AN ANALYSIS OF CONNOTATIVE MEANING MANIFESTED IN FOLKLORE

ALBUM BY TAYLOR SWIFT

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas makna konotatif dalam lirik lagu album Folklore karya Taylor Swift melalui kajian semantik dengan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Teori Frank Robert Palmer digunakan untuk mengungkap makna sebenarnya dari konotasi, sedangkan teori John Lyons dipakai untuk mengklasifikasikan tipe konotasi menjadi positif, negatif, dan netral. Dari 236 data yang dianalisis, ditemukan 69 data berkonotasi positif, 126 negatif, dan 41 netral. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi lima asosiasi budaya: Universal (152), Budaya Barat (35), Budaya Pop (37), Budaya Amerika (11), dan Budaya Prancis (1). Hasil menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar lirik memiliki konotasi negatif, mencerminkan tema utama album yaitu kesedihan dan kerusakan emosional.

Kata kunci: *Makna Konotatif, Taylor Swift, Folklore, dan Asosiasi Budaya.*

Abstract

The research specifically elucidates the actual meaning of connotative significance and categorizes the various forms of connotative meanings expressed in each lyrical composition from Taylor Swift's 2020 album Folklore. This study employed a descriptive qualitative methodology paired with an identification technique. The theoretical framework utilized included Frank Robert Palmer to reveal the actual meaning of connotative meaning and John Lyons to classify the types of connotative meanings. The findings encompassed a total of 236 data analyzed, demonstrating that 69 data represent positive connotation, 126 data signify negative connotation, and 41 data embody neutral connotation. This study concludes that there exist five cultural associations within this album, namely Universal, Western Culture and Society, Pop Culture, American Culture, and French Culture, which have been divided into 152 data as Universal, 35 data as Western Culture, 37 data as Pop or Popular Culture, 11 data as American Culture, and 1 data as French Culture. Overall, the data

indicates that the majority of the lyrics within this album are categorized under negative connotation, primarily reflecting themes of emotional turmoil.

INTRODUCTION

This research analyzes connotative meaning within Taylor Swift's Folklore album through the lens of semantics, a major branch of linguistics concerned with meaning. Linguistics is the scientific study of language, and semantics specifically deals with how meaning is structured and interpreted in language, particularly beyond the literal or denotative level. Connotative meaning involves implied, emotional, and culturally associated meanings that go beyond the direct definitions of words. Semantics itself has several subfields, including lexical semantics and conceptual semantics. Lexical semantics studies word meanings and their relationships, while conceptual semantics focuses on how meaning is mentally represented Yule (2010) substantiates that semantics is the branch of linguistics that is concerned with and focused on the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, or texts. In accordance with the quotation above, semantics significantly plays an essential role in the field of word meaning; this epitomizes that every particular word has its own specific information or meaning.

This study uses Palmer (1981) interpret connotative meanings by identifying the hidden or implied meanings behind specific words or phrases. It also uses Lyons (1977) to categorize these meanings into three types: positive, negative, and neutral. According to Lyons, connotative meanings are powerful tools that influence the listener's emotional and social responses, making them crucial in understanding emotional expression in language. One domain where connotative meaning is especially prevalent is song lyrics. Songs are musical compositions that combine melody with meaningful language, often expressing deep emotions, personal stories, or cultural themes. As Moore (2016) explain, songs are not just entertainment but also serve as mediums for emotional and linguistic expression. Therefore, they are ideal objects for studying connotative meaning.

Taylor Swift's Folklore was chosen as the object of this study because of its poetic, emotionally rich, and narrative-driven lyrics. Released in 2020, Folklore marked a stylistic shift for Swift into indie-folk and alternative music, using fictional characters, emotional themes, and vivid imagery to explore concepts such as heartbreak, nostalgia, societal expectations, and identity. The album contains 17 tracks, and this study analyzes each of

them, including "The 1", "Cardigan", "Exile", and "Seven", among others. The album was selected for its depth of meaning, emotional complexity, and creative use of language. For example, in the lyric "I think your house is haunted, your dad is always mad," Swift uses metaphorical language to suggest emotional trauma or a troubled past. Such lyrics carry connotative meaning that reflects the character's inner experiences rather than just literal facts. This emotional and symbolic layering makes the album a rich subject for semantic analysis.

1. Semantics.

Semantics is a vital branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of meaning in language, particularly how words, phrases, sentences, or texts convey meaning. According to Yule (2010) semantics offers a systematic and structured approach to understanding how meaning is constructed and interpreted. Palmer (1981) describe semantics as the study of how language expresses conceptual ideas through vocabulary and sentence structures, often using logical and mathematical analysis to examine meaning.

Semantics is closely tied to how individuals communicate thoughts and emotions, especially through systems like denotative and connotative meanings. As Leech explains, the relationship between words and their meanings is arbitrary, meaning there is no fixed link between a word and its meaning. Furthermore, semantics includes areas like lexical semantics (the study of word meanings and how they combine) and phraseology (fixed word combinations). Importantly, semantics also addresses how context affects meaning. As Chaer (2013) points out, semantics emphasizes the dynamic, context-dependent nature of language. It not only explores the literal meanings of language elements but also the emotional and social associations they carry. Ultimately, semantics provides essential tools for understanding the depth and complexity of meaning in human language.

2. Denotative Meaning

Denotative meaning, as defined by Palmer (1976), refers to the literal or core meaning of a word, often called its sense. It is the objective meaning that directly links a linguistic symbol to reality, without emotional or cultural associations. Saifuddin (2018) and Chaer (2013) similarly describe it as the original, visible meaning that reflects actual or conceptual references. For example, in the sentence "Roses are the most beautiful flower on earth," the denotative meaning of roses refers to a type of flower with specific physical

characteristics. Overall, denotative meaning is the fundamental, context-free meaning of a lexeme, crucial in linguistic expression.

3. Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning, as explained by Palmer (1976), is the secondary or associated meaning that a word carries beyond its literal or denotative meaning. It involves the emotional, cultural, or personal nuances that are attached to a word, often reflecting attitudes, feelings, or symbolic interpretations. Palmer emphasizes that connotative meaning is not static—it varies depending on the speaker, listener, cultural background, and personal experiences. This makes connotation an essential aspect of language, as it enables words to convey deeper emotional and communicative value beyond their basic definitions. Chaer (2013) further supports this idea by stating that connotative meaning includes a sense of value, which may be positive, negative, or neutral. Words with connotative meanings often reflect how people emotionally respond to them, and this response can shift over time due to changes in cultural or social contexts. A word's connotation may differ from one individual to another, depending on their personal experiences and perceptions. Therefore, connotative meaning plays a significant role in semantics, as it enriches language with expressive power, allowing communication to go beyond mere literal interpretation and include emotional or symbolic depth.

3.1 Types of Connotative Meaning

Consequently, Lyons (1977) argues that connotative meaning based on affective meaning has three types, which provide a huge impact on individuals' thoughts regarding word meaning.

1) First, the positive (favorable) connotative meaning which words with positive connotations evoke pleasant, favorable, or uplifting emotions or associations. They tend to reflect optimism, admiration, or approval.

2) Second, the negative (unfavorable) connotative meaning which words with negative connotations evoke unpleasant, unfavorable, or critical emotions. They are often associated with disapproval, fear, or negative judgment.

3) Third, the neutral connotative meaning which words with neutral connotations do not strongly evoke positive or negative feelings. They are generally descriptive and carry no significant emotional charge.

Based on the elaboration above which positive or negative is actually based on its context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, which is appropriate for exploring problems through written communication and gaining deep understanding. Moleong (2016) and Sugiyono (2020) explain that this method generates descriptive data in the form of words, behaviors, or observations. It aims to describe, interpret, and illuminate a phenomenon systematically. Specifically, this study applies a narrative approach within qualitative research, focusing on personal stories to analyze meaning. This method helps examine the connotative meanings in Taylor Swift's Folklore lyrics by collecting, classifying, interpreting, and drawing conclusions from the data. This study adopts qualitative method to analyse the data which is song lyrics based on theory used within this study. In line with that, Miles & Huberman (1984) data analysis is the vital part of qualitative study establishment, this purposed to recognize the research and concept of data which has developed and evaluated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the research presents the analysis, results, and findings of the study, which focuses on all seventeen songs from Taylor Swift's Folklore album. The analysis is based on identifying the actual meaning behind connotative meanings in words and phrases, guided by Palmer's (1981) theory, and classifying them according to emotional values positive, negative, or neutral based on Lyons' (1977) framework and cultural associations. To interpret the connotative meanings, the study first determines the denotative meanings using online dictionary definitions. It then applies Palmer's theory to uncover the deeper, implied meanings and uses Lyons' classification to group them by emotional value. Cultural associations used in the analysis include Universal, Western, American, Pop/Popular, and French cultures. The lyrics are examined to identify connotative meanings and their corresponding emotional and cultural values. The chapter emphasizes that Folklore was

chosen for its rich use of metaphorical and symbolic language, making it suitable for this type of analysis.

1. **Positive Connotation**

Positive (favourable) connotative meaning which words or phrase with positive connotations evoke pleasant, favourable, or uplifting emotions or associations and tend to reflect optimism, admiration or approval. The following song lyrics which define as positive connotative meaning by John Lyons

1.1 Universal

This analysis rely on how the cultural universality affects the form of meaning in semantic, specifically on connotative meaning because according Palmer (1981) connotative meaning influence by cultural association, and cultural universality is part of cultural association.

Datum 12 (S_1L_{24})

*But we were making it **count***

In cultural universality the word **"count"** appear as the word which does not correlate with the any cultural association, there is not a single definitive source that explicitly states that the word count related to any specific cultural association thus, this word concluded as universal. Connotative meaning within the word can control by how the speaker provide the context of information. Thus connotative meaning can vary across cultures Palmer (1981). The sentences or paragraphs surrounding a word can shape how the reader understand connotative meaning Palmer (1981). In case of this research individuals or group or people perceives that the word count as numbering or calculating. On the other hand, according to LanGeek Dictionary, the word **"count"** indicates as the connotative meaning of **priceless and meaningful**. In the lyric, the word **"count"** associate with sense of making or having the priceless moment or meaningful experience. Additionally, this word originates from the idea of ensuring that some actions hold value and meaning. In this analysis, the word **"count"** does not possible to interpret as the denotative meaning which means as numbering

or calculating, as a result this word concluded as the word which require secondary meaning or connotative meaning which in line with the theory of Palmer (1981). The sentences or paragraphs surrounding a word can shape how the reader understand connotative meaning. This connotation is categories as positive connotation due to it brings uplifting emotion according to Lyons (1977).

1.2 Western Culture and Society

This determines that the Western Culture and Society can affect the consideration of the connotative meaning in the study of semantics. In line with that definition as the parameter, the following lyrics which conclude as negative types and Western Society and Culture association are:

Datum 7 (S_1L_{12})

*Roaring twenties, tossing **pennies** in the pool*

The word **"pennies"** often symbolizes **luck, wishes, and hope**. In the context of the lyrics, pennies represent a sense of optimism and aspiration, aligning with the tradition of tossing coins into fountains to make a wish. This act is commonly associated with the belief that throwing a coin into water can bring good fortune, reinforcing the idea that pennies symbolize hopeful desires for the future. This interpretation suggests that the word carries a deeper emotional significance, representing the act of believing in possibilities and looking forward to something positive. From a theoretical perspective, the tradition of tossing pennies or coins into fountains is closely tied to Western culture. This practice has long been associated with making wishes and is a characteristic element of Western traditions. This cultural background adds depth to the connotative meaning of pennies, as it extends beyond its literal value as a form of currency and instead becomes a symbol of hope and dreams. According to Palmer (1981), connotative meaning arises when a word takes on an additional layer of interpretation beyond its denotative definition. While pennies literally refer to small units of currency, their meaning in the lyrics extends to symbolize hope and the act of wishing for something better. Furthermore, Lyons (1977) categorizes connotative meaning based on emotional value, and in this case, pennies hold a positive connotation. They evoke feelings of optimism, possibility, and pleasant anticipation, making them a meaningful representation of hope in the song's narrative.

2. **Negative Meaning**

Negative (unfavorable) connotative meaning which words with negative connotations evokes the feeling such as unpleasant, unfavorable, or critical emotions and often associates with disapproval, fear, or negative judgement.

2.1 Westren Culture and Society

This determines that the Western Culture and Society can affect the consideration of the connotative meaning in the study of semantics. In line with that definition as the parameter, the following lyrics which conclude as negative types and Western Society and Culture association are:

Datum 90 (S₅L₃₄)

*And you're tossing out blame, **drunk on this pain***

The analysis of the phrase **"drunk on this pain"** is based on Western culture since drunk is one of tradition in Western culture, this information provided based on linguistic and cultural studies of the English language. In determine the connotative meaning of this phrase, this analysis require the secondary meaning of the denotative meaning of this phrase Palmer (1981). According to Merriam Webster Online the word **"drunk on this pain"** means having the faculties impaired by alcohol. Hence, the closet meaning of the secondary meaning of this word is elucidates as connotative meaning. In the lyrics, the phrase **"drunk on this pain"** indicates as the connotative meaning of a sense of **self-destructive tendencies**, since it is close to its denotative meaning. The feeling of self-destructive tendencies, primary can be obtained when someone drunk. This connotation shows the value of negative connotation due to it evokes the feeling of unpleasant and unfavorable emotion, according to Lyons (1977).

3. **Neutral Connotation**

The neutral connotative meaning which words with neutral connotations do not strongly evoke positive or negative feelings and generally descriptive and carry no significant emotional charge.

3.1 Pop or Popular Culture

In consideration, the connotative meaning within the song lyric, this analysis required the cultural association such as Pop Culture. The following song lyrics which conclude as connotation within Pop Culture association, follow as:

Datum 15 (S_1L_{44})

*For digging up the **grave** another time*

The word **"grave"** is widely part of Pop Culture since it evokes the theme of finality and forgotten additional, the word grave is evoking the idea of bury something. Thus, In the lyric, the word **"grave"** indicates the connotative meaning of **past memories**, which means the place which all the memories are bury and being forgotten, it also in line with the function of the grave itself. In considered the type of connotative meaning, this connotation is considered as neutral connotation owing to it doesn't brings the feeling of positive nor negative, according to Lyons (1977).

Datum 46 (S_3L_7)

They **picked out** a home and called it "Holiday House"

The words **"picked out"** is widely part of Pop Culture according Pop Culture, since it most common used in social media and used to easily describe the sense of choosing something. In the lyric, the words **"picked out"** indicates the connotative meaning of **bought something** because the use of denotative meaning of this word is quietly incorrect, which means the used of secondary meaning or connotative meaning is a must which sometimes the word **"picked out"** evokes the connotative meaning of the sense of bought something. In considered the type of the connotative meaning, this connotation is considered as neutral connotation owing to it doesn't brings the feeling of positive nor negative, according to Lyons (1977).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Taking everything into account, after analyzing, classifying, and discussing the data on the connotative meaning manifested in the song lyrics of the Folklore album by Taylor Swift, this section elucidates the conclusions and suggestions interconnected with this study. To begin with, this section provides a brief conclusion of the findings, describing several points. The first is how much data is categorized as connotative meaning, and the

second is what type of connotative meaning is dominant within the following album, which shows the answer to the problem formulation of this research This study primarily discusses the actual meaning of the word that categorizes as connotative meaning and the types of connotations within the lyrics of the seventeen songs in the Folklore album by Taylor Swift. This study aims to reveal the actual meaning of connotative meaning and to discover the types of connotations within the song lyrics. In discussing or determining this analysis, it adopts two grand theories: the theory of Palmer (1981) and John Lyons (1977).

Suggestion

This study analyzes the lyrics of seventeen songs from Taylor Swift's Folklore album, focusing on the actual meanings and types of connotative meanings present in the songs. By examining these lyrics, the research highlights important aspects of language use, particularly how connotations reflect emotional and cultural dimensions. For future research, it is suggested to explore connotative meaning in various contexts, such as film dialogues, short stories, or specific types of connotations. Researchers might also investigate different themes, like the influence behind connotative usage. New objects of study such as news reports, political debates, or sports commentary could offer fresh insights. Additionally, future studies could connect connotative meaning with broader social issues like power dynamics, cultural narratives, or digital media influence.

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