

A Deictic Analysis of Selected FIFA Men's World Cup Theme Songs

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Abstract

The FIFA Men's World Cup is a quadrennial mega-sporting event whose theme songs communicate the tournament's ideals to global audiences. This study examines personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis in four widely recognised songs from the 2010 South Africa and 2022 Qatar tournaments: Waka Waka (This Time for Africa), Wavin' Flag, Hayya Hayya (Better Together), and Light the Sky. Guided by Cruse's (2006) deictic classification and Luo's (2023) five-step qualitative content analysis procedure, all deictic tokens were coded and organised systematically. A total of 460 tokens were identified. Personal deixis was most frequent (193; 41.9%), followed by temporal deixis (136; 29.5%), spatial deixis (60; 13.0%), discourse deixis (43; 9.3%), and social deixis (28; 6.3%). The dominance of personal and temporal deixis foregrounds shared participation and immediacy, while social and discourse deixis support solidarity and cohesion. Overall, deixis reinforces global unity, cultural diversity, sportsmanship, and collective identity among worldwide audiences.

Introduction

The FIFA Men's World Cup is widely regarded as the most-watched sporting event in the world, attracting an estimated 3.2 billion viewers across 64 matches played by 32 teams (FIFA, 2025). The World Cup is organised by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) which is a body founded in 1904 and has its headquarters in Zurich. It is comprising of 211 affiliated national member association (FIFA, 2025). The tournament is convened every four years and serves explicitly as a vehicle for promoting global peace, unity, and international diplomacy (Adams & Ternes, 2022). Beyond the sporting spectacle, the World Cup is a site of global cultural production, and theme songs constitute one of the most visible cultural outputs associated with each edition of the tournament (Laker, 2026).

Since 1962, when El Rock del Mundial inaugurated the tradition in Chile, FIFA and its commercial partners have produced official theme songs for every World Cup edition (FIFA.com). Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter is reported to have equated the importance of the tournament's theme song with that of its official mascot (Zhou, 2021). These songs fulfil multiple communicative functions: they set the affective tone of the tournament, carry its thematic messages to diverse audiences, and serve as instruments of brand promotion for FIFA's commercial sponsors (Zhou, 2021). Laker, (2026) acknowledge that significantly, the songs are composed with the host nation's cultural identity in view, often incorporating lexical or melodic elements from the host country's language or musical tradition.

Language is the medium through which the songs achieve their communicative effects. Among the linguistic resources available to songwriters, deictic expressions - words and phrases whose interpretation depends on the spatiotemporal or social context of utterance (Cruse, 2006) - are particularly powerful tools for situating the audience within the event and constructing a sense of shared identity and purpose. Deixis has been studied extensively in political discourse (Adegoju, 2014; Chefor & Zhiying, 2020; Mwinmelle et al., 2019), presidential speeches (Horsu, et. al, 2020; Mwinmelle et al, 2019;

Mensah et al., 2022), film dialogue (Fauziah, 2015), short story 'the Doum-tree of Wad' Suliman (2022), motivational speeches (Rahayu & Kurniawan, 2019)

Other studies have also concentrated on popular music (Khoirun & Ashadi, 2021; Kurniati & Haryudin, 2021; Rahmi, 2019; Thao & Herman, 2021; Simanjuntak et al., 2021)

Most of these studies especially on music, analyze deixis to decode a songwriter's personal, localized emotions and relationships. For instance, Thao & Herman (2021) analyzing the lyrics of 'my heart will go on' by Celine Dion found the dominant use of person deixis which is used to identify the role of the participant/listener role in the song which will make the listener understand the message easier and relate more,

Using deixis to analyze a World Cup song shifts the focus from an individual's emotional narrative to a macro-sociological phenomenon. It explains exactly how anthems use context-dependent language to connect millions of diverse individuals to a single shared sporting event. Unlike conventional popular music, these songs are commissioned for a specific, time-bound global event and are designed to perform a unique communicative function: they must simultaneously address multiple, geographically dispersed audiences while constructing a unified, collective experience.

Also, while some studies have examined FIFA theme songs from historical, cultural, and hegemonic perspectives (Aslan, 2019; Duan & Yang, 2016; Yang et al., 2024), and others have critiqued their lyrical coherence and ideological alignment (Laker, 2026), there remains a notable absence of deixis-focused studies in world cup theme songs, particularly from within the Ghanaian scholarly context. This is a significant omission of the deictic architecture of these songs cannot fully account for how these songs "set the affective tone of the tournament" or "construct a sense of shared identity" without analyzing the deictic strategies through which such effects are linguistically accomplished.

Moreover, this gap is especially pronounced within the Ghanaian scholarly context, where studies of World Cup discourse have yet to engage with the micro-linguistic processes of meaning-making in sports-related cultural production.

The present study addresses this gap by conducting a deictic analysis of four prominent World Cup theme songs from the 2010 and 2022 editions of the tournament.

Research Questions

Two research questions guide the investigation:

1. What types of linguistic deixis are most frequently employed in the selected FIFA Men's World Cup 2010 and 2022 popular theme songs?
2. How do the identified deictic markers promote the general themes of the FIFA World Cup?

Literature Review

FIFA World Cup Theme Songs as Discursive Artefacts

World Cup theme songs occupy a distinctive position at the intersection of popular music, sports promotion, and global diplomacy. Zhou (2021) classifies such compositions as 'sports music', distinguishing them from ordinary popular music on the grounds that they are designed to synchronise with the rhythmic and emotional demands of competitive sport. According to Zhou (2021), sports music "combines the arts of sport and music as a means of expression in the process of specific training or competition" (p. 44) and is characterised by a heightened rhythmic tempo, athletic affect, and an orientation toward motivating both participants and spectators.

The thematic content of World Cup songs is never accidental. Adams & Ternes (2022) in a critical examination of FIFA's institutional documentation and bid materials for the 2026 tournament, identify two primary purposes underlying the staging of the World Cup: market expansionism and urban redevelopment (global placemaking) on the one hand, and the promotion of global peace, unity, and international diplomacy (global peacemaking) on the other. These dual purposes are reflected in the lyrical content of theme songs, which consistently invoke spatial, temporal, and relational deictic expressions to locate all of humanity within a shared moment and place.

The four songs selected for the present study were drawn from two historically significant editions of the tournament. The 2010 South Africa World Cup was the first edition held on the African continent (Cornelissen, 2018), while the 2022 Qatar World Cup was the first held in an Arab-majority country amidst the controversies (Sofotasiou, 2015). Theme songs from other World Cup tournaments like the 1998, 2006, 2014, and 2018 were not selected because the continents or the countries involved have hosted the tournament before. Also, there was no controversies around the hosting of such tournaments in these countries as compared to South Africa in 2010 and Qatar in 2022 especially on crime and human rights issues respectively. These contextual particularities invest the theme songs with additional layers of cultural and political meaning that are mediated, in part, through deictic language.

Theoretical Framework: Deixis and Its Classification

Deixis, from the Greek word for 'pointing' or 'showing', refers to the class of linguistic expressions whose interpretation is fundamentally anchored to the context of utterance, specifically, the time, place, and participants involved in the speech event (Levinson, 1983). Fillmore (1975) notes that deictic expressions are among the earliest words acquired by language learners, as children naturally employ them to orient themselves within their immediate environment. The deictic centre comprising the 'who' (person), the 'where' (place), and the 'when' (time) of an utterance, provides the interpretive anchor from which all deictic expressions radiate (Chefor, 2020).

Cruse (2006) organises deictic expressions into five categories: three major types; personal deixis, spatial (place) deixis, and temporal (time) deixis and two minor types: social deixis and discourse deixis. Levinson (1983) had previously introduced social and discourse deixis as supplementary categories, and subsequent scholarship has confirmed their analytical utility in both spoken and written text. Each category is described below.

Personal (Person) Deixis

Personal deixis encodes participant roles in a communicative event, distinguishing the speaker ('I', 'we'), the addressee ('you'), and third parties ('he', 'she', 'it', 'they') (Renkema, 1993). In song lyrics, personal deixis is realised primarily through personal pronouns, possessive pronouns (my, our, your, their), and reflexive pronouns (yourself, themselves). These expressions create a relational structure between the singer, as the primary speaker, and the listener, as the implied addressee.

Spatial (Place) Deixis

Spatial deixis encodes the relative location of referents with respect to the deictic centre. Imai (2003) classifies spatial deictic expressions into four groups: (1) the distance group (e.g., here, there, back, in, out); (2) the geometric group (e.g., up, down, in); (3) the geographic group (e.g., inland, Africa, streets); and (4) the cardinal group (e.g., north, south, east, west). Yule (1996) further distinguishes between proximal terms, which situate referents near the speaker (here, this), and distal terms, which situate them farther away (there, that).

Temporal (Time) Deixis

Temporal deixis encodes the time of an event or state relative to the moment of utterance. It is realised through pure deictic adverbs (now, then, today, tomorrow, forever), specific temporal expressions (tonight, end of the day), and verb tense. Yule (1996) identifies verb tense as the most fundamental form of temporal deixis in English, distinguishing past, present, and future orientations with respect to the deictic moment.

Social Deixis

Social deixis encodes the social relationship between participants in a communicative event, including dimensions such as relative status, solidarity, familiarity, and group membership (Levinson, 1983). In English, social deixis is expressed through forms of address (titles, honorifics, inclusive pronouns), register choices, and solidarity markers. In the context of World Cup songs, social deictic expressions include collective address forms ('everybody'), solidarity markers ('we better together'), status-conferring appellations ('good soldier', 'VIP'), and emancipatory or egalitarian address registers ('freedom').

Discourse Deixis

Discourse deixis refers to expressions that point to portions of the discourse itself, thereby organising the text and ensuring cohesion (Levinson, 1983). These include anaphoric expressions (which point backward to previously mentioned content), cataphoric expressions (which point forward to upcoming content), and connective devices (e.g., 'cause', 'and', 'but', 'as we', 'if...then') that link discourse segments. In song lyrics, discourse deixis is also realised through the strategic repetition of refrains and hook lines, which function as cohesion-creating devices that foreground the central thematic message of the song.

Deixis in Popular Music Lyrics

Empirical research on deictic expressions in popular song lyrics has seen personal deixis dominating. For instance, Kurniati and Haryudin (2021), in their analysis of Adele's 25 album, identified 56 deictic tokens distributed across personal (75%), spatial (17%), and temporal (8%) categories. Simanjuntak et al. (2021) corroborated this hierarchy in Hailee Steinfeld's Half Written Story, where personal deixis reached an even more pronounced 93% across five songs. Thao and Herman (2021) reinforced the pattern in Celine Dion's My Heart Will Go On, confirming the presence of all three major categories while implicitly affirming their uneven distribution. The analytical significance of this consensus is clear: popular music lyrics are fundamentally subjective discourse, with singers positioning themselves, their interlocutors, and their emotional states at the discursive centre.

Yet this very consensus reveals a critical limitation that all examine individual artists expressing personal emotional narratives to stable audiences within the conventional parameters of the pop song. The deictic centre in these songs is relatively fixed, the singer's "I" maps cleanly onto a biographical self, the "you" onto a romantic interlocutor, and the "here" onto an intimate, often domestic space. What these studies do not address is how deixis operates when the lyrical "I" is not a person but an event, when the "you" is not a lover but a global television audience, and when the "here" is not a room but a nation temporarily reconfigured as the centre of world attention.

A partial corrective emerges in studies that depart from the dominant pattern. Arnoi and Ashadi (2021), analyzing Ardhito Pramono's lyrics, reported temporal deixis as the most frequent type and notably extended the framework to include discourse deixis (15%) and social deixis (8%). Rahmi (2019) similarly identified social deixis alongside the primary triad. These findings are analytically consequential: they suggest that when lyrical context shifts from intimate confession to more complex social positioning, the deictic economy reconfigures. Temporal and social deixis become more prominent precisely when songs must negotiate relationships between speakers, audiences, and socially stratified contexts. This limitation is not incidental because World Cup theme songs operate under a fundamentally different communicative contract than commercial pop songs.

The present study therefore extends this literature in two critical directions. First, it tests the boundaries of the established consensus: if personal deixis dominates intimate pop ballads, does it retain primacy in songs whose primary function is collective address and national-cultural representation? Or do spatial

and social deixis assume greater proportional weight when the communicative task shifts from self-expression to community construction? Second, it introduces discourse deixis and social deixis as essential rather than peripheral categories, arguing that in event-commissioned sporting anthems, the negotiation of speaker roles, audience identities, and social relationships is not a minor feature but the central pragmatic achievement of the text. By applying the full deictic framework to FIFA World Cup theme songs, this study investigates how deixis functions as a global sporting publics.

Related Studies on World Cup Theme Song Lyrics

Scholarly engagement with FIFA World Cup theme songs brings up three issues for analysis based on the literature reviewed. The first is the work of Laker (2026) who approaches the songs through critical political economy. He frames them as sites of "performative contradiction," instruments that project "euphoric utopianism" and liberal international ideals whilst actively silencing the "dysphoric dystopian" conditions of the nations they represent. The songs generate, in Laker's (2026) formulation, a "loud silence" that fosters surface-level unity while reinforcing structural inequality. This analysis does not ask how the songs linguistically accomplish the interpellation of a global "we" that can simultaneously celebrate and ignore, unite and exclude. The deictic mechanisms through which this "loud silence" is constructed.

The second is represented by Yang et al. (2024), who offers a historical-comparative studies of World Cup songs from 1986 to 2022, tracing shifting musical styles, lyrical forms, and compositional techniques. Their analysis underscores the songs' capacity to "transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries" and function as a host-era cultural trends where the lyrics of the songs are crafted to suit the culture of the host nation. This chronological breadth is valuable, yet the study treats lyrics primarily as content carriers rather than as pragmatic speech acts, precisely the question of deictic negotiation that their study not address.

The final issue is exemplified in the research by Aslan (2019) who also examined World Cup theme songs through identity politics and cultural hegemony, revealing how international artists integrate local musical components into globally oriented compositions to encode national identity into "universal" sporting anthems. This focus on hybridity and representation does not investigate the linguistic means by which "local" becomes "global" within the song text itself.

These three trajectories collectively establish the World Cup theme song as a multidimensional cultural artefact mediating between unity and division, the local and the global, the celebratory and the silenced. What is missing is that none examines the pragmatic-linguistic infrastructure through which these mediations are achieved. The songs are analysed for what they say and what they do politically and culturally, but not for how they position their audiences linguistically to receive these messages.

The present study addresses this significant lacuna by conducting, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, the first deictic analysis of FIFA World Cup theme songs. In doing so, it does not merely add a new dataset to existing deixis research; it reframes the analytical stakes by demonstrating that the

deictic economy of event-commissioned sporting anthems differs qualitatively from that of conventional popular music, and that understanding this difference is essential to explaining how global sporting publics are linguistically constituted.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative content analysis design, which Creswell (2013) describes as the subjective yet systematic interpretation of textual data through classification and coding. Content analysis is appropriate for document-based data, as it enables the researcher to identify patterns, frequencies, and themes within a body of text without imposing the researcher's influence on the communicative context of the data (Musa, 2014). As the data for this study consist entirely of textual documents (the lyrics of four song compositions) this design was considered optimally suited to the research objectives. Kumar (2011) further affirms that content analysis allows for the rigorous classification of words and themes that emerge from textual data to describe specific phenomena.

Data Sources

The data corpus comprised the full lyrics of four FIFA World Cup theme songs, purposively selected from two tournament editions: the 2010 South Africa World Cup and the 2022 Qatar World Cup. The selected songs are:

Table 1
Selected World Cup theme songs

Code	Title	Artist(s)	Tournament	Status
H-1	Hayya Hayya (Better Together)	Trinidad Cardona, Davido, Aisha	2022 Qatar	Official FIFA anthem
L-2	Light the Sky	Nora Fatehi, Balqees, Rahma Riad, Manal	2022 Qatar	Official FIFA soundtrack
W-3	Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)	Shakira featuring Freshly Ground	2010 South Africa	Official FIFA anthem
W-4	Wavin' Flag	K'Naan	2010 South Africa	Coca-Cola promotional anthem

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was employed on the grounds that these four songs meet a specific combination of criteria. First, each song is associated with one of two uniquely significant tournament editions: 2010 marked the first World Cup hosted in Africa, whilst 2022 marked the first hosted in the Arab world. These editions are not merely chronologically distinct; they represent FIFA's strategic expansion into regions historically marginalised in the tournament's Eurocentric history (Tomlinson, 2014). This makes their

theme songs particularly rich sites for examining how deixis negotiates between local cultural specificity and global address.

Second, the official anthems for each tournament which were hayya and waka waka were selected because they were sanctioned by FIFA and thus perform the most explicit "official" communicative function.

H-1 was FIFA-commissioned, performed at opening ceremony, embodies official narrative of Arab hospitality and global unity and W-2 too was FIFA-commissioned; best-selling World Cup song of all time (10 + million copies); performed at closing ceremony. This song explicitly articulates "Africa" as deictic centre.

Third, the two supplementary songs (L-2 and W-4) were selected because they achieved greater commercial reach and audience recognition than any other songs associated with their respective tournaments, *Wavin' Flag* reached number one in fifteen countries and became the de facto sonic emblem of the 2010 tournament despite its commercial origins, whilst *Light the Sky* garnered over 100 million YouTube views and was prominently featured in tournament broadcasts.

Data source

Lyrics were sourced from three independent channels to ensure accuracy and proper verification: the first is the primary source which is from the official lyrics published on FIFA.com (FIFA, 2010; FIFA, 2022), the second is the secondary verification which is the official music video recordings on FIFA's verified YouTube channel, with lyrics displayed as on-screen text where available. Third is the tertiary verification which is the official lyric videos published by the artists' verified channels on YouTube and Vevo. Table 2 gives further details of this.

The Verification process also involved independent transcription of lyric content from audio by two research assistants. Each assistant produced a written transcript from audio-only playback (without visual cues), and discrepancies were resolved through consensus discussion moderated by the principal researcher.

This dual-source verification was necessary because published lyrics sometimes sanitise or standardise vernacular expressions, code-switching, or omit non-lexical deictic elements and also because deictic interpretation depends crucially on exact lexical form.

Table 2
The specific versions of the World Cup theme songs used

Song	Version Used	Duration	Release Date	You tube link address
H-1	Official music video (FIFA YouTube)	3:32	1 April 2022	https://youtu.be/vyDjFVZgJoo?t=17
L-2	Official music video (FIFA YouTube)	3:54	7 October 2022	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HKNdrBYS5k
W-3	Official music video (Shakira Vevo)	3:31	4 June 2010	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRpeEdMmmQ0
W-4	Coca-Cola Celebration Mix official video (K'Naan Vevo)	3:45	12 February 2010	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTJSt4wP2ME

The *Wavin' Flag* Coca-Cola Celebration Mix was selected over the original album version because it was the version distributed globally during the 2010 tournament and thus represents the reception context within which deictic interpretation occurred.

Data Analysis Procedure

Analysis followed Luo's (2023) five-step qualitative content analysis procedure, adapted to the deictic focus of the study: the first step is the selection of content where the four verified lyric texts constituted the complete analytical corpus. The second is the definition of units and categories. The unit of analysis was the deictic token, defined as any word or phrase whose interpretation depends on the spatiotemporal or social context of utterance (Cruse, 2006). Tokens were classified according to a five-category framework:

Table 3
Category of deixis and their operational definition

Category	Operational Definition	Some illustrative Examples
Personal deixis	Expressions referring to speaker, addressee, or other persons	I, you, we, they, me, us
Spatial deixis	Expressions locating entities in physical or conceptual space	here, there, this, that, near, far
Temporal deixis	Expressions anchoring utterance in time	now, then, today, soon, always
Discourse deixis	Expressions referring to portions of the ongoing discourse	this verse, the following, as I said
Social deixis	Expressions encoding social status, formality, or relational distance	sir, formal vs. informal pronouns
The third step deals with the generation of coding rules. This involves a detailed operationalization of definitions for each category, with particular attention to contextual disambiguation. For example:		

- "We" was coded as inclusive personal deixis when it clearly encompassed the global audience (e.g., "we are one"), but as exclusive personal deixis when it referred only to the performing artists or a national in-group (e.g., "we Africans").
- "Here" was coded as spatial deixis when referring to a physical location, but as discourse deixis when referring to the current textual moment (e.g., "here in this song").
- Code-switching instances (Arabic *hayya*, Spanish *waka waka*) were examined for whether the switched element carried deictic function in its source language that was preserved or transformed in the English-dominant context.
- It must be noted that repeated words in choruses were counted each time they occurred because they were seen as token frequency (Gries, 2024). Since songs rely on repetition for their pragmatic effect analyzing actual language use as they occur and counting each occurrence rather than lexical inventory will be very important and will reflect the lived experience of the listener.

A systematic coding was carried out at the fourth step where all tokens were coded independently by two coders that is the principal researcher and one trained research assistant with an Mphil in communication skills degree holder with experience in pragmatic analysis. The assistant underwent a calibration phase involving coding of Wavin' Flag as a pilot lyric text with feedback before independent coding commenced.

The final step consisted of analysis and interpretation of the coded data which was done using frequency counts, proportional distributions and also through interpretive analysis of pragmatic function.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative trustworthiness were addressed. Concerning credibility criterion, the strategy employed was that there was prolonged engagement with the songs that is the song was listened to repeatedly and transcribed for the analysis. In addition to this was peer debriefing with a second coder; member-checking through consultation of official FIFA documentation and others.

The second criteria observed to make the study trustworthy was transferability, a thick description of context to enable easy applicability to other sporting anthems. On dependability, audit trail for instance was used. This involved the keeping of meticulous notes on coding decisions. Where the exact coding as done was applied to all. Finally, Confirmability was applied. This involves ensuring that the findings and the interpretations of deixis were clearly grounded in the lyrics themselves.

Results and Discussion

Types and Frequency of Deictic Expressions

The analysis revealed the presence of all five deictic categories across the four theme songs. Tables 1 to 5 present the frequency distributions for each category, while Table 6 provides a summary of all five categories combined.

Personal (Person) Deixis

A total of 193 personal deictic tokens were identified across the four songs, making personal deixis the most frequently used deictic category in the corpus. Table 4 shows each song and their tokens with some key examples.

Table 4
Personal Deixis 193 tokens (41.9% of all deixis)

Song	Tokens	Key Examples
Hayya Hayya	55	I, you, we, your, it, "we better together" dominates via chorus repetition
Light The Sky	49	Everybody, me, you're, you, i
Waka Waka	26	You, your, we-"You're a good soldier," "We're all Africa"
Wavin' Flag	63	I, me, your, us, our, we, They - shifts from "I" to "we" across verses

Wavin' Flag (W-4) recorded the highest personal deixis count (63 tokens) driven largely by a dense first-person presence that constructs the song's narrative from the perspective of a singular, aspirational voice. Hayya Hayya (H-1) registered 55 tokens, creating a dialogic texture that enacts the solidarity theme of the song. Light the Sky (L-2) yielded 49 tokens, while Waka Waka (W-3) had the fewest personal deictic expressions (26). Across the corpus, the first-person plural pronoun 'we' appeared in three of the four songs (excepting Waka Waka) and constituted a particularly salient deictic device for constructing collective identity and togetherness. The direct address "you," "your" and inclusive plurals "we," "everybody," "us" transform the listener from passive audience into active participant. The high frequency of 1st person plural "we" (especially in *Hayya Hayya* and *Light The Sky*) absorbs the listener into a shared identity.

These findings are consistent with the broader literature, in which personal deixis typically emerges as a dominant category in song lyrics (Kurniati & Haryudin, 2021; Simanjuntak et al., 2021), though the present study assigns personal deixis the second rank when all five deictic types are considered.

Extract 1 (W-4): *"Give me freedom, give me fire"*

The singular "me" constructs a biographical voice (K'Naan's diasporic narrative) that invites the listener to identify with a specific, embodied experience of aspiration. This is what Cruse (2006) terms "speaker inclusion", the deictic centre is anchored in a particular individual whose story becomes accessible to the audience. The singer is not merely reporting; he is enacting a subject position that listeners can inhabit.

By contrast, the first-person plural performs a different pragmatic function which Levinson (1983) calls "inclusive we," dissolving the boundary between singer and audience.

Second-person functions differently from the others. The direct address "you" in *Waka Waka* operates as what Cruse (2006) classifies as "addressee deixis," but its pragmatic force varies by context:

Extract 2 (W-3): *"You're a good soldier, choosing your battles / Pick yourself up and dust yourself off"*

In this co-text, "you" does not refer to a specific identifiable individual (as it would in a love song). Instead, it operates as a "generic you" (Fitzmaurice, 2004) an address to any listener who occupies the role of resilient competitor. The possessive "your" in "your battles" and the reflexive "yourself" in "pick yourself up" compound this effect: they locate agency not in the singer but in the addressee, positioning the listener as the protagonist of a sporting narrative.

Third-person tokens (44 total) are less frequent but pragmatically significant. In *Wavin' Flag*, "it" operates deictically:

Extract 3 (W-4): *"Celebration, it surrounds us"*

The pronoun "it" here is not anaphoric (pointing back to prior discourse) but exophoric, indexing the immediate situational context of the tournament. This constructs what Hanks (2005) calls a "shared perceptual field"- the assumption that speaker and addressee are jointly oriented toward the same external phenomenon.

Spatial (Place) Deixis

A total of 60 spatial deictic tokens were recorded, placing spatial deixis third in the overall frequency ranking. Table 5 shows the four songs with key examples and tokens.

Table 5
Spatial Deixis 60 tokens (13% of all deixis)

Song	Tokens	Key Examples
Hayya Hayya	10	every street, at my feet, up, down, around
Light The Sky	14	Up, "Look up," "We up"; East/West, in-between
Waka Waka	20	front line, East to West, Africa
Wavin' Flag	16	higher, In the streets, around us, underneath the sun, back,

Waka Waka (W-3) recorded the highest spatial deixis count (20 tokens), a finding that reflects the song's prominent spatial narrative centered on Africa as both physical host and symbolic deictic centre. The high frequency of the specific location sub-category in this song confirms that spatial deixis in Waka Waka functions to foreground continental identity as a locus of global gathering. Light the Sky (L-2) and Wavin' Flag (W-4) each registered 14 and 16 tokens respectively, while Hayya Hayya (H-1) had the fewest spatial expressions at 10 tokens.

Extract 4 (L-2): *"Got the east and west / Meet you in-between"*

Here, "east" and "west" function as cardinal direction terms (Imai, 2003) that enumerate the full spatial range of the global audience. The phrase "meet you in-between" then performs the crucial pragmatic work: it transforms the binary spatial opposition into a unified "in-between" location.

The proximal/distal distinction (Yule, 1996) is also pragmatically active:

Extract 5 (H-1): *"I wanna walk the walk on every street"*

The quantifier "every" combined with "street" creates "distributed proximity", the sense that the tournament's celebratory space extends everywhere simultaneously. This differs from conventional spatial deixis, which orients the listener toward a single deictic centre; here, the centre is deliberately dispersed to accommodate a global audience.

Temporal (Time) Deixis

Temporal deixis was the second most frequently occurring deictic category in the corpus, with 136 tokens recorded across the four songs (Table 6). Verb tense constituted the dominant sub-category. This reflects the present-tense verb forms as more temporal deictic marker, consistent with Yule's (1996) position that verb tense is the primary vehicle of temporal deixis in English.

Table 6
Temporal Deixis – 136 tokens (29.5% of all deixis)

Song	Tokens	Key Examples
Hayya Hayya	40	now, tomorrow, never - "the time is now or never" walk, skip, don't, sticking
Light The Sky	27	Tonight- "Tonight we out to play" worries, play, saying, light
Waka Waka	30	this time, today, moment - "This time for Africa" raising, shine, go, feed, feel
Wavin' Flag	38	When I get older, now, end of the day; say, get, call, waving, goes, give, rejoice

Hayya Hayya (H-1) had the highest temporal deixis count of 40 tokens. These expressions construct an urgent temporal orientation that anchors the listener in the shared present moment of the tournament. Wavin' Flag (W-4) contributed 38 tokens, Light the Sky (L-2) yielded 27 tokens and Waka Waka (W-3) recorded the fewest temporal expressions (30 tokens).

Extract 6 (H-1): *"You know we better together"*

The present-tense "know" is not merely grammatical simultaneity; it presupposes shared knowledge. By using the present tense, the singer treats the proposition as already mutually accepted, a pragmatic strategy that Brown and Levinson (1987) classify as "positive politeness," claiming common ground with the addressee. The temporal deixis functions ideologically: it presents unity not as future aspiration but as present reality, thereby naturalizing the FIFA mandate of global solidarity.

Pure deictic adverbs perform a different temporal function. The adverb "now" appears 10 times in *Hayya Hayya*:

Extract 7 (H-1): *"The time is now or never"*

Here, "now" operates as what Cruse (2006) terms a "pure temporal deictic" – its interpretation is entirely dependent on the moment of utterance. The co-text "or never" creates a binary temporal opposition (present vs. nullity) that pressures the listener into immediate engagement. This is "temporal mobilization", the use of deictic time to compel action. The pragmatic effect is to collapse the distance between performance and lived experience: the tournament is not happening "soon" but *now*.

Social Deixis

Social deixis was identified in all four songs, yielding a total of 28 tokens at 6% (Table 7) the least among the five.

Table 7
Social Deixis – 28 tokens (6% of all deixis)

Song	Tokens	Key Examples
Hayya Hayya	5	Solidarity markers: 'we better together', 'rockin' with you' Terms of inclusion 'everybody'; Relational address: 'you now', 'you' (inclusive)
Light The Sky	9	VIP address: 'treat yourself like a VIP'; collective inclusion: 'everybody'; invitational: 'shout if you're with me', 'lean on me'
Waka Waka	6	Military/status address: 'good soldier'; encouragement register: 'you paved the way', 'this is your moment'; collective solidarity: 'this is Africa'
Wavin' Flag	8	Collective address: 'we all say', 'every nation'; solidarity markers: 'together at the end of the day', 'unify us'

Light the Sky (L-2) recorded the highest social deixis count (9 tokens), attributable to the song's sustained use of invitational constructions and collective address forms. Wavin' Flag (W-4) followed with 8 tokens, then Waka Waka (W-3) with 6 tokens and Hayya Hayya (H-1) with 5 tokens. The relatively even distribution of social deixis across the four songs suggests that solidarity and collective address are consistent discursive features of World Cup theme song production, irrespective of the particular tournament edition.

Extract 8 (W-3): *"You're a good soldier, choosing your battles"*

Here, "good soldier" functions as a "status-conferring appellation." It assigns the addressee a social role within a military metaphor of competitive sport. The evaluative adjective "good" encodes solidarity, while

the noun "soldier" constructs a hierarchical but inclusive relationship. This is classic social deixis: it indexes the relative social positions of speaker and addressee within a specific interactional frame.

Extract 9 (L-2): *"Gotta treat yourself like a VIP"*

The acronym "VIP" is a prestige address register. Its pragmatic function is "positive face enhancement" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The reflexive "yourself" compounds this effect: it directs the status-conferral inward, positioning the addressee as both recipient and agent of their own elevation. The invitational construction in *Light the Sky* represents a different social deictic function "solidarity summons":

Discourse Deixis

Discourse deixis yielded 43 tokens in total (Table 8), making it the fourth most frequent deictic category. Discourse deictic expressions identified in the corpus include cataphoric anticipation ('this time for Africa', 'when I get older'), cohesive connectors ('cause', 'as we', 'and together', 'no matter what'), conditional linkers ('if you...then'), and framing address forms ('everybody', repeated as a discourse-organising summons).

Table 8
Discourse Deixis – 43 tokens (9.3% of all deixis)

Song	Tokens	Key Examples
Hayya Hayya	8	cohesive connectors: 'every tomorrow', 'no matter what'; forward-linking: 'promise...gonna be'-'You know what it is"
Light The Sky	10	textual cohesion: 'if you...then', contrastive connectors: 'but'; anaphoric: 'them lights'-'it's okay"
Waka Waka	15	Cataphoric anticipation: 'this time for Africa'; logical connectors: anaphoric; Cause this is Africa", 'and if', "this time," " "this is your moment," "this is Africa"
Wavin' Flag	10	Discourse cohesion: 'and together...'; anaphoric: 'it surrounds us'; it additive connectors: 'as we', 'let's'; cataphoric: 'when I get older', the beautiful game

Waka Waka (W-3) recorded the highest count (15 tokens), followed Light the Sky (L-2) and Wavin' Flag (W-4) with 10 tokens each. Hayya Hayya (H-1) was the last with 8 tokens.

Extract 10 (W-3): *"Cause this is Africa"*

Here, "cause" (because) is a causal connector that links the immediately preceding line to the explanatory proposition. The demonstrative "this" performs anaphoric work, pointing backward to the prior discourse context. Together, the connector with demonstrative create what Halliday and Hasan (1976) call a "cohesive tie."

Extract 11 (L-2): *"Shout if you're with me"*

The "if...then" structure (with "then" implied in the imperative "shout") is a conditional linker that creates "hypothetical discourse space" a projected sequence in which the addressee's action is contingent on their state.

Overall Frequency Distribution

Table 9 presents the aggregate frequency of all five deictic categories across the corpus. A total of 460 deictic tokens were identified.

Table 9
Overall Frequency of all Five Deictic Categories

SN	Type of Deixis	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	Personal (Person) Deixis	193	41.9	1st
2	Temporal (Time) Deixis	136	29.5	2nd
3	Spatial (Place) Deixis	60	13	3rd
4	Discourse Deixis	43	9.3	4th
5	Social Deixis	28	6.3	5th
Grand Total		460	100	

As Table 9 shows, personal deixis (41.9%) the dominant category, followed by the temporal deixis (29.5%). Just after these are spatial deixis (13%) and Discourse deixis (9.3%) and social deixis the least occurring at (6.3%). These findings confirm several previous studies (Kurniati & Haryudin, 2021; Simanjuntak et al., 2021), in which personal deixis consistently ranked first.

How Deictic markers promote the general theme of the World Cup

The thematic analysis identified four overarching themes through which deictic expressions promote the general objectives of the FIFA World Cup which according to Adams and Ternes (2022), it is to promote global peace, unity and international diplomacy. Themes that were derived from the deictic expression used in the theme songs include: (a) global unity and togetherness, (b) sportsmanship, celebration, and collective participation, (c) cultural diversity, and (d) collective identity construction.

Global Unity and Togetherness

This theme is promoted primarily through the coordinated deployment of personal, temporal, and spatial deixis working in concert. The pragmatic mechanism is "deictic convergence" which is the simultaneous alignment of speaker-addressee relationships (personal), time (temporal), and space (spatial) to create the illusion of co-presence among geographically dispersed participants. Personal deixis promotes unity through the inclusive "we":

Extract 12 (H-1): *"You know we better together"*

The first-person plural "we" is what Isreal (2019) calls an "inclusive plural" it encompasses both singer and addressee, dissolving the dyadic boundary between performer and audience. The predicate "better together" makes the unity explicit: the comparative "better" encodes the superiority of collective over individual state. The pragmatic effect is to construct what Anderson (1983) terms an "imagined community", a collective experienced as immediate and concrete despite its geographic dispersion.

Temporal deixis reinforces this unity by anchoring all participants in the same moment:

Extract 13 (H-1): *"The time is now or never"*

The pure deictic "now" constructs "temporal co-presence" (Levinson, 1983) the sense that all listeners inhabit the same decisive moment regardless of time zone. The binary "or never" creates "temporal urgency" a pressure to commit to the collective present that excludes deferral or absence.

Spatial deixis contributes by transforming geographic dispersion into convergence:

Extract 14 (L-2): *"Got the east and west / Meet you in-between"*

The cardinal directions "east and west" enumerate the full spatial range of the global audience, while "in-between" transforms the binary opposition into a unified location. Note that this is analytically distinct from "collective identity" (Theme 4): here, the focus is on the *dissolution of spatial boundaries* (boundary dissolution), not on the *creation of a new collective self* (identity transformation).

Social deixis strengthens unity through solidarity-marking:

Extract 15 (W-4): *"Unify us, make us feel proud"*

The imperative "unify" is a directive speech act that requests the transformation of a diverse group into a single entity. The first-person plural object "us" positions the speaker as already part of the group to be unified, while the second-person implied agent is positioned as a co-participant. The social deictic function is what Levinson (1983) calls "solidarity encoding", the minimization of status differentials through inclusive address.

Sportsmanship and Collective Participation

This theme is promoted through deictic expressions that position the audience as active sporting agents rather than passive spectators. The pragmatic mechanism is "deictic agency transfer" the relocation of actional capacity from the singer to the listener through second-person address and imperative constructions.

Personal deixis promotes sportsmanship through second-person strategic deployment:

Extract 16 (W-3): *"You're a good soldier, choosing your battles / Pick yourself up and dust yourself off"*

The "you" here is a "generic you" that puts any listener into the role of resilient competitor. The reflexive "yourself" in "pick yourself up" directs agency inward, positioning the addressee as the sole agent of their own recovery. This is what Adegoju (2014) terms "ideological positioning" that is the use of personal deixis to align the addressee with specific values (perseverance, self-reliance) central to sporting ideology. This is analytically distinct from the solidarity markers in Theme 1: here, the focus is on *role assignment* (positioning the listener as a specific type of agent), not on *boundary dissolution* (erasing differences between participants).

Social deixis reinforces this through status-conferring appellations:

Extract 17 (W-3): *"You're a good soldier"*

Extract 18 (L-2): *"Treat yourself like a VIP"*

The first extract elevates the listener to a position of honour within a military metaphor of competitive sport. The second uses a prestige register ("VIP") to create "occasion-specific status enhancement" the temporary elevation of the listener's social position for the duration of the event.

Spatial deixis encodes the festive register through celebratory space construction:

Extract 19 (H-1): *"I wanna walk the walk on every street / I wanna party, party eight days a week"*

The geographic deictic "every street" projects the singer's festive aspiration across the entire host territory, constructing "distributed celebration space", the sense that the entire city is a site of festivity. The hyperbolic "eight days a week" (an idiom meaning "all the time") extends this spatial celebration into a temporal frame that exceeds ordinary boundaries.

Temporal deixis marks celebratory moments with precision as in the extract below.

Extract 20 (L-2): *"Tonight we out to play oh"*

The specific time expression "tonight" collapses the distance between the song's performance context and the listener's lived experience. Its pragmatic function is "occasion anchoring" the precise temporal location of celebration that makes the listener a participant in the immediate event. This is analytically distinct from the "shared nowness" of Theme 1: here, the focus is on *action mobilization* (getting the listener to play/celebrate), not on *boundary dissolution* (creating a sense of co-presence).

Cultural Diversity and Host Identity

This theme is promoted through deictic expressions that affirm the host nation's cultural specificity while simultaneously integrating that specificity into a universal sporting framework. The pragmatic

mechanism is "deictic glocalization" the simultaneous encoding of local and global reference points. Spatial deixis is the primary vehicle as illustrated below:

Extract 21 (W-3): "Cause this is Africa"

The demonstrative "this" transforms the geographic name "Africa" into a deictic centre. The pragmatic effect is the linguistic construction of the host nation (not merely the tournament) as the locus of global attention. The 14 occurrences of "Africa" in *Waka Waka* do not simply name a continent; through their co-occurrence with deictic markers, they construct Africa as the symbolic centre of a global gathering. This is analytically distinct from the "spatial reconciliation" of Theme 1: here, the focus is on *host specificity* (celebrating a particular place), not on *boundary dissolution* (erasing differences between places).

Personal deixis portrays cultural diversity through inclusive collective address such as is in extract 22:

Extract 22 (W-3): "We're all Africa"

The first-person plural "we" combined with the predicate "all Africa" performs "collective cultural identification" - the transformation of individual and national identities into a single heterogeneous collective. The pragmatic effect is paradoxical: it asserts cultural specificity ("Africa" as a distinct cultural identity) while simultaneously dissolving individual differences into that specificity ("we're all" Africa).

Temporal deixis marks the present as a moment of unprecedented cultural exchange:

Extract 23 (W-3): "This time for Africa"

The cataphoric demonstrative "this" combined with "time for" constructs "historical uniqueness" - the positioning of the present moment as unprecedented in its cultural significance (the first World Cup in Africa).

Social deixis encodes hospitality and cultural welcome as in extract 24:

Extract 24 (L-2): "Them lights are saying hello"

The light imagery constructs the host environment as a socially welcoming space. The social deictic function is "environmental personification", the attribution of social agency to the host setting, which positions the host nation as actively welcoming. This is analytically distinct from the solidarity markers of Theme 1: here, the focus is on *host hospitality* (the host welcoming the guest), not on *peer solidarity* (equals uniting with equals).

Collective Identity Construction

This theme is analytically distinct from Theme 1 (Global Unity) in its focus: while Theme 1 concerns the *dissolution of boundaries* between participants, Theme 4 concerns the *creation of a new collective self* - the transformation of "I" and "you" into "we." The pragmatic mechanism is "deictic identity fusion", the progressive merging of individual deictic centres into a single collective centre.

Personal deixis is seen in the following:

Extract 25 (W-4):

"Give ME freedom, give ME fire" (singular)

"LET'S rejoice... WE all say" (plural inclusive)

"When I get older... THEY'LL call ME freedom" (return to singular)

This progression demonstrates "deictic cycling" the movement from singular to plural and back again that mirrors the social process of identification. The initial "me" establishes individual aspiration; the "let's/we" transforms that aspiration into collective action; the return to "I" re-individualizes the narrative but now with the collective framework established.

Social deixis constructs identity through egalitarian register:

Extract 26 (W-4): *"They'll call me freedom just like a wavin' flag"*

The emancipatory appellative "freedom" combines with the simile "just like a wavin' flag" to construct "aspirational identity" a collective self defined not by what it is but by what it aspires to become. The social deictic work is performed by the implied community of "they" who will confer the title: this community positions the speaker (and by extension, the listener) as worthy of emancipatory recognition. This is analytically distinct from the "status conferral" of Theme 2: here, the focus is on *collective aspiration* (what "we" can become together), not on *individual role assignment* (what "you" should do now).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study provides a robust initial map of the deictic architecture of FIFA World Cup theme songs, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the corpus was limited to four songs from two tournament editions. While these were purposively chosen for their geopolitical significance, a larger, diachronic corpus (e.g., 1962–2026) would allow for the identification of shifting deictic trends across decades of globalization. Relating to this is the version used, this has been mitigated methodologically via Table 2 where the different kind of version for each song has been given.

Second, this analysis focused exclusively on linguistic tokens. However, theme songs are multimodal texts; the deictic "pointing" in the lyrics is often reinforced or contradicted by visual deixis in music videos (e.g., pointing gestures, camera angles) and musical deictics (e.g., rhythmic shifts that mark "now"). Future research should adopt a multimodal pragmatic approach to fully capture the affective impact of these anthems.

Third, the study predominantly analyzed English lyrics or English transliterations of multilingual segments. The nuanced deictic systems of other languages prominently featured in these songs may

offer different pragmatic affordances that are lost in translation. Comparative studies of deictic usage across the various linguistic versions of World Cup songs like Spanish vs. English versions of Waka Waka would enrich our understanding of how global messages are adapted for local linguistic markets.

Conclusion

This study has conducted analysis of five types of deictic expressions personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis in four prominent FIFA World Cup theme songs from the 2010 and 2022 editions of the tournament. A total of 460 deictic tokens were identified and classified. personal deixis (193; 41.9%) emerged as the dominant category followed by Temporal deixis (136; 29.5%) then spatial deixis (60; 13%), discourse deixis (43; 9.3%), and finally social deixis (28; 6.3%).

The thematic analysis in response to Research Question two identified four major ways in which deictic expressions promote the general themes of the FIFA World Cup: through the construction of global unity and togetherness, the encoding of sportsmanship and collective celebration, the affirmation of cultural diversity, and the production of collective identity. These functions are distributed across all five deictic categories.

The findings have implications for the study of sports discourse and popular music linguistics. The consistent and purposive deployment of deictic language in World Cup theme songs suggests that these songs are not merely entertainment products but carefully crafted discursive instruments through which FIFA's institutional objectives - particularly the promotion of global peace, and unity (Adams & Ternes, 2022) are communicated to a global audience. Future research could extend this analysis to a larger corpus of World Cup theme songs across multiple tournament editions, compare deictic patterns across different sporting mega-events, or examine the interaction between deictic expression and other pragmatic phenomena such as implicature and speech acts in sports music contexts.

Declarations

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established principles of research ethics, including academic integrity, transparency, proper attribution, and responsible use of published materials. Since the research was based entirely on publicly available song lyrics and documentary sources, no human participants were directly involved. Therefore, issues concerning informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and protection of participants were not applicable.

Attention was also given to copyright and intellectual property rights. The selected song lyrics were used strictly for academic and analytical purposes, and the artists, song titles, and relevant sources were appropriately acknowledged. Only relevant portions of the lyrics were reproduced where necessary to support the analysis.

To ensure research integrity, the lyrics were obtained and verified from credible sources before analysis. The coding process followed clearly defined analytical procedures, and interpretations were grounded in the textual evidence. The involvement of a second coder also helped to reduce individual researcher bias and enhance the credibility of the analysis.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest

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