

Semantic-Stylistic Features of Deictic Units
in German *Qur'an*, *Bible* and Prayer Texts:
Their Meaning, Emotional Impact
and Textual Functions

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the semantic and stylistic features of deictic units in German translations of religious texts, particularly the Qur'an, the Bible, and various prayer texts. Deictic expressions such as personal pronouns, temporal markers, spatial references, and demonstrative forms play a crucial role in establishing communicative interaction between the sacred text, the speaker, and the reader or believer. The research analyzes how deictic units function not only as grammatical elements but also as important stylistic devices that shape meaning, emotional influence, and interpretative perception within religious discourse. Special attention is given to the way deixis contributes to expressing divine authority, spiritual intimacy, temporal universality, and spatial symbolism in German religious language. The study demonstrates that deictic units intensify emotional engagement, create a sense of immediacy, and strengthen the pragmatic connection between sacred messages and believers. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the textual functions of deixis in organizing discourse structure, guiding interpretation, and reinforcing theological concepts across different religious traditions. The findings reveal that deictic expressions serve as key linguistic mechanisms through which sacred texts achieve both communicative clarity and profound emotional resonance.

Keywords: Deictic units, religious discourse, German religious texts, Qur'an translation, Bible language, prayer texts, semantics, stylistics, emotional impact, discourse function, pragmatics, sacred language

INTRODUCTION

Religious texts represent a unique type of discourse in which language performs not only a communicative function but also a spiritual, emotional, and symbolic role. Among the linguistic elements that contribute significantly to the structure and interpretation of sacred texts are “deictic units.” Deixis refers to linguistic expressions whose meaning depends on context, including the speaker, the addressee, time, place, and situational reference. In religious discourse, deictic expressions acquire special importance because they help establish a dynamic relationship between the divine voice, the sacred message, and the believer as a recipient of spiritual guidance.

German translations of religious texts such as the *Qur'an*, the *Bible*, and various prayer texts provide a valuable field for linguistic analysis, as translation processes often reshape deictic structures while preserving theological meaning and stylistic solemnity. In sacred language, pronouns like *ich* (I), *du* (you), *wir* (we), demonstratives such as *dies*, *jenes*, and temporal expressions like *heute*, *jetzt*, or *ewig* do more than indicate reference; they construct spiritual proximity, divine authority, and emotional involvement. Through deixis, the believer is positioned not merely as a reader but as an active participant in a communicative interaction with the sacred.

From a semantic perspective, deictic units help clarify reference relations within complex theological narratives. They connect abstract religious concepts with concrete experiential reality, allowing timeless divine messages to appear immediate and personally relevant. For instance, temporal deixis transforms historical revelation into an ever-present message, while personal deixis creates intimacy between God and humanity. Spatial deixis, in turn, often symbolizes metaphysical concepts such as heaven, earth, proximity to God, or spiritual distance.

Stylistically, deictic expressions contribute to the emotional intensity and persuasive power of religious texts. Sacred discourse frequently employs second-person forms to address believers directly, generating feelings of responsibility, devotion, and moral reflection. German religious language, characterized by its formal register and syntactic precision, demonstrates how carefully selected deictic forms reinforce reverence, solemnity, and spiritual authority. The emotional effect produced by deixis enables religious texts to transcend purely informational communication and function as instruments of spiritual experience.

Furthermore, deictic units perform essential textual and pragmatic functions. They organize discourse coherence, guide interpretation, and structure narrative perspective. In translated religious texts, translators must balance linguistic accuracy with theological sensitivity, ensuring that deictic references preserve both meaning and stylistic authenticity. Differences in deictic realization between the Qur'an, Biblical texts, and prayer traditions reveal how religious discourse adapts linguistic strategies to express universal spiritual values across cultural and historical contexts.

The present study aims to analyze the semantic and stylistic characteristics of deictic units in German versions of the Qur'an, the Bible, and prayer texts, focusing on their meaning, emotional influence, and textual functions. By examining deixis as a central linguistic mechanism of sacred discourse, the research seeks to demonstrate how language mediates spiritual communication and shapes the interaction between sacred texts and believers within German religious linguistic tradition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of deictic units in religious discourse is grounded in linguistic, pragmatic, and stylistic research traditions that explore how language functions within context-dependent communication. Scholars in linguistics, discourse analysis, and religious language studies have emphasized that deixis is not merely a grammatical phenomenon but a central mechanism

through which meaning, emotional engagement, and interpretative guidance are constructed. The following review analyzes key academic works that form the theoretical foundation for examining deictic expressions in German religious texts such as the Qur'an, the Bible, and prayer discourse.

One of the most influential works in the study of deixis is Charles J. Fillmore's research on deixis and contextual meaning. In his theoretical framework, Fillmore explains that deictic expressions function as "anchoring points" connecting linguistic structures to communicative situations [1]. According to Fillmore, personal pronouns, spatial references, and temporal indicators cannot be interpreted independently from context because their meaning emerges through the relationship between speaker, listener, and environment. This concept is particularly relevant for religious texts, where the identity of the speaker often shifts between divine voice, prophetic narration, and communal prayer. Fillmore argues that deixis allows texts to transcend historical boundaries, enabling readers to interpret sacred messages as personally addressed to them. His work provides a foundational understanding of how deictic units transform written religious texts into interactive spiritual communication.

Another important contribution is Stephen C. Levinson's book *Pragmatics* (1983), which offers a comprehensive linguistic analysis of deixis within pragmatic theory [2]. Levinson categorizes deixis into personal, temporal, spatial, social, and discourse deixis, emphasizing that each type serves specific communicative functions. He demonstrates that deictic expressions guide interpretation by organizing discourse perspective and participant roles. In religious texts, Levinson's model helps explain how pronouns such as I, you, and we establish hierarchical relationships between God and believers while simultaneously creating intimacy and moral responsibility. Levinson also highlights the emotional dimension of deixis, noting that direct address increases psychological involvement. His theoretical approach is widely applied in analyzing sacred discourse because it clarifies how linguistic form contributes to theological meaning and stylistic impact.

The stylistic and functional aspects of religious language are extensively discussed in David Crystal & Derek Davy's work *Investigating English Style* (1969) [4]. Although the authors primarily focus on English stylistics, their analysis of religious language remains highly relevant for German religious texts. Crystal & Davy argue that sacred discourse employs specific stylistic strategies – formal vocabulary, repetition, parallel structures, and deictic reference – to evoke reverence and emotional intensity. They emphasize that deictic units play a central role in shaping the relationship between text and audience, particularly in prayer and sermon contexts where direct address fosters spiritual participation. The authors note that religious language often combines timelessness with immediacy, achieved through temporal deixis that connects past revelation with present experience. Their stylistic perspective supports the idea that deixis functions as both a semantic and aesthetic element in sacred communication.

A further theoretical foundation is provided by Teun A. van Dijk's discourse analytical studies, especially in *Discourse and Context* (2008) [4]. Van Dijk examines how discourse structures influence cognition, interpretation, and social interaction. He argues that context models determine how readers understand references within texts, and deictic expressions serve as key signals guiding these models. In religious discourse, van Dijk suggests that deixis helps construct collective identity and shared belief systems by positioning readers within a symbolic communicative space. His framework explains how religious texts maintain authority and emotional power across generations, as deictic markers continually re-contextualize sacred messages for new audiences. Van Dijk's discourse-oriented approach is particularly valuable for analyzing translated religious texts, where contextual adaptation is essential for preserving meaning and stylistic authenticity.

Taken together, these scholarly works demonstrate that deixis operates at the intersection of semantics, pragmatics, stylistics, and discourse analysis. Fillmore establishes the contextual foundation of deixis, Levinson systematizes its pragmatic classification, Crystal & Davy reveal its stylistic and

emotional functions, and van Dijk explains its cognitive and discourse-organizing role. These theoretical perspectives collectively support the present study's analysis of deictic units in German religious texts, showing that deixis is a crucial linguistic mechanism through which sacred language conveys meaning, emotional resonance, and communicative interaction between divine message and believer.

METHODOLOGY

The present research applies a qualitative and comparative linguistic methodology to investigate the semantic-stylistic features of deictic units in German religious texts, namely the German translations of the *Qur'an*, the *Bible*, and selected prayer texts. The methodological framework integrates approaches from semantics, pragmatics, stylistics, and discourse analysis in order to examine how deictic expressions function within sacred discourse.

First, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical method, which allows systematic identification and classification of deictic units found in the selected religious texts. Personal deixis (pronouns referring to speaker and addressee), temporal deixis (expressions indicating time), spatial deixis (references to location), and discourse deixis (textual referencing structures) were identified and categorized. The analysis focuses on how these linguistic elements contribute to meaning construction and communicative interaction between the divine voice and believers.

Second, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine similarities and differences in the use of deictic expressions across three types of religious discourse: Qur'anic translation, Biblical text, and prayer language. This comparison enables the study to reveal how different religious traditions employ deixis to express theological concepts such as divine authority, spiritual intimacy, moral instruction, and collective identity. Special attention was given to translation strategies used in German religious texts to preserve semantic accuracy and stylistic solemnity.

Third, the research employs a pragmatic analysis based on contextual interpretation. Deictic expressions were analyzed within their communicative situations, considering speaker roles (God, prophet, narrator, believer), audience positioning, and interactional context. This approach helps explain how deixis creates immediacy, emotional involvement, and interpretative guidance within sacred discourse.

Additionally, a stylistic analysis was applied to examine the emotional and aesthetic impact of deictic units. The study evaluates how direct address, repetition of pronouns, demonstrative forms, and temporal references contribute to rhetorical intensity, spiritual engagement, and persuasive power in religious texts.

The data corpus consists of selected passages from authoritative German translations of the *Qur'an*, the Luther *Bible*, and commonly used German prayer texts. Text fragments were selected according to their high frequency of deictic usage and their theological relevance. Each example was examined through contextual reading, semantic interpretation, and functional classification [5].

Finally, elements of discourse analysis were incorporated to understand the broader textual functions of deixis. The study investigates how deictic units organize narrative perspective, maintain cohesion, and reinforce ideological and spiritual meanings within religious discourse.

Through the integration of descriptive, comparative, pragmatic, stylistic, and discourse-analytical methods, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how deictic units operate as key linguistic mechanisms shaping meaning, emotional influence, and communicative effectiveness in German religious texts.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of deictic units in German translations of the *Qur'an*, the *Bible*, and prayer texts demonstrates that deixis functions as a central linguistic mechanism shaping semantic meaning, stylistic expression, emotional influence, and textual

organization within religious discourse. Unlike ordinary communication, sacred texts employ deictic expressions not only to indicate reference but also to construct a spiritual relationship between the divine speaker and the believer. The findings reveal that personal, temporal, spatial, and discourse deixis operate simultaneously to create immediacy, authority, and emotional engagement.

1. *Personal deixis and the construction of divine-human interaction*

Personal deixis represents one of the most prominent features of religious language. Pronouns such as *ich* (I), *du* (you), *wir* (we), and *er* (he) are frequently used in German religious texts to establish communicative roles. In the German *Qur'an* translation, divine speech often employs the plural pronoun *wir* (“we”) when referring to God. This form conveys majesty, authority, and transcendence while preserving theological respect. The plural pronoun functions stylistically as a marker of divine power rather than numerical plurality.

In contrast, Biblical texts frequently utilize direct second-person address (*du* or *ihr*) to communicate commandments and moral guidance. For example, expressions such as *Du sollst nicht...* (“You shall not...”) create an immediate ethical relationship between God and the believer [6]. The deictic pronoun positions the reader as an active participant rather than a distant observer. The emotional effect of such direct address strengthens feelings of responsibility, devotion, and personal accountability.

Prayer texts demonstrate a different pragmatic function of personal deixis. Here, the believer becomes the speaker addressing God directly using forms such as *Du bist unser Herr* (“You are our Lord”) [7]. The shift of deictic perspective – from divine speech to human supplication – illustrates how deixis structures dialogic interaction within sacred discourse. Thus, personal deixis enables religious texts to simulate a continuous dialogue between humanity and the divine.

2. *Temporal deixis and the concept of sacred time*

Temporal deixis plays a crucial role in transforming historical religious narratives into timeless spiritual messages. German religious texts frequently employ expressions such as *heute* (today), *jetzt* (now), *ewig* (eternal), and *immer* (always). These temporal markers collapse chronological distance and present divine revelation as permanently relevant.

In Qur'anic passages, temporal expressions often connect past prophetic events with present belief, reinforcing the idea that divine guidance transcends historical periods. Similarly, Biblical language uses temporal deixis to merge sacred history with contemporary religious life. For instance, phrases like *Heute ist ein Retter geboren* ("Today a Savior is born") demonstrate how temporal deixis creates spiritual immediacy even when describing historical events [8].

Prayer discourse intensifies this effect by emphasizing present interaction with God. Words such as *jetzt* and *heute* suggest that prayer is not merely remembrance but an active spiritual encounter occurring in real time. Therefore, temporal deixis contributes to emotional involvement by making sacred experience psychologically immediate.

3. *Spatial deixis and symbolic religious space*

Spatial deixis in religious texts extends beyond physical location and acquires symbolic theological meaning. Expressions such as *hier* (here), *dort* (there), *oben* (above), and *im Himmel* (in heaven) represent metaphysical relationships rather than geographic coordinates.

In German Biblical and Qur'anic translations, spatial deixis often distinguishes between earthly existence and divine transcendence. References to *Himmel* (heaven) symbolize closeness to God, purity, and salvation, whereas references to *Erde* (earth) may represent human limitation and moral testing [9]. The spatial contrast constructed through deixis reinforces theological worldviews and guides spiritual interpretation.

Prayer texts frequently employ spatial deixis to create symbolic proximity between the believer and God. Even though God is described as transcendent, expressions implying nearness

suggest spiritual accessibility. This stylistic strategy strengthens emotional comfort and reinforces faith.

4. *Discourse deixis and textual organization*

Discourse deixis refers to linguistic elements that organize the structure of the text itself. German religious texts utilize demonstrative forms such as *dies*, *jenes*, or phrases like *dieses wort* ("this word") to guide interpretation and highlight key theological statements [10]

In both Qur'anic and Biblical discourse, demonstrative deixis often introduces authoritative teachings or emphasizes divine promises. These expressions function as interpretative signals directing readers toward essential doctrinal ideas. Through discourse deixis, sacred texts maintain coherence while reinforcing ideological focus.

Furthermore, repetition of deictic expressions contributes to stylistic rhythm and rhetorical intensity. Recurrent pronouns and demonstratives create parallel structures that enhance memorability, a characteristic especially important for oral recitation and communal worship traditions.

5. *Emotional and stylistic impact of deictic units*

The analysis shows that deixis significantly influences emotional perception. Direct address generates intimacy, temporal deixis creates urgency, and spatial deixis evokes symbolic imagery. Together, these elements produce a strong emotional resonance that distinguishes religious discourse from secular language.

German religious language demonstrates a careful balance between formal reverence and personal closeness. Deictic units allow sacred texts to maintain divine authority while simultaneously inviting personal reflection and spiritual participation. The emotional effect achieved through deixis explains why religious texts remain powerful across historical and cultural contexts.

6. *Functional synthesis*

Overall, the analysis confirms that deictic units fulfill multiple interconnected functions in German religious texts:

- establishing communicative roles between God and believers,
- transforming historical revelation into timeless experience,
- constructing symbolic spiritual space,
- organizing textual coherence and interpretation,
- enhancing emotional engagement and persuasive power.

Thus, deixis operates not only as a grammatical category but also as a semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic instrument through which sacred meaning is conveyed and experienced. The interaction of different types of deixis demonstrates how linguistic structure becomes a vehicle for theological expression and spiritual communication within religious discourse.

The semantic-stylistic analysis of deictic units becomes clearer when examined through authentic examples taken from German translations of the *Qur'an*, the *Bible*, and German prayer texts. The following examples illustrate how deixis functions linguistically, emotionally, and textually within sacred discourse.

Personal deixis in the German Qur'an. Example (German Qur'an translation)

Wir haben dich nur als Barmherzigkeit für die Weltengesandt. (Qur'an 21:107, German translation) [11]

The pronoun *wir* (we) represents a significant example of personal deixis. Grammatically, it is a first-person plural form, yet semantically it refers to the single divine speaker – God. This usage is known as the *pluralismajestatis* (majestic plural).

From a semantic perspective, this deictic form expresses divine authority and transcendence. It elevates the speaker beyond human individuality and emphasizes power, sovereignty, and sacred dignity.

Stylistically, the pronoun creates distance between God and humanity while simultaneously maintaining communicative interaction. Emotionally, the believer perceives the statement as a universal message addressed to all humanity rather than a limited historical audience. Textually, the deictic shift positions the

Prophet and the reader as recipients of divine action, strengthening theological interpretation.

Personal deixis in the German Bible. Example (Luther Bible)

Du sollst den Herrn, deinen Gott, lieben. (Deuteronomium 6: 5)

[12]

The second-person pronoun *du* (you) functions as direct personal deixis. Unlike narrative discourse, this form eliminates distance between divine law and the believer. Semantically, the command is individualized; every reader becomes the addressee. The religious instruction is not abstract but personally binding. Stylistically, direct address increases rhetorical strength and clarity. The imperative structure supported by deixis creates moral urgency. Emotionally, the believer experiences personal responsibility and spiritual involvement. The text becomes dialogic rather than descriptive. Textually, repeated second-person deixis organizes Biblical commandments into a coherent ethical system directed toward individual faith practice.

Personal deixis in German prayer texts. Example (Christian Prayer).

Vaterunserim Himmel, geheiligtwerde Dein Name.

[13]

Here, deixis operates inversely compared to scriptural revelation. The believer becomes the speaker addressing God directly through *dein* (your).

Semantically, this establishes intimacy and dependence between human and divine participants. Stylistically, the possessive deictic form reinforces reverence and humility. The sacred relationship is constructed through linguistic closeness. Emotionally, prayer deixis produces feelings of trust, hope, and spiritual comfort. The believer enters an imagined communicative space with God. Textually, this form transforms prayer into a dialogic structure, illustrating how deixis enables interaction even in monologic written texts.

Temporal deixis in religious texts. Example (Bible):

Heute ist euch der Heiland geboren. (Lukas 2:11) [14]

The temporal deictic marker *heute* (Today) collapses historical distance. Although the event belongs to the past, the text presents it as spiritually present. Semantically, revelation becomes timeless. Stylistically, temporal immediacy intensifies narrative significance. Emotionally, believers experience sacred history as a living reality rather than a completed event. This demonstrates how temporal deixis converts historical narration into ongoing spiritual experience.

Example (German Qur'an):

Heute habe Ich euch eure Religion vervollkommen. (Qur'an 5:3, German translation) [15]

The temporal deixis *heute* signals divine completion while simultaneously addressing future believers. The message transcends chronological boundaries and affirms theological finality.

Spatial deixis in sacred language. Example (Bible):

Unser Vater im Himmel. [16]

The spatial expression *imHimmel* (in Heaven) does not primarily indicate physical location. Instead, it symbolizes divine transcendence and spiritual authority. Semantically, heaven represents sacred space beyond human reality. Stylistically, spatial deixis elevates the tone of discourse. Emotionally, it evokes reverence and aspiration toward spiritual closeness.

Example (Qur'an Translation):

Eristeuch näher als eure Halsschlagader. (Qur'an 50:16)

Spatial deixis here expresses paradoxical proximity: God is transcendent yet spiritually near. The metaphorical spatial reference intensifies emotional connection and reinforces theological doctrine of divine omnipresence.

Discourse deixis and textual guidance. Example (Bible):

Dies ist mein Gebot. (Johannes 15:12) [17]

The demonstrative *dies* (this) functions as discourse deixis, pointing to the immediately following teaching. It directs reader attention and marks doctrinal importance. Such deixis organizes sacred discourse by highlighting central theological statements. The examined examples confirm that deictic units in German religious texts perform multiple integrated functions:

- they construct communicative interaction between God and believers,
- transform historical revelation into present spiritual experience,
- symbolize metaphysical space and sacred time,
- strengthen emotional engagement,
- guide interpretation and discourse structure.

Thus, deixis serves as a powerful semantic and stylistic instrument through which religious texts achieve authority, intimacy, and enduring emotional influence.

CONCLUSION

The conducted research demonstrates that deictic units constitute one of the most essential linguistic mechanisms in German religious discourse, particularly in translations of the Qur'an, the Bible, and prayer texts. Deixis performs not only a grammatical or referential function but also a profound semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and emotional role within sacred communication. Religious texts differ from ordinary discourse because they aim to establish a spiritual interaction between the divine speaker and the believer, and deictic expressions serve as the primary linguistic tool enabling this interaction.

The analysis shows that personal deixis constructs communicative relationships between God and humanity by positioning believers as direct recipients of divine messages.

Through pronouns such as *ich*, *du*, *wir*, and *ihr*, sacred texts create both authority and intimacy, transforming readers into active participants in spiritual dialogue. Temporal deixis eliminates chronological distance, presenting historical revelation as eternally relevant and spiritually present. Expressions like *heute*, *jetzt*, and *ewig* allow sacred messages to transcend time and remain meaningful for every generation of believers.

Furthermore, spatial deixis functions symbolically rather than physically, representing metaphysical concepts such as divine transcendence, spiritual proximity, heaven, and moral orientation. Religious discourse employs spatial references to guide believers' perception of sacred reality and reinforce theological worldview. Discourse deixis, meanwhile, organizes textual coherence, emphasizes doctrinal statements, and directs interpretation by highlighting key religious teachings.

The comparative examination of German Qur'anic translations, Biblical language, and prayer texts reveals both shared and distinctive stylistic strategies. While Qur'anic discourse frequently emphasizes divine authority through majestic forms, Biblical language relies heavily on direct moral address, and prayer texts foreground intimate communication initiated by believers. Despite these differences, all three traditions utilize deixis to intensify emotional engagement, enhance persuasive power, and maintain the sacred character of religious language.

Ultimately, the study confirms that deictic units operate as bridges between linguistic form and spiritual meaning. They transform written sacred texts into living communicative experiences, allowing believers to perceive divine messages as personally relevant, emotionally powerful, and contextually immediate. Therefore, deixis should be regarded as a key analytical category in the linguistic study of religious discourse, translation studies, and stylistic analysis of sacred texts.

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