

## A Pragmatic Study: Investigating the Meaning of Social Deixis in Spoken Discourse

**Fatmah Fatmah**

*Department of English Education, Faculty of Education and Science, Swadaya Gunung Djati, University, Cirebon, Indonesia*

[fatmah3593@gmail.com](mailto:fatmah3593@gmail.com)

**Indri Lutpiah**

*Department of English Education, Faculty of Education and Science, Swadaya Gunung Djati, University, Cirebon, Indonesia*

[indrilutfiah707@gmail.com](mailto:indrilutfiah707@gmail.com)

**Sari Sucita Laden**

*Department of English Education, Faculty of Education and Science, Swadaya Gunung Djati, University, Cirebon, Indonesia*

[sarisucitra02@gmail.com](mailto:sarisucitra02@gmail.com)

**Devi Mulatsih\*<sup>1</sup>**

*Department of English Education, Faculty of Education and Science, Swadaya Gunung Djati University, Cirebon, Indonesia*

[mulatsih83@gmail.com](mailto:mulatsih83@gmail.com)

**Jaufillaili Jaufillaili**

*Department of English Education, Faculty of Education and Science, Swadaya Gunung Djati University, Cirebon, Indonesia*

[fillihidayat@gmail.com](mailto:fillihidayat@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

*This research aims to investigate the types of social deixis and analyze their social meaning in a speech context. This research used a qualitative method. The participant of this research is Retno Marsudi's utterances, who is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The data was collected from YouTube and a transcript from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia's website. The data collected was analyzed using qualitative analysis, where the data was divided into five types of deixis and then narrowed down into two types of social deixis. After the data was narrowed down, the researchers analyzed the meaning of the social deixis based on contextual and sociocultural theory. The results of the analysis conclude that there are two types of social deixis: 1) relational social deixis and 2) place social deixis with three data of relational and one data of place social deixis. The social meaning of social deixis implies professionalism, social status, familiarity, and formality.*

<sup>1</sup> \* Corresponding Author

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Spoken language is a standard communication tool that humans can use to convey their intentions and ideas (Prasad, 2019). A Speech is regarded as one of the spoken languages that is commonly employed to deliver specific messages and purposes carried out by someone in front of an audience. And usually presented by a leader of a country, company, community or anyone who can inspire or persuade the audience. According to Nygaard and Tzeng (2021), spoken language is a complex form of communication that relies on creating and understanding intricate auditory signals that can convey linguistic elements such as words and phrases. They also explain that signals can convey non-linguistic elements such as the speaker's origin, emotions, articulation habits, and unique physical characteristics. For this reason, the researchers decided to analyze deixis in speech.

Jasim (2022) states that pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines how the context of a speech situation affects the meaning of the utterances. The speech situation can influence the meaning of the utterance, as they do not have inherent meaning without it. Erlinda (2019), explains that the relationship between language and context involves language use competence within the context to conduct an appropriate communication context for language understanding and comprehension. Pragmatics mainly includes implicature, presupposition, speech acts, deixis, and aspects of discourse structure. It is essential to learn pragmatics because it helps us to understand the meaning behind a word or sentence in a conversation. One of the examples that reflects the relationship between language and context is the phenomenon of deixis.

Deixis is an essential component of pragmatics that studies how situational contexts are connected to the meaning of a language, which is highlighted through grammatical and lexical means (Green, 2022), where deixis involves elements such as location, time, person, social relation, and discourse. In Saputra and Apsari (2021), it is explained that the term deixis originates from the classical Greek term “*deiknynai*”, which means “to show or point out”. It refers to language elements that directly indicate entities, such as objects, processes, attributes, and circumstances. Al-Hamzi, et al (2023) also argued that deixis is one of the pragmatic aspects used to identify person, time, place, discourse and social relation in a conversation or written words based on the context. In conclusion, deixis is an element of pragmatics that explains how words express a meaning based on personal, temporal, setting, social, and discourse context. For example, “Mr. President distributed social aid for us who are in need”. In this context, deixis refers to using words or phrases that depend on a particular situational and social context. The sentence expresses the speaker’s respect for the President by mentioning “Mr. President” also, the use of “Us” indicates that the speaker is a part of the people whom the President helps.

Deixis has been investigated in several previous studies. One of the earlier studies that investigated the use of deixis on declaration speeches by Indonesia Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates with the title “Deixis Analysis of Declaration Speeches of Indonesian Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates” authored by Fathurohman et al. (2023) found 124 forms of deixis used in Prabowo’s and Gibran’s Declaration Speech on October 25, 2023. The data is divided into 56 person deixis, 5 place deixis, 6 time deixis, 3 discourse deixis, and 48 social deixis. In conclusion, the most used deixis are Personal Deixis and Social Deixis, with 56 data for Personal Deixis and 48 data for Social Deixis found in the speech. In Wisniewska’s Journal titled “Personal Deixis in the 2020 United States Presidential Election: An Analysis of Joe Biden’s and Donald Trump’s Political Speeches” (2020), the researcher compared the personal deixis usage in political speeches of Joe Biden and Donald Trump. The research found that both candidates commonly used “we,” but Biden used universal “we” to address all Americans, while Trump used royal

“we” to refer to his government. That means that the same deictic pronouns can have a dual function, which is to indicate inclusion and exclusion. Another earlier study entitled "An Analysis of Deixis in 'Beauty and The Beast Movie Script'" by Lorenza et al. (2024), which similarly focuses on a script text as this research but leans more towards movie scripts, has identified five types of deixis in the movie script on each section except the coda with person, social, and spatial deixis being the most often used by the character of Beauty and The Beast movie.

According to the earlier studies, the researchers aim to investigate the use of social deixis in the speech that Retno Marsudi delivered as Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs from October 2023 to January 2024 about the current issue between Israel and Palestine. Specifically, the following research question will be addressed throughout the paper:

1. What are the types of social deixis that occur in Retno Marsudi’s speech?
2. What is the social meaning of the social deixis that occurred in Retno Marsudi’s speech at the United Nations meeting from October 2023 to January 2024 about the resolution for the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis?

The researchers chose the speeches that were delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss because they relate to the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Also, no research has been conducted on those speeches.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of pragmatics constitutes a fundamental domain within linguistics, focusing on language use in context and understanding how meaning is constructed through communicative acts. Dey (2023) asserts that pragmatics is a field of study focused on the intentions and goals communicated by the speaker. Levinson (1983) in Karimah & Luhtvia (2023) defines Pragmatics as the investigation into how language interacts with its surrounding context to shape understanding. Despite sharing similarities with semantics, which explores meaning, pragmatics maintains a distinct focus. Parker (1986) elucidates this contrast between semantics and pragmatics. Semantics delves into the intrinsic meaning of words or lexical meaning, detached from context, whereas pragmatics considers meaning intertwined with context, encompassing the speaker's intention or emotions. Yule (1996) also states that “pragmatics is the study of the meaning of the speaker”, it implies that pragmatics can be described as the analysis of the meaning of the speaker's speech. Yule asserts that pragmatics involves the investigation of contextual meaning. It implies that pragmatics is the study of the contextual meaning contained in language and involves a specific context. According to those perspectives, pragmatics consists of analyzing language, meaning, and context in written or spoken form.

According to Huebner (2019), There are different genres of spoken discourse that humans can produce, such as conversation, debates, lectures, and speech. This research mainly explores the use of deixis in speech. The reason is that speech provides interactive conversation between a speaker and listeners. Various listeners would give immediate or later feedback on the speaker’s message in the speech. A speech cannot occur without the presence of a speaker, a conversational partner, and a speech context. Besides structural components, pragmatics also examines the use of language within social and cultural factors that influence communication. The elements of pragmatics include implication, speech act, politeness strategy, and interpretation of meaning in context. It is essential to gain valuable insight from the interplay of language, context, and speaker intention to achieve excellent language comprehension as a tool for social interaction and meaning negotiation.

Deixis is a linguistics field that has been a primary focus of pragmatics study,

which focuses on language use according to the context to achieve the interpretation of words. Throughout the years, numerous research studies have investigated deixis communication's form, function, and implication. Bunyarang & Prasongsook (2022) stated that deixis plays an essential role in how language is used in communication, whether written or spoken, influenced by a specific situation or context. It is also explained by William (2019) that a particular expression that relies on contextual utilization and mainly focuses on providing an excellent comprehension for the receiver against the speaker's messages (Hanifa et al., 2023) is a linguistic phenomenon named deixis. Understanding deixis involves the recognition of the context in which a statement or sentence is made to ensure accurate comprehension. Therefore, employing language effectively becomes paramount to avoid any potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Yule explained that deixis involves indicating or referencing through language. Deixis manifests when a word's reference is contingent upon the speaker's situational context. Various categories of deixis exist, encompassing personal deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis.

According to Ricca & Johan (2021), three categories of deixis exist: person deixis, spatial deixis, and temporal deixis. Firstly, person deixis encompasses deictic expressions of individuals, such as pronouns denoting a first, second, or third person, for example, "I," "you," "he," "she," "we," "they," "him," "her," "them," or demonstratives like "that man." Secondly, spatial deixis concerns deictic terms associated with location, such as "here," "there," "above," "near," "behind," among others. Lastly, temporal deixis involves deictic expressions concerning time, including terms like "now," "then," "later," "tomorrow," "yesterday," etc. Deixis in discourse or text entails the utilization of expressions within a statement to denote a particular segment of the ongoing discourse (Levinson, 1983). Additionally, it contends that discourse deixis is evident within textual contexts. The notions of spatial and temporal dimensions are inherently intertwined with academic texts, irrespective of their presentation mode, be it oral or written, as pointed out in Ritonga (2023).

Levinson (1983) describes social deixis as the linguistic feature within a sentence that mirrors or sets up particular social contexts pertinent to the speech act. It represents social roles or connections among individuals and their engagements with others in Saadon (2021). This encompasses the utilization of courteous pronouns, forms of address, and linguistic indicators indicating social standing or position. Social deixis emphasizes the distinctiveness and social ranking among conversational participants, influencing language selection like honorifics, familiar terms, and informal titles. Fillmore (1971) also suggested that social deixis deals with some elements of sentences within a specific social context of an utterance where it includes several aspects such as person marking, speech level, social behavior, titles, the relation between the participants, and all of which contribute to the social interaction.

Heriyadi & Diana (2020) delineate two fundamental categories of social deixis, apparent in linguistic structures across cultures: relational social deixis and place social deixis. Relational social deixis denotes deictic references to specific social attributes of referents, independent of their relative ranking, or to the social dynamics between the speaker and addressee. Examples of relational social deixis are my husband, teacher, sister, or pronouns like you and she. In contrast, place social deixis refers to the linguistic phenomenon where language conveys the spatial relationships and cultural significance of a location within a particular social context. For example, in some cultures, the term "downtown" might have different connotations, implying the central business district in one place and a vibrant cultural hub in another. Place social deixis helps situate individuals,

objects, or events in a particular space, contributing to the precision and clarity of communication.

Context is a central issue of pragmatic studies as pragmatics concerns the intended meaning of speakers or the messages being conveyed (Nagy, 2015). In essence, pragmatics asserts that the language context is intricately tied to the specific situation. Utterances can take on varying meanings when placed in different contexts. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics involves examining contextual meaning. This analysis entails interpreting individuals' intended meanings within a given context and understanding how the context shapes verbal expressions. The success of a conversation hinges on the alignment of the speaker's statements with the listener's intentions, and this implies that effective communication is not solely about the words spoken; somewhat, the speaker's expressions can be anticipated by the listener based on how the conversation is guided. Therefore, in doing this research, the researcher chose Retno Marsudi's Speech as the Indonesian Foreign Minister at a UN meeting about the issue between Palestine and Israel from October 2023 to January 2024 to analyze relational social deixis and place social deixis.

In every event of verbal interaction or communication process, several elements take a role and are involved in the event. Researchers have introduced the ethnography of communication to investigate distinctions arising from language and context. Connected to this framework is Hymes' SPEAKING model (1967), which analyzes speech events by considering setting and scene, participants, ends, acts sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre. Since our everyday language includes emotional nuances, incorporating an emotional dimension into this model (E-SPEAKING) appears to offer a more thorough understanding of cultural and linguistic interpretations (Pishghadam, R, Ebrahimi, S, Shairi, R, M, & Derakshan, A, 2021). By analyzing the elements, in particular, of s speech, we can comprehend the linguistic and contextual factors that contributed to the formation of the event.

Socio-culturalism suggests that every particular society or individual can be characterized by different norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, ideas, and values (Khoi, 2023). Furthermore, according to Emile Durkheim in Khoi (2023), culture itself is believed to emerge through social interaction and function to uphold societal stability. According to the statement below, culture has a significant role in the pragmatics of language use to understand communication in a social context because, in sociopragmatics, it explains that linguistic action must be done concerning notions such as appropriateness, politeness, and others. In pragmatics, culture holds a significant role because, in an intercultural context, it depends on individual communication preferences from different nations and cultures to negotiate with meaning and common understanding (McConachy., & Oatey., 2021).

### **3. METHOD**

In this research, the researchers use a qualitative method. According to Perry in Asmarita & Haryudin (2019), the objective is to deepen understanding of the types and meanings of social deixis in Retno Marsudi's speech. According to Levitt (2021), the qualitative method does not require a specific approach to identify the population. The source of this research is the transcription of Retno Marsudi's speech as the primary data source, which was chosen because of its relevant content. The transcriptions become the foundation for identifying and analyzing the types and meanings of social deixis in Retno Marsudi's communication. The aims of social deixis were thoroughly described using pragmatic approaches based on Stephen C. Levinson's theory. This theory is a basis for understanding the pragmatic context of using social deixis in speech.

In data collection, the researcher searched the Internet and YouTube to find relevant speech transcripts by Retno Marsudi. After finding the speech transcription, the

researcher conducted a transcription process to convert the speech content from YouTube videos into written text. Next, the researcher classified the data based on the types of deixis found in Retno Marsudi's speech transcription.

This research follows the approach by Miles and Huberman in Ricca & Johan (2021), where the data analysis technique consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. After collecting the data, the researcher only takes social deixis data from the previous deixis type classification. Then, the researcher classifies it into two types of social deixis: 1) Relational social deixis and 2) Place social deixis. For data presentation, after the data has been reduced, the researcher presents the data systematically. Usually, it is in the form of tables, graphs, or diagrams to facilitate understanding and analysis.

This data source used in this study was a speech delivered by Retno Marsudi at the UN meeting as Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs from October 2023 to January 2024 about the current issue between Israel and Palestine. The transcript used as data in this study was taken from YouTube on 26 January 2024, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia's website.

Understanding the speech of native English speakers can assist individuals in enhancing their proficiency in the language. This proficiency, in turn, can prove advantageous for English learners by minimizing the likelihood of miscommunication and misunderstandings when conversing with other English speakers (Ratri & Bram, 2023).

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the analysis, the researcher found two types of social deixis in Retno Marsudi's speech. There are 1) relational social deixis and 2) place social deixis. Here is a further explanation of the data that the researcher collected:

##### **4.1. Types of Social Deixis**

##### **4.1.1. Relational Social Deixis**

###### **Data 1**

"Efforts to evacuate our nationals failed and failed again due to the situation.

###### **Colleagues,**

Our meeting should not only send a strong message but also mobilize international support to end the horrifying situation in Gaza."

**Context:** The data above was uttered by Retno Marsudi several times in the speech and that one sample that the researcher chose to analyze. The context is Retno Marsudi giving a speech in the UN meeting as a representative of Indonesia to voice out Indonesian advocates for Palestinians and indirectly representing the Palestinian people to demand justice for them.

The term "**Colleagues**" here is classified as relational deixis because it represents the relationship between the speaker and the audience. The use of "colleagues" indicates that the speaker and the audience have the same position and role as colleagues. It also shows familiarity, as opposed to the use of "ladies and gentlemen", which is more formal. But it still indicates professionalism and respect to the audience.

###### **Data 2**

"**Madame President**

I'm here today for the third time in three months, joining the Council debate on Palestine to reaffirm Indonesia's unwavering commitment to stand with Palestine."

**Context:** The line uttered by Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi, at the beginning of her speech at the third UNSC meeting as a representative of Indonesia's President and society to deliver her speech to call out the world and all UN diplomats to take action to stop Israel genocide action on Palestinian.

The use of the term "**Madame President**" in the sentence above is an example of relational deixis where the term honors the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Mrs. Nathalie Broadhurst. The term "**Madame President**" also indicates Retno Marsudi's position as a participant in the meeting. In addition, the term "**Madame President**" in the meeting is appropriate because it is a formal and polite word or utterance to be used in a formal forum such as the UN Security Council meeting.

### Data 3

"I am supposed to be with **my President** in Beijing now for the Belt and Road Forum. **My President** asked me to leave him in Beijing and fly to Jeddah to attend this meeting."

**Context:** Retno Marsudi attended the first United Nations meeting in Jeddah regarding the conflict between Israel and Palestine in order to displace the President who was participating in the Belt and Road forum in Beijing. Retno Marsudi was supposed to attend the forum with the President; however, the President asked her to attend the UN meeting to convey Indonesian support and advocacy for Palestine as their representative.

The use of the term "**my President**" shows a class of relational deixis because there is a level of relationship between Retno Marsudi and the President. This indicates that Retno is a subordinate or staff member of the president and that she is in a lower position in the government hierarchy structure. Instead of just saying "the President," which can be ambiguous and impersonal, "my President" clarifies who she refers to and why she is present at the meeting.

### 4.1.2. Place Social Deixis

#### Data 1

"Madame President

I'm here today for the third time in three months joining **the council debate** on Palestine to reaffirm Indonesia unwavering commitment to stand with Palestine

To declare that Indonesia will not rest until we see Justice and dignity restored for the Palestinian people"

**Context:** The text uttered by Retno Marsudi, the Indonesian foreign minister as Indonesia's representative at the Council debate emphasizes Indonesia's unwavering commitment to stand with Palestine and declares their commitment to ensuring justice and dignity for the Palestinians.

The term "**Council Debate**" is classified as place social deixis because it signifies that the event or meeting took place in the United Nation conference room, thereby indicating that the situation occurred in a formal setting. The speaker uses the term

“Council Debate” instead of others because it specifically indicates the place, situation, and purpose of the meeting, where the meeting is held in an international forum at the United Nation conference room to discuss the solutions for the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

## **4.2. The meaning of Social Deixis**

### **4.2.1. Relational Social Deixis**

#### **Data 1**

“Efforts to evacuate our nationals failed and failed again due to the situation.

#### **Colleagues,**

Our meeting should not only send a strong message, but also mobilize international support to end the horrifying situation in Gaza.”

The social meaning of “Colleagues” based on most cultural norms, reflects a professional and respectful attitude toward others. So, the social meaning of “**Colleagues**” used by Retno Marsudi here is that she wants to represent her respect to the audience present in the meeting, which is her fellow diplomats and government officials. Culturally, the term “Colleagues” also implies that the relationships of the people involved are equal within the context of their professional roles or responsibilities.

#### **Data 2**

#### **“Madame President**

I'm here today for the third time in three months joining the Council debate on Palestine to reaffirm Indonesia's unwavering commitment to stand with Palestine.”

The social meaning of the word “Madame President” is to show Retno Marsudi’s respectful attitude by acknowledging the authority and position held by the President of the meeting and demonstrating courtesy in addressing her during the Council debate. It also recognizes gender equality, the use of “Madame” specifically denoting a female president, where it acknowledges the power of women in leadership roles or higher positions in diplomacy across cultural and political contexts. In summary, “**Madame President**” reflects broader societal norms and values regarding gender and authority.

#### **Data 3**

“I am supposed to be with **my President** in Beijing now for the Belt and Road Forum. **My President** asked me to leave him in Beijing and fly to Jeddah to attend this meeting.”

The social meaning of “**My President**” denotes the personal relation between the speaker and the person mentioned. Furthermore, based on cultural context, the mention of the national president of a country as “**My President**” reflects Retno Marsudi’s (the speaker) sense of loyalty, respect, and authority towards the President, underscoring the hierarchical and relational dynamics within the political leadership of Indonesia. Additionally, in a particular context of the text, the use of the possessive word “**My**” denotes a familiarity, close affiliation and sense of duty and responsibility between Retno Marsudi and the President, where in the speech, she shows her willingness to



comply with the president's request to fulfil the President's agenda and obligations by mentioning in the speech that she attends the meeting to stand out for the president as the representative of Indonesia in UN meetings.

#### 4.2.2. Place Social Deixis

##### Data 1

“Madame President

I'm here today for the third time in three months joining **the council debate** on Palestine to reaffirm Indonesia's unwavering commitment to stand with Palestine

To declare that Indonesia will not rest until we see Justice and dignity restored for the Palestinian people“

The social meaning of the word “**The Council Debate on Palestine**” denotes that the meeting is being held to discuss human rights concerns and potential avenues for resolving the conflicts between Palestine and Israel. Moreover, it means that this discussion involved an international forum where representatives from different countries convened to discuss matters of global importance related to Palestine. Based on socio-cultural context, Participating in a Council debate on Palestine carries social implications of advocacy, solidarity, and engagement with global issues. Furthermore, within the context of the text, by actively engaging or participating in such discourse, the representative of Indonesia demonstrates Indonesian commitment to supporting Palestine and addressing the challenges faced by its people.

The findings reveal that Retno Marsudi’s speech employs relational and place social deixis to establish professional relationships and situational context. Relational Social Deixis occurred in terms of “Colleagues”, “Madam President”, and “My President” to imply professionalism, respect, hierarchy, and familiarity. Meanwhile, Place Social Deixis occurred in terms of “Council Debate” to imply the formal and international context of the meeting.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate the types and social meaning of the social deixis that occurred in Retno Marsudi’s speech. Through the process of collecting data, it is found that the social deixis in Retno Marsudi’s speech employs three kinds of relational and one kind of place social deixis. These findings answered the question of what types of social deixis occurred in Retno Marsudi’s speech and supported Levinson (193) and Heriyadi and Diana’s (2020) theoretical framework about how relational social deixis can emphasize social attributes, social dynamics, and relative ranking. And, how to place social deixis can emphasize spatial relationships and significant location of individuals, objects or events.

The data indicate a quite similar social meaning. The social meaning based on the context in relational social deixis of the terms “Colleagues” implies professional attitude and respect to the audience, “Madam President” implies the speaker’s respect and authority to the meeting’s leader and “My President” implies the personal relation and hierarchy between the speaker and her President. Moreover, the three data above also imply equality dynamics, professionalism and hierarchy. In the meantime, the social meaning based on the context of the term “Council Debate” which is classified as place social deixis implies a formal situation that occurred at an international forum to discuss a global issue. Align with Khoi's (2023) perspective, the meaning of the data above is affected by the

sociocultural context where interaction is dependent on society or an individual's cultural behavior and communication attitude.

In conclusion, the findings of social deixis types and social meaning of Retno Marsudi's speech are consistent with the theoretical framework provided about pragmatics and social deixis. The identification of relational and place social deixis of this research demonstrates how language is connected to context, especially social context. The results corroborate the perspective of Levinson (1983) and Heriyadi and Diana (2020) about the types and essential role of social deixis in understanding language in a specific context.

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**About the Authors**

**Fatmah Fatmah** is a College Student majoring in English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Science, at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, INDONESIA 45132

**Indri Lutpiah** is a College Student majoring in English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Science, at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, INDONESIA 45132

**Sari Sucita Laden** is a College Student majoring in English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Science, at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, INDONESIA 45132

**Devi Mulatsih** is a faculty member in the English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Science, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, INDONESIA 45132. She has taught English for twelve years. Her research interests include linguistics and social humanities.

**Jaufillaili Jaufillaili** is a faculty member in the English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Science, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, INDONESIA 45132 She has taught English for twenty years. Her publication appeared in *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature Journal*. Her research interests include pragmatics, sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, and conversational analysis.