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CONNOTATIVE MEANINGS IN “RED (TAYLOR’S VERSION)” ALBUM BY TAYLOR SWIFT

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ABSTRACT

Connotative meaning refers to the emotional and associative implications from words literal definition, and song lyrics are often used by the creator as an intermediary to convey the contents of thoughts and feelings with various types of language styles. This study aims to identify types of connotative meanings and to examines how the connotative meanings in the song lyrics contribute to the overall emotional impact or message of the song in Red (Taylor’s Version) album by Taylor Swift. The study applies a qualitative descriptive method. The theoretical foundation is based on Leech’s (1981) theory of semantics, with a focus on identifying and analyzing three types of connotative: positive, negative, and neutral based on Michael Halley’s (1980) theory on connotative functions. The analysis follows several stages: lyrics selection, identification of connotative expression, classification by type, and interpretation within the context of the album’s themes. The analysis findings indicate that the three types of connotative meanings are consistently used throughout the album, while precise number for each connotative category in Red (Taylor’s Version) are not definitively established, the album predominantly features negative emotional tones, consistent with its themes of love and loss. By deeper meaning and clearer translation, this study aims to avoid cultural misunderstanding or miscommunication through figurative language.

Keywords: *Connotative meaning, semantics, song lyrics, figurative language*

INTRODUCTION

Connotative is an emotional association to a word or phrase, refers to the ideas, emotions, or signifying words that invokes in addition to its literal meaning. These could include the obvious differences of a word or phrase with its literal meaning. According to Leech's theory, it is worth re-examination: "Connotative meaning of the idea is that the communicative value of an expression depends not only on the subject but also in talk" (Leech 1981) in (Enggie Kharmelita et al., 2024). Semantic is the study of linguistic meaning, it explains about how words get their meaning and how the meaning of a complex expression depends on its parts. Song lyrics are often used by the creator as an intermediary to convey the contents of thoughts and feelings, song lyrics are made with various types of language styles. Songwriters see music as something that symbolizes their personal characteristics (Moon et al., 2006).

The "Red" album, released in 2012 and Taylor has re-recorded the album on November 12, 2021, known as “Red (Taylor’s Version)”. This album features a variety of songs that explore

various aspects of love and relationships, with lyrics rich in connotative meanings. Prior studies, such as those by Butarbutar & Tampubolon (2023) and Pratiwi (2020), have emphasized the importance of connotation in song lyrics however this study expands existing work by applying more detailed classification and highlights the role of connotative meanings to listener's interpretations and emotional responses as insight into the semantic structure in Taylor Swift's songwriting. This study analyzes connotative meanings in lyrics from Taylor Swift's Red (Taylor's Version). It begins with a review of key semantic theories and past research on song lyrics. Selected lyrics will be examined line by line to identify emotional, message, and metaphorical meanings beyond the literal text. These connotations will be categorized and analyzed to uncover the rich layers of figurative language. The research aims to show identify types of connotative meanings and to examines how Swift's use of connotative language enhances storytelling, emotion, and listener connection.

Connotative meaning refers to the additional implications attached to words or phrases beyond their literal meaning. In the context of song lyrics, connotative meanings are often used to express emotions, create imagery, or express abstract ideas in a more poetic and on the deep way. This type of research can also help listeners who have trouble interpret utterance from the speaker fits the context to understand and appreciate the complexity and depth of Swift's lyrics. Furthermore, this analysis can contribute to a broader understanding of language use in contemporary pop music and how artist use connotative meanings to create emotional connections with their listeners.

This analysis uses the main theory from (Leech, 1981) says, semantics is the study of meaning and as the center of communication in language. The meanings in semantic are divided into seven types of meanings namely denotative meanings, connotative meanings, social and affective meanings, reflective and collocative meanings, and associative meanings. But in this analysis the writer only takes one meaning, connotative meanings. Linguist have identified different types of connotative meaning, based on Halley (1980) theory it says that connotative meaning divides into three types which positive connotation, negative connotation, and neutral connotation in (Butarbutar & Tampubolon, 2023). Semantics is the technical term used to designate to the study of meaning, and as meaning is part of language, semantics is linguistic, writes Palmer (1976). Pranoto and Afrilita (2019) states that the type of semantics investigated is lexical semantics when the object of the inquiry is the language's vocabulary in (Suryono, 2023). In the digital and social media age, understanding connotative

meaning is becoming increasingly important. Words and phrases can quickly acquire new connotations or change their meaning based on online usage. Internet memes, hashtags, and online slang often have complex layers of connotative meaning that can only be fully understood by those familiar with their digital cultural context.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, researcher discuss several topics related to the theoretical frameworks that inform this research. Providing semantics, meaning, types of meaning, types of connotative meaning.

Semantics

The study of the meaning of linguistic expressions is known as semantics. Understanding semantics makes it easier for people to better understand the meaning included, everyone would agree that semantics is a study of meaning, and the major purpose of semantic is meaning itself. There are at least two major ways to understand how language meaning is examined. The first is the verbal strategy. The second method is a philosophical one. Semantics is a discipline of linguistics having strong ties to other social sciences like sociology and anthropology. According to Chaer (1995), a meaningful relationship or semantic relationship between a word or other language unit and another word or language unit is frequently encountered in language in (Suryono, 2023)

Meaning

Meaning is a study in linguistics related to semantics. Yule (2010) defines semantics as follows; semantics is the part of linguistics that deals with the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. In other words, semantics is a substation of science that studies the meaning of words to understand texts. Based on the theories above, semantics is the study of the meaning of words and sentences as a means of communication to convey intent and information between speakers and listeners (Costantia 2022). As a result, the communication can happen smoothly and understand one another are built in automatically. Leech (1981) explained that there are seven types of meaning namely: conceptual meanings, thematic meanings, associative meanings, connotative meaning, style meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, and collocative meaning.

Types of Meaning

In this album which has a lot of meaning implied in her lyrics, it shows that the meaning is so vague and elusive that it is impossible to come any clear for speaker meaning

and sentence meaning. In this work, Leech identifies seven types of meaning, each meaning playing a unique role in interpreting and utilizing language. These types of meaning are conceptual meaning, collocative meaning, thematic meaning, social meaning, reflected meaning, and connotative meaning. These types of meaning form the foundation for understanding the intricacies of communication.

1. Conceptual Meaning

Conceptual meaning, also known as denotative or cognitive meaning, is the cornerstone of linguistic communication as described in Geoffrey Leech's theory of seven types of meaning. This type of meaning represents the core, literal definition of a word or phrase, stripped of any additional connotations or subjective associations. It is considered the most crucial element in language communication due to its complex and highly organized structure, which can be compared to and related to the analogous organization at the syntactic and phonological levels of language. Conceptual meaning provides the foundation for understanding and interpreting language, serving as the basic building block upon which other types of meaning are constructed.

The importance of conceptual meaning lies in its ability to provide a clear and unambiguous representation of ideas and objects in the real world. It allows for precise communication by establishing a shared understanding of words and concepts among speakers of a language. This type of meaning is typically what one would find in a dictionary definition, representing the most basic and essential aspects of a word's significance. For example, the conceptual meaning of "chair" would be "a piece of furniture designed for sitting," without any additional implications about style, comfort, or personal associations. By focusing on the logical and factual aspects of meaning, conceptual meaning provides a solid foundation for more nuanced interpretations and uses of language, including the other six types of meaning identified by Leech.

2. Associative Meaning

Associative meaning, as conceptualized by Leech, is a complex and multifaceted aspect of linguistic semantics that goes beyond the literal or denotative meaning of words and expressions. It refers to the additional layers of meaning that words acquire based on individual experiences, cultural contexts, and social factors. Unlike conceptual meaning, which deals with the dictionary definition of words, associative meaning is more subjective, varying from person to person and across different cultural contexts. Leech's theory of

associative meaning encompasses five distinct subtypes: connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, and collocative meanings.

Connotative meaning refers to the additional, often emotional or evaluative associations that a word carries beyond its literal definition. For example, the word "home" might connote warmth, safety, and comfort, in addition to its basic meaning of a place where one lives. Stylistic meaning, on the other hand, relates to the social circumstances and contexts in which certain words or expressions are typically used. This subtype of associative meaning helps speakers distinguish between formal and informal language, technical jargon, and colloquialisms, allowing them to adjust their language use according to different social situations and audiences. Affective meaning, the third subtype in Leech's theory, focuses on the emotional response that words or expressions evoke in the speaker or listener. This aspect of associative meaning is particularly important in understanding how language can be used to convey attitudes, feelings, and personal opinions. Reflected meaning occurs when a word with multiple senses evokes one of its other meanings, even when not directly intended. For instance, the word "gay" in its older sense of "happy" might still evoke its more contemporary meaning related to sexual orientation, affecting how the word is understood and used in different contexts. The fifth subtype, collocative meaning, refers to the associations a word acquires due to the words that frequently appear alongside it in common usage. This aspect of associative meaning explains why certain word combinations sound natural to native speakers while others may seem awkward or incorrect, even if they are grammatically valid. For example, the words "pretty" and "handsome" both mean attractive, but "pretty" is more commonly associated with feminine subjects, while "handsome" is typically used for masculine subjects. This distinction in collocative meaning influences how these words are used and understood in everyday language. Understanding associative meaning is crucial for effective communication, language learning, and translation. It helps explain why literal translations often fail to capture the full meaning and impact of expressions across languages and cultures.

3. Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning, as proposed by Geoffrey Leech in his semantic theory, is an aspect of language that focuses on how the organization and structure of a message contribute to its overall meaning. This type of meaning is concerned with the way speakers or writers arrange

their words and sentences to convey emphasis, focus, and order within their communication. One of the key aspects of thematic meaning is the concept of theme and rheme within a sentence. The theme typically represents the starting point or topic of the sentence, while the rheme provides new information or comments about the theme. For example, in the sentence "The cat chased the mouse," "The cat" serves as the theme, introducing the subject of the sentence, while "chased the mouse" functions as the rheme, providing new information about the cat's action. By manipulating the order of these elements, speakers can shift the focus and emphasis of their message. This manipulation of sentence structure allows for the creation of different shades of meaning, even when the basic conceptual content remains the same. Thematic meaning also encompasses the use of various linguistic devices to highlight or downplay certain information within a sentence or discourse. Leech's theory of thematic meaning highlights the importance of considering not just what is said, but how it is said, in the study of semantics and communication. By examining the thematic structure of language, we can gain insights into the speaker or writer's intentions, the relative importance of different pieces of information, and the subtle ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed.

4. Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning is a meaning that has elements of feeling in it and contains additional meaning, or certain taste values in addition to the general basic meaning (Keraf, 2007: 27-28). Connotative meaning is an important aspect of linguistics that refers to the additional meanings or emotional associations attached to a word or phrase, beyond its literal meaning. Unlike denotative meaning, which refers to the literal definition of a word, connotative meaning involves the nuances, feelings, and ideas associated with the word based on cultural, social, or personal experiences.

Connotative meaning is a word that has sense of value and nuances that dealing with experience and expressing them through words. In linguistics, connotative meaning is considered an integral part of semantics, which is the study of meaning in language. Connotative meaning plays a significant role in many forms of communication, especially in literature, poetry, song lyrics, advertising, and political speech. In song lyrics, for example, careful word choice based on its connotation and it can create a mood, reinforce a theme, or convey a complex metaphor.

The study of connotative meaning also has important implications for second language learning and translation. Foreign language learners need to understand not only the

denotative meaning of words but also their connotative nuances in order to communicate effectively and avoid cultural misunderstandings. Translators face a particular challenge in capturing and transferring connotative meaning from one language to another, since connotations are often culture-specific and have no direct equivalent in the target language. This requires creativity and a deep understanding of both cultures to find precise equivalents.

5. Social Meaning

Social meaning involves how language reflects the social context in which it is used, such as the relationships between speakers, their social roles, and the broader cultural and societal norms. It encompasses how language reflects, reinforces, or challenges social structures, ideologies, and identities. Kurnia (2019), in his study *Slogan Kajian Donald Trump "Buat Amerika Besar Lagi" Melalui Teori Semantik Geoffrey Leech (Donald Trump's Slogan "Make America Great Again" Through Geoffrey Leech's Semantics Theory)*, explores the social meaning embedded in the slogan. The phrase "Make America Great Again" carries significant social meaning, as it evokes nostalgia for a perceived past greatness and appeals to specific social groups, particularly those who feel marginalised by contemporary societal changes. Kurnia highlights how the slogan resonates with specific cultural and political identities, effectively using social meaning to rally a particular population segment.

6. Affective Meaning

Affective meaning refers to the emotional tone or attitude a speaker conveys through their choice of words. It reflects the speaker's emotions, intentions, and feelings. The affective meaning of a word can indicate whether the speaker is expressing happiness, anger, excitement, sadness, or any other emotional state. Affective meaning is crucial in personal and professional communication, as it helps shape the emotional atmosphere of a conversation or a public address.

7. Collocative Meaning

Collocative meaning arises from the habitual co-occurrence of words in specific contexts, forming predictable associations between words that frequently appear together. For example, phrases like "strong coffee" and "heavy rain" are common collocations, where "strong" and "heavy" are commonly paired with "coffee" and "rain," respectively. These habitual word pairings shape the interpretation of phrases by creating expectations in how certain words are used together. Dewi (2021), in her doctoral dissertation, *English Slang Words in Motivational Videos of Jay Shetty: A Sociolinguistics Perspective*, explores the

collocative Meaning of slang terms frequently used in motivational contexts. She investigates how words like "hustle," "grind," and "achieve" are often paired together to convey a message of perseverance and self-improvement. These collocations help reinforce the intended Meaning in motivational speeches and videos. Dewi's analysis shows how collocative meanings help shape audience expectations and understanding by relying on familiar and repetitive word pairings that evoke specific ideas and emotions.

Positive Connotation

Positive connotations evoke pleasant feelings or associations, it refers to the positive or favorable associations that have a good meaning and are related to a particular word from its literal definition or meaning to make the sentences better. example, consider the word "home" it refers to a place where people live by its literal meaning or definition. However, "home" has a positive connotation because it basically associated with warmth, comfort, and secured feeling. Words with positive connotations are often used to evoke positive emotions and create a good impression in the listener or reader to expressing a nice nuance and a good-vibes. According to Cruse (1997) the expression is considered to have a positive connotation as it is describing someone's feeling in (Harsetiani, 2022)

Negative Connotation

Negative connotations evoke unpleasant associations, it refers to the unfavorable or negative associations and meaning that a word carries beyond its denotation. For example, the word "stubborn" has a negative connotation. It implies resistance to change or cooperation and is often used to describe someone who is difficult to compromise. Negative connotation tends to express a negative meaning from a word that leads to describe negative nuances, it can evoke feelings of fear, discomfort, angry, sadness, etc. For instance, the word "mad" means that something drives you crazy or something that really makes you furious. Emotional impact of communication with words with negative connotation can influence the audience of how they perceive the message in some words or sentences.

Neutral Connotation

Neutral connotations, on the other hand, do not have a strong emotional charge. It does not evoke strong positive or negative feelings which it does not implying any judgement or strong emotion. For example, the word "style" as a noun means a way of doing something, a quality that makes a person or thing seems different and it has a neutral connotation. In communication, neutral connotation helps to express information or meaning in a word and

avoid influencing opinions or emotions. For another instance, the word “unique” which mean something unusual but it implies on neutral connotation because it is not refers to something positive or negative.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the connotative meanings found in Taylor Swift's song lyrics on her RED (Taylor's Version) album. Gay (2006) state that qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon. The data of this research are words, phrases, or song lyrics which contain connotative meaning in the selected song lyrics from Red (Taylor's Version) album by Taylor Swift, released in 2021. The connotative meaning found would be analyzed to find out the three types of connotative meaning and to find out the meaning of the selected song lyrics. The source of data is selected song lyrics on Red (Taylor's Version) album that chosen randomly. In order to do the research, the researcher used some techniques to collect the data.

The researcher chose which song will be chosen from the album and deciding which lyrics will be selected, the researcher making interpretations of the connotative meaning of the data to uncover and interpret the implicit, figurative, and connotative meanings conveyed in Swift's selected song lyrics. After that, the researcher analyzed the data to find out the three types of connotative meaning with the examples and the meaning of the selected song lyrics from Red (Taylor's Version) album beyond their literal denotation. The descriptive qualitative method allows for a rich and detailed data of the connotative language used throughout the album. For the data analysis, the researcher classified the data based on the three types of connotative meaning, systematically identifying and categorizing instances of connotative language throughout the lyrics. Each example is examined in the context of the selected song lyrics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The classification of connotative meaning is generally divided into three main categories: positive connotation, negative connotation, and neutral connotation. Each of these categories plays an important role in building the emotional nuance and overall meaning of the songs on the Red (Taylor's Version) album. Positive connotation in the Red (Taylor's Version) album is often used by Swift to describe happy moments, hopes, or positive aspects of a relationship. On the other hand, negative connotations are also found throughout the album,

especially when Swift describes heartbreak, disappointment, or painful aspects of a relationship. Neutral connotations also play a significant role in the Red (Taylor's Version) album, although perhaps not as much as positive or negative connotations. Neutral connotations are often used to provide context or background without adding any particular emotional nuance. The song "Red (Taylor's Version)" itself, which serves as the album's title, is full of negative connotations that describe the intensity and complexity of emotions in a troubled relationship.

1. Positive Connotation – "Begin Again (Taylor's Version)"

Lyrics:

*And you throw your head back laughing like a little kid,
I think it's strange that you think I'm funny 'cause he never did.*

Translation:

You laugh at my jokes and you think that i am funny which is strange for me cause my previous relationship didn't do what you do.

Analysis:

The word "a little kid" on those lyrics suggest a positive connotation: innocence, joyful, and light-hearted. This gives the listener a sense of happiness and unburdened joy just like a little kid, central to the theme of starting over and experiencing something new and exciting in life, particularly in a fresh relationship. Taylor is pointing out how the new partner positively sees her differently rather than her past one. The fact that the new partner appreciates her sense of humor, which the former didn't, signals emotional growth and recognition. This uplifting connotation shows that the new relationship brings positive perspective and joy into her life.

2. Negative Connotation – "All Too Well (10 Minute Version) (Taylor's Version)"

Lyrics:

*Maybe we got lost in translation,
Maybe I asked for too much,
But maybe this thing was a masterpiece,
'Till you tore it all up.*

Translation:

Maybe it all just misunderstanding and you didn't understand me, and you make me feel i was asking too much for being understood. Our relationship was perfect until you messed up.

Analysis:

The line "Maybe we got lost in translation" hints at communication failures or misunderstandings between Taylor and her partner and conveys a negative connotation. The word "lost" according to Family Word Finder book conveys lacking, misplaced, missing. Both parties were speaking different emotional languages, unable to fully understand each other. The phrase "tore" is especially powerful as it indicates rip, pull apart, break. The connotation here is strongly negative, focusing on the pain of a failed relationship, broken promises, and the irreversible damage caused by one partner's actions. This negative connotation emphasizes betrayal, self-blame, and the overwhelming sorrow of a love that was once beautiful but ultimately shattered.

3. Neutral Connotation – "Holy Ground (Taylor's Version)"

Lyrics:

Back to a first glance feeling on New York time.

Translation:

Remembering the feeling when we first met.

Analysis:

The word "*feeling*": sensation, emotion, response. It may sound sentimental however the phrase doesn't use emotionally words such as "butterflies", "beautiful", "painful", or "tragic". It states a memory in a feeling from a first glance which neither framed as wonderful nor as heartbreaking. It may refer to an emotional moment, it's described in a neutral, observational way. The phrase "*New York time*" is a neutral reference to a location's time zone, serving more as a timestamp than an emotional trigger, there's no value judgement or emotional charge in this phrase. The lyric describes a time and feeling without using emotionally weighted language.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that the use of connotative language allows listeners to interpret the lyrics in ways that resonate with their own experiences. Through metaphors, symbolism, and carefully crafted lyrics, Swift creates a rich tapestry of emotions and experiences that resonate deeply with her audience. Analysis of connotative meanings in the Red (Taylor's Version) album also shows how Swift often uses a mix of different types of connotations in a single song to create a complex and emotional narrative. The use of diverse connotations in the Red (Taylor's Version) album not only demonstrates Swift's skill as a songwriter, but also

reflects the complexity of the emotions and experiences she is trying to convey. The balance between positive, negative, and neutral connotations allows Swift to depict various aspects of relationships and life experiences with rich nuance. In conclusion, the classification of connotative meanings in Taylor Swift's Red (Taylor's Version) album shows a complex and thoughtful use of language to convey messages and emotions. From positive connotations that depict hope and happiness, to negative connotations that describe sadness and disappointment, and neutral connotations that provide context, Swift uses a variety of linguistic techniques to create a profound and memorable work. This kind of analysis not only provides insight into Swift's creative process, but also shows the power of language in pop music to convey complex and universal human experiences.

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