



## An In-Depth Semantic Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meaning in the Song Lyrics of 'Let Her Go' by Passenger

Yenni Adelina Sinaga<sup>1\*</sup>, Bernieke Anggita Ristia Damanik<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Indonesia

email: [yennisinaga35@gmail.com](mailto:yennisinaga35@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [bernieke.damanik@uhn.ac.id](mailto:bernieke.damanik@uhn.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

### Article Info :

Received:  
27-04-2026  
Revised:  
12-05-2026  
Accepted:  
15-05-2026

### Abstract

*This study examines the semantic construction of denotative and connotative meanings in the song lyrics of "Let Her Go" by Passenger through a non-empirical qualitative design grounded in Geoffrey Leech's theory of meaning. The analysis focuses on how literal lexical references and implied emotional significations interact to produce layered interpretations within lyrical discourse. Data were obtained from the complete song lyrics and analyzed through close reading, semantic categorization, and contextual interpretation. The findings reveal that denotative meanings function as structural anchors that provide literal clarity, while connotative meanings dominate the interpretive dimension by expressing emotional experiences such as regret, loneliness, love, and realization. The study further identifies that repetition, symbolism, metaphor, and binary oppositions such as light and darkness significantly contribute to semantic depth and thematic coherence. Interaction between denotative and connotative layers forms a unified interpretive system that enables emotional resonance and narrative progression. The research concludes that semantic analysis is essential in revealing the complex relationship between literal and emotional meanings in song lyrics.*

**Keywords:** *Semantics, Denotative Meaning, Connotative Meaning, Song Lyrics, Interpretation.*



©2022 Authors.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License.  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of linguistic and semiotic studies, semantic analysis has increasingly become a pivotal domain for understanding how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and emotionally experienced within multimodal and cultural texts, particularly in the era of globalized digital music consumption where song lyrics function not merely as entertainment artifacts but as transnational vehicles of affective communication and identity construction (Gee, Laiya, & Telaumbanua, 2022). Within this evolving paradigm, the study of denotative and connotative meaning has gained renewed scholarly attention, as researchers seek to disentangle the layered relationship between literal linguistic representation and the culturally and emotionally charged meanings embedded within popular song lyrics. Recent developments in discourse-oriented semantics emphasize that meaning in lyrical texts cannot be reduced to lexical reference alone, but must be understood as a dynamic interplay between linguistic form, contextual framing, and interpretive subjectivity, particularly in genres such as pop music where emotional accessibility is strategically encoded through linguistic simplicity and semantic depth (Pratiwi, Indrayani, & Soemantri, 2020).

Empirical scholarship in this field demonstrates a consistent methodological orientation toward identifying semantic dualities in song lyrics across diverse musical genres and cultural contexts. Studies on Western and global pop music, such as analyses of One Direction and Ariana Grande, reveal that connotative meanings frequently dominate lyrical interpretation, with themes of love, loss, and emotional vulnerability being systematically constructed through metaphorical and symbolic language (Sari & Kusumawardhani, 2016; Pratiwi et al., 2020). Similarly, research on contemporary artists such as The 1975 and Justin Bieber ft. Kid LAROI further substantiates the prevalence of emotionally charged semantic layering, where denotative structures serve primarily as entry points for deeper interpretive connotations that evoke psychological and experiential resonance among listeners (Lubis & Harahap, 2024; Gee et al., 2022). Across these studies, figurative language consistently emerges as a mediating mechanism that transforms ordinary lexical items into complex semiotic carriers of emotional meaning, thereby reinforcing the interpretive richness of lyrical discourse.

Despite the growing body of literature, critical examination reveals persistent theoretical and methodological limitations in existing semantic studies of song lyrics. A substantial number of studies

remain largely descriptive in nature, focusing on categorization of denotative and connotative meanings without sufficiently interrogating the interactional mechanisms through which these meanings co-construct thematic coherence within a single textual system (Mangewa, 2012; Sari & Kusumawardhani, 2016). Furthermore, many analyses tend to isolate figurative language from broader semantic structures, thereby neglecting the systemic interdependence between repetition, contrast, and symbolic expression in shaping interpretive depth (Anissa & Permana, 2023). Even more recent contributions, while more sophisticated in identifying figurative and mythic constructs in lyrical discourse, often privilege identification over explanatory synthesis, leaving unresolved how semantic layering functions as an integrated discourse strategy across entire song structures (Max, 2022; Gea, Pasaribu, & Sembiring, 2026). This fragmentation of analytical focus produces an epistemic gap in understanding how meaning operates holistically within lyrical narratives.

Such limitations generate an urgent need for more integrative semantic frameworks capable of bridging lexical-level analysis with discourse-level interpretation, particularly in songs that have achieved global cultural circulation and sustained emotional impact among diverse audiences. The song “Let Her Go” by Passenger represents a particularly salient case for such inquiry, given its widespread reception and its reliance on minimalistic linguistic structures that nonetheless generate profound emotional and psychological interpretations across listeners. Existing literature has not sufficiently addressed how the interplay between denotative simplicity and connotative complexity operates within this specific lyrical composition, nor how repetition and binary oppositions contribute systematically to its semantic architecture. This gap is particularly significant in understanding how contemporary song lyrics function as condensed narratives of human emotional experience, where linguistic economy paradoxically produces interpretive expansiveness across cultural and cognitive contexts.

Positioned within this scholarly landscape, the present study advances a more structurally integrated semantic approach that conceptualizes meaning in song lyrics as a layered continuum rather than a binary opposition between literal and figurative interpretation. By focusing on “Let Her Go” by Passenger, this research situates itself at the intersection of lexical semantics, discourse analysis, and literary linguistics, aiming to demonstrate how denotative and connotative meanings interact dynamically within a single lyrical system to construct emotionally resonant narrative coherence. Unlike prior studies that tend to compartmentalize semantic categories, this research foregrounds the relational mechanisms that bind literal and implied meanings into a unified interpretive structure, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of lyrical semantics in contemporary popular music studies.

This study aims to conduct an in-depth semantic analysis of denotative and connotative meanings in the song lyrics of “Let Her Go” by Passenger by systematically examining how linguistic choices generate layered emotional and symbolic significance within the text. The expected contribution lies in advancing theoretical understanding of semantic interaction in lyrical discourse, particularly by refining the conceptual relationship between denotation and connotation as interdependent rather than isolated categories of meaning production, while also offering a methodological model for future semantic analyses of song lyrics that prioritizes integrative interpretation over descriptive classification.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study adopts a non-empirical qualitative research design, as the primary data are not generated through human participants but derived from a pre-existing textual artifact, namely the song lyrics of “Let Her Go” by Passenger. The study is categorized as descriptive-interpretive textual analysis within the field of semantic and discourse studies, focusing on the systematic examination of linguistic meaning embedded in literary and lyrical structures. The source of data is the officially published lyrics of the song, which are treated as a stable linguistic corpus for semantic investigation. The selection of data is based on relevance and semantic richness criteria, particularly the presence of lexical items, phrases, and clauses that exhibit potential denotative and connotative meanings. The corpus is purposively delimited to the complete lyrical structure of the song to ensure analytical comprehensiveness while maintaining interpretive depth within a single-text case study framework.

The analytical framework is grounded in Geoffrey Leech’s theory of meaning, particularly the distinction between conceptual (denotative) meaning and associative (connotative) meaning, which provides the primary lens for textual interpretation. The analysis is conducted through a systematic interpretive procedure involving close reading, semantic categorization, and contextual meaning

reconstruction, whereby each linguistic unit is first interpreted at its literal level and subsequently examined for emotional, symbolic, and culturally mediated meanings. To ensure analytical rigor, triangulation is achieved through repeated iterative reading and cross-referencing interpretations with established semantic literature, thereby enhancing interpretive consistency and minimizing subjective bias. The study does not involve human subjects; therefore, ethical considerations are primarily concerned with proper textual attribution, academic integrity, and faithful representation of the source material without distortion or misinterpretation of the original lyrical content.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Semantic Mapping of Denotative Structures in “Let Her Go” Lyrics

The initial stage of analysis focuses on identifying denotative structures embedded in the lyrical composition of “Let Her Go,” which function as the foundational layer of meaning before interpretive expansion into connotative domains. The textual corpus demonstrates that literal lexical items such as “light,” “sun,” and “home” operate as primary semantic anchors that construct surface-level meaning accessible without contextual inference (Sari & Kusumawardhani, 2016). Within this structural mapping, the denotative layer serves as a linguistic scaffold that enables subsequent emotional and symbolic interpretation, aligning with semantic principles that emphasize conceptual meaning as the entry point of linguistic comprehension (Mangewa, 2012). The distribution of denotative expressions in the lyric reveals a systematic reliance on everyday vocabulary that maintains semantic transparency while simultaneously enabling layered interpretability.

**Table 1. Semantic Mapping of Denotative Meaning in Selected Lyrics of “Let Her Go” by Passenger**

No	Lyric Fragment	Denotative Interpretation	Semantic Function
1	light when it's burning low	dim illumination	physical reference to light intensity
2	miss the sun	absence of sunlight	environmental condition
3	let her go	releasing someone	literal act of separation
4	feeling low	emotional state reduction	basic affective description

Table 1 demonstrates that denotative meaning functions primarily as referential grounding that stabilizes interpretation before metaphorical expansion occurs, particularly through recurring lexical contrasts. The presence of such literal anchors is consistent with findings in contemporary semantic studies which indicate that popular song lyrics often maintain a dual-layered structure where denotation provides structural clarity while enabling connotative depth (Gee, Laiya, & Telaumbanua, 2022). In this lyrical system, denotation does not operate independently but rather functions as an interpretive gateway toward emotional meaning construction.

Further examination of the denotative layer reveals that lexical simplicity is deliberately maintained to enhance accessibility while preserving interpretive openness. Expressions such as “let her go” and “feeling low” demonstrate minimal syntactic complexity, yet they form the basis for extensive semantic expansion through contextual interpretation. This pattern aligns with observations that contemporary lyrical discourse often employs reduced linguistic complexity to maximize affective resonance across diverse audiences (Pratiwi, Indrayani, & Soemantri, 2020). The simplicity of denotation in this case does not indicate semantic limitation but rather strategic openness for multi-layered interpretation.

The interaction between literal lexical items also reveals structural symmetry, particularly in binary lexical arrangements such as “sun” versus “snow” and “light” versus “low,” which establish a foundational semantic polarity. This polarity functions as a preparatory mechanism for emotional contrast that emerges in later interpretive stages, reflecting how denotative structures can encode latent oppositional meaning systems (Lubis & Harahap, 2024). Such structuring suggests that even at the denotative level, lexical selection is not arbitrary but guided by thematic coherence and semantic anticipation.

In addition, the recurrence of specific denotative phrases across the lyrical structure indicates a patterned reinforcement strategy that stabilizes thematic continuity. Repetition of literal phrases such as “miss the sun” contributes to semantic anchoring, ensuring that interpretive shifts remain connected to a consistent conceptual base. This mechanism aligns with semantic argumentation theory which posits that repetition strengthens meaning stability within discourse structures (Pruś, 2021). Consequently, denotation in this lyrical context operates not merely as reference but also as cohesion device.

The denotative system in “Let Her Go” also reflects a minimalistic linguistic economy that enhances interpretive scalability. The songwriter’s reliance on basic lexical units allows for broad semantic activation without requiring complex syntactic mediation, a pattern frequently observed in globally circulated pop lyrics (Fabbri, 1982). This economy of expression facilitates cross-cultural accessibility while simultaneously preserving interpretive ambiguity that enables connotative expansion.

Moreover, the literal meaning layer demonstrates a consistent alignment with experiential universality, particularly through references to light, loss, and movement. Such universality ensures that denotative meaning remains cognitively accessible across linguistic and cultural boundaries, reinforcing the song’s global interpretability. This phenomenon corresponds with findings in visual and linguistic semiotics that emphasize the role of simplified symbolic structures in enhancing transnational meaning transfer (Machin, 2004). As a result, denotation in this context functions as a universal semantic interface.

The structural integrity of denotative meaning is further reinforced through syntagmatic organization, where lexical units are arranged in predictable grammatical patterns that reduce interpretive ambiguity. This grammatical stability ensures that literal meaning remains intact even when subjected to multiple interpretive readings. Similar patterns have been observed in semantic analyses of contemporary song lyrics where syntactic regularity supports interpretive layering (Sinaga & Damanik, 2026). Thus, denotative structures serve as a controlled semantic environment for meaning expansion.

At a deeper analytical level, denotative meaning in this song establishes a referential baseline that enables emotional modulation without semantic distortion. The stability of literal meaning ensures that connotative interpretation remains anchored rather than arbitrary, preserving interpretive coherence across analytical layers. This structural dependency between denotation and higher-order meaning aligns with semantic theory emphasizing hierarchical meaning construction in discourse systems (Irawan, 2025). Therefore, denotation operates as a prerequisite condition for connotative emergence.

The denotative mapping of “Let Her Go” demonstrates that literal meaning is not a static linguistic residue but an active structural component that enables thematic and emotional development. The interplay of lexical simplicity, repetition, and syntactic stability constructs a semantic foundation that supports deeper interpretive processes. This foundational role confirms that denotation functions as an essential organizing principle in lyrical semantics, preparing the text for subsequent connotative elaboration.

### **Semantic Construction of Connotative Meaning in “Let Her Go” Lyrics**

The connotative dimension in “Let Her Go” operates as a multilayered semantic system in which literal lexical items are reconfigured into emotionally charged and psychologically resonant meanings beyond their dictionary definitions. Expressions such as “light,” “sun,” and “home” undergo semantic expansion through contextual embedding, producing associative meanings linked to happiness, emotional security, and existential loss, a pattern consistent with connotative dynamics in contemporary song discourse (Purnamasari, 2018). Within this interpretive framework, connotation does not emerge as an additive layer but as a resemanticization process that transforms ordinary lexical items into carriers of affective experience. This transformation aligns with prior findings indicating that song lyrics frequently rely on associative meaning to construct emotional depth and listener engagement (Lubis & Harahap, 2024).

**Table 2. Semantic Transformation from Literal Meaning to Connotative Meaning in Selected Lyrics of “Let Her Go” by Passenger**

No	Lyric Fragment	Literal Meaning	Connotative Interpretation
1	Only miss the sun when it starts to snow	seasonal contrast	realization of value after loss
2	Everything you touch surely dies	physical destruction	emotional self-blame and failure
3	Staring at the bottom of your glass	visual act	loneliness and emotional collapse
4	Feeling low	low physical state	psychological depression

Table 2 illustrates that connotative meaning is systematically constructed through metaphorical displacement, where physical or observable actions are reinterpreted as psychological conditions. The transformation of “staring at the bottom of your glass” into a representation of existential emptiness demonstrates how bodily actions are encoded as emotional states, reflecting the semantic principle that meaning is contextually negotiated rather than fixed (Gee, Laiya, & Telaumbanua, 2022). This process reinforces the idea that connotation functions as a bridge between linguistic form and subjective emotional experience.

The lyric “Everything you touch surely dies” exemplifies extreme semantic amplification, where literal impossibility is reinterpreted as symbolic self-condemnation and emotional deterioration. Such hyperbolic semantic extension aligns with observations in lyrical studies that emphasize exaggeration as a mechanism for intensifying emotional communication (Ayu, 2022). Within this structure, connotation operates through psychological projection, allowing abstract emotional states to be externalized through dramatic linguistic imagery. This reinforces the notion that lyrical meaning often depends on metaphorical distortion rather than literal accuracy.

Binary oppositions embedded in the lyric, particularly “sun and snow” or “high and low,” function as connotative triggers that construct emotional polarity between happiness and suffering. These oppositions do not merely describe environmental contrasts but encode psychological transitions from emotional presence to absence, reflecting semantic argumentation processes in expressive discourse (Pruś, 2021). The repetition of such oppositional structures intensifies interpretive framing by reinforcing cognitive association between natural phenomena and emotional states. Consequently, connotation emerges as a structured system rather than a spontaneous interpretive effect.

The recurrent phrase “Only know you love her when you let her go” operates as the central connotative nucleus of the entire song, encapsulating retrospective emotional awareness and regret. This expression demonstrates how temporal displacement in meaning construction enables realization to occur after experiential loss, a phenomenon frequently identified in semantic studies of emotional discourse (Sari & Kusumawardhani, 2016). The phrase’s repetition amplifies its semantic weight, transforming it into a cognitive anchor for the entire lyrical narrative. Its connotative force lies in the tension between knowledge and absence.

**Table 3. Semantic Devices and Their Connotative Functions in “Let Her Go” by Passenger**

Semantic Device	Example	Connotative Function
Metaphor	Everything you touch dies	emotional self-destruction
Contrast	sun vs snow	happiness vs loss
Repetition	let her go	emotional fixation
Symbolism	light	hope and awareness

Table 3 demonstrates that multiple semantic devices converge to produce a unified connotative system within the song, where metaphor, contrast, repetition, and symbolism operate interactively rather than independently. This convergence reflects findings in figurative language studies that emphasize the integrated nature of semantic devices in lyrical construction (Anissa & Permana, 2023). The table further indicates that connotative meaning is not isolated at lexical level but distributed across structural and rhetorical dimensions.

Emotional imagery such as “staring at the ceiling in the dark” intensifies the psychological dimension of connotation by representing cognitive stagnation and existential anxiety. The darkness motif functions as an associative field for uncertainty and emotional paralysis, reinforcing established semantic correlations between visual deprivation and psychological distress (Max, 2022). This imagery illustrates how spatial references in lyrics are systematically reinterpreted as internal emotional landscapes. The semantic shift from physical space to mental state underscores the depth of connotative layering.

The phrase “dreams come slow and they go so fast” introduces temporal instability as a connotative mechanism that reflects unpredictability in emotional fulfillment. Temporal distortion in lyrical semantics often functions as a representation of emotional fragility, where duration and loss are cognitively merged into a single interpretive frame (Irawan, 2025). This reinforces the idea that connotation operates through the manipulation of experiential time rather than objective chronology. As a result, emotional perception becomes central to semantic interpretation.

At a broader interpretive level, connotative meaning in this song constructs a narrative of emotional realization that emerges through suffering and retrospection. The lyric structure consistently transforms ordinary experiences into symbolic representations of psychological transformation, aligning with studies that highlight emotional encoding as a dominant feature of popular music semantics (Rachman, 2022). This narrative is not explicitly stated but constructed through cumulative semantic associations across the lyrical sequence. Therefore, connotation functions as the primary driver of thematic coherence.

Ultimately, the connotative system in “Let Her Go” reveals that emotional meaning in song lyrics is produced through systematic semantic transformation rather than spontaneous interpretation. The interplay of metaphor, repetition, contrast, and imagery constructs a dense network of associative meanings that extend far beyond literal lexical reference. This confirms that connotation serves as the principal mechanism through which lyrical texts achieve emotional resonance and interpretive depth, positioning it as a central analytical category in semantic studies of contemporary music discourse.

### **Interaction between Denotative and Connotative Meaning in the Construction of Thematic Coherence in “Let Her Go”**

The interaction between denotative and connotative meaning in “Let Her Go” demonstrates a layered semantic architecture in which literal lexical stability enables the emergence of complex emotional and symbolic interpretation. Denotative elements such as “sun,” “light,” and “home” provide referential clarity that anchors the listener’s cognitive processing, while simultaneously opening interpretive pathways toward emotional abstraction as identified in semantic discourse studies (Sinaga & Damanik, 2026). This dual structure reflects a systematic dependency where connotative meaning cannot be fully activated without the prior establishment of denotative grounding. Within this framework, meaning is constructed through progressive semantic expansion rather than isolated lexical interpretation.

**Table 4. Interaction between Denotative and Connotative Meaning in Selected Lyrics of “Let Her Go” by Passenger**

<b>No</b>	<b>Lyric Fragment</b>	<b>Denotative Layer</b>	<b>Connotative Layer</b>
1	Only miss the sun when it starts to snow	climate reference	realization after emotional loss
2	Only know you love her when you let her go	separation act	regret and retrospective awareness
3	Everything you touch surely dies	physical consequence	emotional self-condemnation
4	Staring at the ceiling in the dark	physical posture	existential loneliness

Table 4 illustrates that denotative and connotative meanings operate in a continuous interpretive loop rather than as separate semantic categories. Each lexical item maintains its literal reference while simultaneously generating associative meaning that reconfigures its interpretive value. This interaction

confirms that semantic production in lyrical discourse is relational and context-dependent, consistent with findings in semantic argumentation theory (Pruš, 2021). The table further demonstrates that thematic coherence emerges from the systematic alignment of both meaning levels.

The lyric “Only know you love her when you let her go” functions as the central integrative node where denotation and connotation converge into a unified semantic structure. The literal act of “letting go” establishes a concrete referential event, while its connotative extension constructs psychological realization and emotional regret as dominant interpretive outcomes (Sari & Kusumawardhani, 2016). This convergence produces a semantic feedback loop in which literal action and emotional awareness reinforce each other. As a result, the lyric becomes both descriptive and reflective simultaneously.

Binary oppositions such as “sun and snow” and “light and low” further illustrate how denotative contrasts are systematically transformed into connotative meaning structures. The physical opposition embedded in these lexical pairs evolves into emotional polarity representing happiness versus loss and awareness versus ignorance. Such semantic transformation aligns with findings in figurative language studies emphasizing the role of contrast in meaning intensification (Anissa & Permana, 2023). The interaction between oppositional denotation and emotional connotation produces interpretive depth across the lyrical narrative.

**Table 5. Integrated Semantic Mechanisms and Their Functions in Constructing Meaning in “Let Her Go” by Passenger**

Semantic Mechanism	Example	Integrated Function
Denotation-to-connotation shift	sun → happiness	emotional reinterpretation
Repetition	let her go	cognitive reinforcement
Contrast	light vs dark	emotional polarity construction
Symbolism	home	security and belonging

Table 5 demonstrates that semantic mechanisms function collectively in constructing thematic coherence rather than operating independently. The transformation from denotative reference to connotative meaning is reinforced through repetition and symbolic association. This integrated structure reflects analytical findings in lyrical semantics that emphasize the convergence of linguistic devices in meaning formation (Lubis & Harahap, 2024). Consequently, thematic unity emerges from structured semantic interaction.

Repetition plays a critical role in stabilizing the interaction between denotation and connotation by continuously reactivating core semantic units within the listener’s interpretive process. The repeated phrase “let her go” maintains its literal meaning while progressively accumulating emotional significance through contextual reinforcement. This mechanism aligns with discourse studies that highlight repetition as a strategy for semantic intensification and argument stabilization (Pruš, 2021). Through repetition, connotative meaning becomes increasingly dominant without erasing denotative clarity.

Imagery such as “staring at the bottom of your glass” illustrates how physical description (denotation) is immediately reinterpreted as psychological condition (connotation), demonstrating rapid semantic transition within a single expression. The physical act of looking at a glass is semantically minimal at the denotative level but expands into a complex emotional state of isolation and despair. This transformation reflects the interpretive flexibility of lyrical language in contemporary music discourse (Rachman, 2022). The interaction between both meaning layers enables compressed emotional storytelling.

Temporal expressions such as “dreams come slow and they go so fast” further illustrate how denotative temporality is reconfigured into connotative instability. The literal reference to time progression becomes a symbolic representation of emotional unpredictability and fragile fulfillment. This semantic shift aligns with findings in lexical-semantic studies that emphasize temporal metaphorization in expressive language systems (Irawan, 2025). The convergence of temporal denotation and emotional connotation strengthens narrative depth.

At the structural level, the song constructs a coherent thematic trajectory through the continuous interaction between literal reference and emotional implication. Each denotative unit contributes to a cumulative connotative field that reflects regret, realization, and emotional loss as interconnected experiences. This layered structure confirms that meaning in lyrical discourse is distributed across multiple semantic strata rather than confined to isolated lexical units (Pratiwi, Indrayani, & Soemantri, 2020). The integration of both meaning types ensures interpretive continuity across the song.

The interaction between denotative and connotative meaning in "Let Her Go" produces a unified semantic system in which literal clarity and emotional depth operate interdependently. The song demonstrates that thematic coherence emerges from structured semantic layering rather than isolated linguistic elements. This interactional model highlights the necessity of integrated semantic analysis in understanding contemporary lyrical texts, where meaning is continuously negotiated between reference and emotion.

## CONCLUSION

The semantic examination of "Let Her Go" demonstrates that meaning in lyrical discourse is constructed through a hierarchical yet interdependent relationship between literal reference and emotional implication, where denotative expressions establish structural clarity while simultaneously enabling the expansion of connotative interpretations that dominate the emotional narrative. The lexical simplicity embedded in the song functions not as a limitation but as a strategic foundation that supports semantic layering, allowing ordinary expressions such as references to light, sun, and home to evolve into complex representations of psychological states including regret, loss, and self-realization. Repetition operates as a reinforcing mechanism that stabilizes thematic continuity while intensifying emotional resonance, particularly through the recurring realization that love becomes fully understood only after separation. Symbolic contrasts such as light and darkness and sun and snow further amplify semantic polarity, transforming environmental references into cognitive representations of human emotional fluctuation. Figurative language and metaphorical displacement strengthen the interpretive depth by converting physical descriptions into psychological meaning structures. The interaction between denotative stability and connotative expansion ultimately forms a unified semantic system in which thematic coherence emerges through progressive meaning construction, confirming that song lyrics function as layered linguistic artifacts capable of encoding universal human emotional experiences within structured semantic frameworks.

## REFERENCES

- Anissa, Y. S., & Permana, I. P. A. (2023). Analysis of Figurative Language and Meaning in the Four Album by One Direction. *Austronesian: Journal of Language Science & Literature*, 2(2), 97-103. <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Ocz4CV4AAAAJ&hl=id&oi=sra> <https://doi.org/10.59011/austronesian.2.2.2023.97-103>.
- Ayu, M. T. I. (2022). An Analysis of Hyperbole in the Sour Album of Olivia Rodrigo. *Sphota: Jurnal Linguistik dan Sastra*, 14(2), 105-114. <https://doi.org/10.36733/sphota.v14i2.5002>.
- Dylewski, R. (2021). Dissecting the word: The use of the lexeme shit in selected performances of comedian Dave Chappelle's stand-up routine. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 56(s1), 511-550.
- Fabbri, F. (1982). What kind of music?. *Popular music*, 2, 131-143. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143000001264>.
- Fadilla, D. A., Susanto, A., & Sukirno, S. (2026). Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meanings in the Lyrics of the Song "Pikiran yang Matang" by the Band Perunggu. *Journal of Social Research*, 5(4), 1746-1755. <https://doi.org/10.55324/josr.v5i4.3113>.
- Gea, P. K., Pasaribu, T. K., & Sembiring, R. A. (2026). An Exploration of Figurative Language in Henry Moodie's Song Album Mood Swings. *J-LELC: Journal of Language Education, Linguistics, and Culture*, 6(1), 72-82. <https://doi.org/10.25299/j-lelc.2026.27472>.
- Gee, R., Laiya, R. E., & Telaumbanua, T. (2022). An analysis of denotative and connotative meaning selected Justin ft Kid Laroi songs lyric. *Research on English Language Education*, 4(2), 40-46. <https://doi.org/10.57094/relation.v4i2.682>.
- Irawan, D. (2025). The Meaning of Denotation and the Meaning of Connotation in the Lyrics of the Song "Roman Picisan" by Dewa-19: Semantic Study. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra*, 4(6), 1671-1684. <https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v4i6.987>.

- Lubis, S. S., & Harahap, D. I. (2024). Semantic analysis of connotative and denotative meanings in songs by the 1975. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Multi Disiplin Ilmu (Senadimu)* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 126-142).
- Machin, D. (2004). Building the world's visual language: The increasing global importance of image banks in corporate media. *Visual communication*, 3(3), 316-336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357204045785>.
- Mangewa, Y. P. (2012). An Analysis on the Denotative and Connotative Meaning of Lyrics of Creed's Songs. *AgroSainT*, 3(2), 337-337. <https://doi.org/10.47178/agro.v3i2.632>.
- Max, J. I. S. D. (2022). Mythical Car: Metonymy in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics. *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics*, 9(2), 219-235. <https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v9i2.23139>.
- Pratiwi, D. R., Indrayani, L. M., & Soemantri, Y. S. (2020). The analysis of denotative and connotative meaning in Ariana Grande's song lyrics: A semantic study. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 3(2), 231-235. <https://doi.org/10.34050/els-jish.v3i2.9994>.
- Pruś, J. (2021). How can modifications of meaning influence argumentation? The concept and typology of semantic arguments. *Argumentation*, 35(3), 483-508. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-020-09542-y>.
- Purnamasari, I. (2018). An Analysis of Connotative Meaning on Justin Bieber's Song Lyrics. *Pioneer*, 10(2), 318711. <https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v10i2.247>.
- Rachman, E. S. (2022). Revealing The Voice of Gay Pride in Troye Sivan's Song Heaven: Form and Meaning. *Language Horizon: Journal of Language Studies*, 10(2), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.26740/lh.v10n2.p1-8>.
- Sari, A., & Kusumawardhani, P. (2016). Denotative and connotative meaning in One direction's songs lyric: A semantic perspective. *ELT-Lectura*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.31849/elt-lectura.v3i2.479>.
- Simbolon, S. G. K., & Damanik, B. A. R. (2026). A Semantic Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meaning in the Song Lyrics "Anti Hero" by Taylor Swift. *Jurnal Ilmiah Nusantara*, 3(3), 351-359. <https://doi.org/10.61722/jinu.v3i3.9807>.
- Sinaga, R. A., & Damanik, B. A. R. (2026). A Semantic Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meaning in the Song Lyrics of "Mirrors" by Justin Timberlake. *Jurnal Ilmiah Nusantara*, 3(3), 256-271. <https://doi.org/10.61722/jinu.v3i3.9790>.
- Thurlow, C., & Jaworski, A. (2006). The alchemy of the upwardly mobile: Symbolic capital and the stylization of elites in frequent-flyer programmes. *Discourse & Society*, 17(1), 99-135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926506058066>.