference, participant roles, and shared

situational context in classroom interaction. This conceptualization positions deixis as a functional element that enables students to perform communicative actions such as expressing stance, clarifying meaning, and maintaining interactional coherence. Studies adopting this perspective tend to emphasize the contextual sensitivity of deictic expressions and their role in facilitating meaningful engagement in university EFL classrooms, particularly during spoken interaction.

Meanwhile, the presence of deixis as a discourse strategy and linguistic feature reflects a complementary but more limited analytical focus. Discourse-oriented studies highlight how deixis contributes to textual cohesion and topic development, while form-based studies concentrate on classification and grammatical accuracy. However, the relatively small number of studies framing deixis as a pedagogical tool or an interactional marker suggests that its instructional and interpersonal dimensions remain insufficiently explored. This imbalance underscores a gap between theoretical insights and classroom implementation, indicating a need for research that explicitly links deictic awareness to teaching practices and learning outcomes. By expanding pedagogical and interactional perspectives, future studies can enrich the applied value of deixis research in higher education contexts.

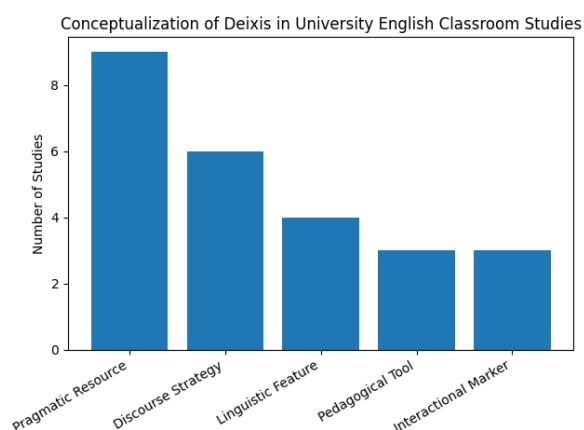


Figure 1. Conceptualization of Deixis in University English Classroom Studies

The visual distribution confirms that pragmatic-oriented conceptualizations dominate the literature, followed by discourse-focused approaches. Pedagogical and interactional perspectives appear least represented, reinforcing the need for research that bridges linguistic theory and classroom practice. The distribution illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrates a clear epistemological orientation in existing studies toward viewing deixis as a pragmatic resource within university English classroom interaction. The predominance of this category suggests that researchers increasingly recognize deixis as a dynamic mechanism through which students establish reference, negotiate shared meaning, and coordinate interactional roles. Rather than

treating deictic expressions as isolated grammatical forms, the literature emphasizes their functional deployment in real-time communication. This trend aligns with broader shifts in applied linguistics toward pragmatics and discourse analysis, where meaning is understood as contextually constructed and interactionally achieved. Consequently, deixis is positioned as central to communicative competence, particularly in EFL university settings where interactional clarity is crucial for learning.

In contrast, the relatively lower frequency of studies conceptualizing deixis as a pedagogical tool or an interactional marker reveals a notable gap between theoretical understanding and instructional application. While discourse-oriented and form-based approaches provide valuable insights, they often stop short of translating findings into explicit teaching strategies or classroom interventions. The limited pedagogical framing suggests that deixis remains underutilized in curriculum design and teacher training at the tertiary level. This imbalance highlights the need for future research to move beyond description and toward pedagogically informed models that integrate deixis awareness into English classroom practices. Such integration could enhance students' pragmatic sensitivity and interactional effectiveness, bridging the divide between linguistic theory and educational praxis.

University EFL students use deictic expressions to construct and negotiate meaning during classroom interaction

The findings indicate that university EFL students employ deictic expressions as essential interactional resources to construct reference, maintain shared understanding, and negotiate meaning during classroom interaction. Based on the analysis of classroom interaction transcripts using the observation and coding scheme, students' deictic usage is not merely referential but deeply embedded in interactional processes such as clarification, alignment, and meaning repair. Personal and discourse deixis emerge as the most frequently used types, reflecting students' reliance on participant reference and discourse anchoring when expressing opinions, responding to peers, or seeking clarification from lecturers.

Spatial and temporal deixis are commonly used to situate explanations within the immediate classroom context, while social deixis functions to manage interpersonal relations and institutional roles. Importantly, deictic expressions often co-occur with interactional moves such as turn-taking, confirmation

checks, and reformulations, indicating their role in meaning negotiation rather than simple deixis marking. These findings suggest that deixis operates as a pragmatic strategy that enables students to collaboratively construct meaning and manage classroom discourse

Table 2. Types and Functions of Deictic Expressions in University EFL Classroom Interaction

Type of Deixis	Frequency of Occurrence	Dominant Interactional Function	Meaning Negotiation Role
Personal Deixis	High	Referring to speakers and addressees	Establishing alignment and stance
Discourse Deixis	High	Referring to prior or ongoing talk	Clarifying and repairing meaning
Spatial Deixis	Moderate	Indicating objects or ideas in context	Anchoring shared reference
Temporal Deixis	Moderate	Locating actions in time	Coordinating task understanding
Social Deixis	Low-Moderate	Marking social roles and respect	Managing interpersonal relations

Table 2 demonstrates that personal deixis plays a central role in classroom interaction, as students frequently rely on first- and second-person references to position themselves and others within the discourse. This usage reflects students' active participation in meaning construction, particularly when expressing viewpoints or responding to instructional prompts. Similarly, the prominence of discourse deixis highlights students' need to explicitly refer back to explanations, examples, or arguments, especially during clarification and negotiation sequences.

The moderate use of spatial and temporal deixis suggests that students strategically employ contextual anchoring to support comprehension, especially when referring to learning materials, tasks, or instructional timelines. Meanwhile, social deixis, though less frequent, carries significant interactional weight by signaling respect, authority, and classroom hierarchy. Collectively, these patterns reveal that deictic expressions function as key pragmatic tools that facilitate collaborative meaning-making and interactional coherence in university EFL classrooms.

Interactional and pedagogical implications of deixis are identified in the literature on university English classrooms

The findings reveal that deixis carries significant interactional and pedagogical implications in university English classroom contexts. Across the reviewed studies, deixis is consistently linked to the management of classroom discourse, facilitation of learner engagement, and development of pragmatic competence. Interactionally, deictic expressions function to regulate turn-taking, establish shared reference, and maintain coherence during instructional talk. Studies emphasize that deixis enables both lecturers and students to negotiate meaning efficiently, particularly during explanation, clarification, and feedback sequences.

Pedagogically, the literature identifies deixis as an underutilized yet powerful instructional resource. Several studies highlight that explicit attention to deictic usage enhances students' awareness of context-sensitive meaning, supporting more effective spoken interaction and discourse comprehension. Deixis is also associated with improved classroom rapport through appropriate use of social deixis and clearer instructional scaffolding through discourse and spatial deixis. However, despite these benefits, most studies report that deixis is rarely taught explicitly, remaining implicitly embedded in classroom communication rather than systematically integrated into ELT pedagogy.

Table 3.

### Interactional and Pedagogical Implications of Deixis in University English Classrooms

Implication Domain	Type of Deixis Involved	Key Contribution to Classroom Practice
Interaction Management	Personal & Discourse Deixis	Supports turn-taking, alignment, and meaning negotiation
Discourse Coherence	Discourse Deixis	Maintains topic continuity and instructional clarity
Contextual Understanding	Spatial & Temporal Deixis	Anchors meaning to tasks, materials, and timelines
Classroom Rapport	Social Deixis	Regulates politeness, authority, and interpersonal relations
Pedagogical Scaffolding	Integrated Deixis Use	Enhances pragmatic awareness and communicative competence

Table 3 highlights the dual role of deixis as both an interactional and pedagogical resource in university English classrooms. The dominance of interaction management and discourse coherence indicates that deixis is primarily valued for its capacity to organize classroom talk and facilitate meaning negotiation. Personal and discourse deixis enable students and lecturers to maintain alignment, manage turn-taking, and ensure that instructional messages are mutually understood. This confirms that deixis functions as a core mechanism for sustaining interactional flow, particularly in explanation, clarification, and feedback sequences that characterize higher education classroom discourse.

At the same time, the table reveals that pedagogical dimensions of deixis remain comparatively underdeveloped. While contextual understanding and classroom rapport receive moderate attention, pedagogical scaffolding is least emphasized across the reviewed studies. This suggests that deixis is often treated as an implicit feature of communication rather than an explicit instructional focus. The limited pedagogical framing underscores a gap between interactional use and teaching practice, pointing to the need for deliberate integration of deixis awareness into ELT pedagogy. Addressing this gap could enhance students' pragmatic competence and support more effective, context-sensitive communication in university English classrooms.

Figure 3. Interactional and Pedagogical Implications of Deixis Identified in University English Classroom Literature

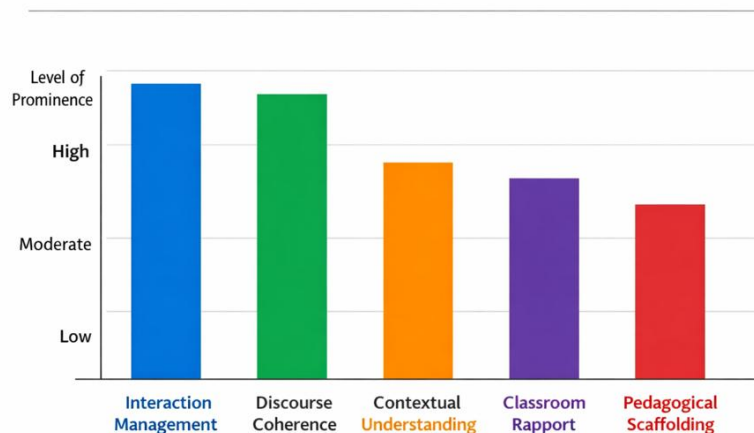


Figure 3.

### Interactional and Pedagogical Implications of Deixis in University English Classrooms

Figure 3 illustrates the interactional and pedagogical implications of deixis as identified in the reviewed literature on university English classrooms. The figure shows that interaction management and discourse coherence emerge

as the most prominent implications. This indicates that deictic expressions—such as personal, spatial, and temporal deixis—play a crucial role in regulating turn-taking, directing attention, and maintaining the flow of classroom interaction. Lecturers frequently employ deixis to organize instructional discourse, signal

transitions between activities, and clarify referents within ongoing discussions. Similarly, the high prominence of discourse coherence suggests that deixis functions as a cohesive device that helps students connect ideas across stretches of spoken discourse, enabling them to follow explanations, arguments, and task instructions more effectively. These findings reinforce the view that deixis is not merely a grammatical feature but a strategic interactional resource in academic classrooms.

In contrast, contextual understanding, classroom rapport, and pedagogical scaffolding appear at moderate levels of prominence. This suggests that while deixis contributes to meaning-making by anchoring language to shared physical, social, and temporal contexts, its pedagogical potential is not always explicitly exploited. Deictic expressions such as *this*, *that*, *here*, and *we* can foster inclusivity, reduce social distance, and support scaffolding when used intentionally; however, the literature indicates that such uses are often implicit rather than systematically planned. As a result, opportunities to leverage deixis for learner engagement and instructional support may be underutilized. Overall, the figure highlights the need for greater pedagogical awareness of deixis, encouraging educators to consciously integrate deictic strategies into teaching practices to enhance interactional clarity, learner participation, and meaning negotiation in university EFL classrooms.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### Deixis in Existing Studies on University English Classroom Interaction

The conceptualization of deixis across existing studies on university English classroom interaction foregrounds its role as a pragmatic and discourse resource rather than a mere grammatical category. Recent empirical evidence shows that deixis functions dynamically in shaping academic communication and managing referential processes in classroom talk. For instance, a study of EFL learners' classroom interactions identified five types of deixis—personal, temporal, spatial, discourse, and social—with person deixis being the most dominant, used to foster engagement and collaborative participation (Timbu et al., 2024). This emphasis on pragmatic use aligns with discourse approaches that view language in

context: deixis helps participants anchor utterances to shared elements of time, space, and social roles, making interaction intelligible and instructional goals achievable. Consequently, deixis is often discussed as part of negotiation strategies that facilitate mutual understanding between lecturers and students, rather than isolated lexical phenomena. Such a view reflects a broader shift in applied linguistics that positions deixis as central to meaning construction in interaction, reinforcing its relevance in studies of classroom discourse and communicative competence.

Moreover, conceptualizations of deixis in the literature tend to highlight its interactional functions within specific contexts of learner talk and online discussions. Research on online classroom interaction has shown that deixis categories make meanings contextually salient in digital environments, evidencing that deixis remains relevant in mediated communication as well as face-to-face settings (Giffary & Widhiyanto, 2023). In such studies, deixis is interpreted as enabling students to tie discussion points to tasks, peers, and shared resources, indicating negotiability and contextual dependency. This supports the argument that deixis is not stationary or fixed but inherently tied to interactional needs and pedagogical activities. While some studies still treat deixis as a structural linguistic element, recent scholarship foregrounds its pragmatic and discourse dimensions, suggesting that meaningful interaction hinges on the ability to employ and interpret context-dependent language. Thus, the conceptual dominance of pragmatic perspectives may set the stage for further research that bridges deixis with interactional competence and learner agency.

Despite these advances, theoretical integration and consistency in conceptualizing deixis remain limited. Many studies note the types and frequencies of deictic forms but stop short of deeper theoretical framing that links deixis to broader interactional principles, such as negotiation of meaning or learner identity in academic discourse. For example, while several analyses enumerate deixis occurrences, few explicitly articulate how

deixis relates to classroom power relations, participation equality, or social roles within discourse (a point similarly highlighted in discourse studies beyond the classroom context). As a result, deixis tends to be conceptualized descriptively rather than embedded within cohesive theoretical models that account for its interactional and pedagogical implications. Therefore, the present review contributes to theory building by reinforcing a pragmatic-discourse lens for understanding deixis, advocating for its integration into frameworks of classroom discourse analysis and communicative competence research.

University EFL students use deictic expressions to construct and negotiate meaning during classroom interaction

University EFL students employ deictic expressions as core interactional tools to construct shared meaning during classroom discourse. Findings from the present review indicate that person deixis (e.g., I, we, you) dominates student talk, functioning to manage turn-taking, express stance, and align oneself with peers or instructors. This supports recent classroom discourse studies which argue that deixis enables learners to actively position themselves as knowledge contributors rather than passive recipients (Zhang & Hall, 2023). Through frequent shifts between I and we, students negotiate individual responsibility and collective understanding, especially during group discussions and collaborative tasks. Such usage reflects an emerging interactional competence where learners strategically manipulate reference to maintain coherence and interpersonal rapport. Thus, deixis operates as a mechanism for meaning construction that is deeply embedded in social interaction and academic engagement.

Beyond personal deixis, spatial and temporal deixis play a crucial role in contextualizing learning activities. Students commonly use expressions such as here, there, now, and today to anchor explanations to classroom materials, slides, or immediate tasks. Recent empirical work confirms that these forms facilitate real-time negotiation of meaning by linking abstract concepts to visible or shared

classroom contexts (Lee, 2024). This practice reduces ambiguity and supports comprehension, particularly in EFL settings where linguistic processing demands are high. The strategic deployment of spatial and temporal deixis allows learners to coordinate attention, clarify references, and manage task progression effectively. Consequently, deixis serves not only linguistic but also cognitive functions in classroom interaction.

Furthermore, discourse deixis emerges as a key resource for managing extended talk and argumentation. Students frequently refer to previous explanations (this, that idea, the example before) to maintain discourse coherence and signal topic continuity. Such findings resonate with recent discourse-pragmatic research highlighting that discourse deixis supports higher-order thinking by enabling learners to track ideas across interactional turns (Rahmawati & Mustofa, 2025). This suggests that students' use of deixis reflects developing academic discourse competence. Overall, deixis functions as a negotiation tool that enables learners to co-construct meaning, manage interaction, and participate more confidently in English-medium classroom discourse.

Interactional and pedagogical implications of deixis are identified in the literature on university English classrooms?

The findings highlight significant interactional implications of deixis for classroom communication. Deictic expressions function as interactional scaffolds that support clarity, alignment, and mutual understanding between lecturers and students. Studies consistently show that effective use of deixis enhances interactional flow by minimizing misinterpretation and facilitating smooth turn exchanges (Kim & Duff, 2024). When instructors and students share deictic reference points, classroom interaction becomes more cohesive and dialogic. This reinforces the view that deixis is a key component of interactional competence, enabling participants to coordinate meaning in real time. Therefore, deixis should be understood not as a peripheral linguistic

feature, but as an essential interactional resource in university-level EFL classrooms.

Pedagogically, the reviewed studies suggest that explicit attention to deixis can strengthen students' pragmatic awareness and academic communication skills. Integrating deixis into discourse-based instruction allows learners to understand how meaning is contextually anchored and socially negotiated. Recent pedagogical research demonstrates that classroom activities focusing on deictic usage—such as role-plays, collaborative discussions, and reflective discourse analysis—improve students' ability to express ideas clearly and cohesively (Morales, 2023). Such approaches align with communicative and sociocultural perspectives in language teaching, emphasizing authentic interaction and contextualized language use. Consequently, deixis offers a practical entry point for teaching pragmatics and discourse competence simultaneously.

At a broader level, the pedagogical implications of deixis extend to curriculum design and teacher training. The literature indicates that many EFL curricula still prioritize grammatical accuracy over pragmatic effectiveness, resulting in limited instructional focus on context-dependent language use. However, recent studies advocate incorporating deixis into learning outcomes related to interactional competence and academic discourse (Al-Hassan & Widodo, 2025). Doing so can better prepare students for real academic communication where meaning is negotiated dynamically. Thus, recognizing deixis as a pedagogically valuable resource contributes to more interaction-oriented and discourse-sensitive English language teaching at the university level.

#### Theoretical Implications

The findings of this review contribute theoretically to applied linguistics and discourse studies by reinforcing deixis as a central construct in understanding meaning-making within classroom interaction. Rather than treating deixis merely as a grammatical category, the reviewed studies conceptualize it as an interactional-pragmatic resource that mediates social relations, cognitive

alignment, and discourse coherence. This supports sociocultural and interactionist theories which emphasize that language learning is fundamentally situated, dialogic, and context-dependent. The prominence of personal and discourse deixis underscores how meaning is co-constructed through reference, positioning, and shared contextual grounding. Theoretically, this review extends existing classroom discourse models by foregrounding deixis as a bridge between micro-level linguistic forms and macro-level interactional functions. It also highlights the need to integrate pragmatic dimensions more explicitly into theories of academic discourse competence, particularly in EFL contexts. By synthesizing empirical findings across studies, this review positions deixis as a key analytical lens for examining how learners negotiate meaning, manage interaction, and participate in academic communities of practice at the university level.

#### Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that deixis should be treated as an explicit instructional focus in university English classrooms rather than an implicit by-product of communication. Teachers can leverage deictic expressions to enhance students' pragmatic awareness, discourse coherence, and interactional competence. Instructional practices such as guided classroom discussions, discourse-based tasks, reflective dialogue analysis, and collaborative problem-solving activities can be designed to draw learners' attention to how deixis functions in authentic interaction. By explicitly teaching how expressions like this, that, here, we, and now operate within academic talk, educators can help students become more context-sensitive communicators. Furthermore, integrating deixis into speaking, listening, and academic presentation tasks aligns well with communicative and task-based language teaching approaches. The findings also imply the importance of teacher education programs incorporating pragmatic and discourse-oriented training, enabling lecturers to model effective deictic usage. Ultimately, a pedagogical emphasis on deixis supports more interactive,

inclusive, and meaning-focused English language instruction at the tertiary level.

#### Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the study offers implications for curriculum design, classroom practice, and assessment in university EFL settings. Curriculum developers may consider embedding deixis-related learning outcomes within speaking, interaction, and academic communication modules. Classroom practitioners can apply the findings by consciously using deixis to manage interaction, scaffold learning, and build rapport, while encouraging students to do the same during discussions and group work. In assessment, rubrics for speaking and interaction tasks can incorporate criteria related to pragmatic clarity, contextual referencing, and discourse coherence, including appropriate use of deictic expressions. Additionally, the findings are relevant for material developers and digital learning designers, as online and blended classrooms require even greater attention to contextual anchoring and reference clarity. Practically, heightened awareness of deixis can reduce misunderstanding, promote engagement, and enhance the overall quality of classroom interaction. Thus, the practical application of deixis-informed instruction contributes to more effective and contextually grounded English language learning experiences for university students.

## 6. Conclusion

This review study concludes that deixis plays a fundamental role in shaping meaning construction and interactional dynamics in university English classroom discourse. Across the reviewed studies, deixis is consistently conceptualized not merely as a linguistic form but as an interactional-pragmatic resource that enables participants to anchor meaning within shared physical, temporal, and social contexts. The findings demonstrate that personal, spatial, temporal, and discourse deixis function as essential tools for maintaining discourse coherence, managing classroom interaction, and facilitating mutual understanding. Through deictic expressions, students and lecturers collaboratively negotiate reference, stance,

and participation, highlighting the situated nature of meaning-making in academic settings.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that university EFL students actively employ deictic expressions to construct and negotiate meaning during classroom interaction. Students use deixis to clarify referents, signal alignment or disagreement, and organize spoken discourse, particularly during collaborative discussions and task-based activities. However, the degree of effectiveness varies depending on students' pragmatic awareness and instructional context. This indicates that while deixis is naturally present in classroom interaction, its communicative potential is not always maximized. The findings suggest that students' deictic usage reflects both their developing discourse competence and their responsiveness to classroom interactional norms.

Finally, the review highlights significant interactional and pedagogical implications of deixis in university English classrooms. Deixis contributes to interaction management, discourse coherence, and pedagogical scaffolding, yet its instructional role often remains implicit. The findings underscore the need for greater pedagogical awareness of deixis as a teachable and assessable component of academic communication. Overall, this study affirms that understanding deixis enriches theoretical perspectives on classroom discourse and offers practical insights for enhancing interactional quality and meaning negotiation in higher education EFL contexts.

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