

# A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICS TO THE ALBUM SONG "CHARLIE" BY CHARLIE PUTH

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## ABSTRACT

Semantics is the study of meaning in language. Then, scientifically, semantics aims to analyze language, which means a meaning is contained in the language. According to Riemer (2010:3), "Meaning is the essence of language. Meaning, we might say, is the purpose of language; having language without meaning is like having wheels without air." The objective of this study is to find the denotative meaning and affective meaning in Charie Puth's album song.

The data were obtained from Charlie Puth's song lyrics. The data collection was carried out by collecting information related to the research through journal, article, dictionaries and books, searching for song lyrics on the Genius website, and collecting the lyrics of the songs. The data were analyzed based on Geoffrey Leech and J.R. Martin & P. R. R. White's theory.

The result of the research is that there are 39 data about the denotative meaning and affective meaning contained in Charlie Puth's "CHARLIE" album. Then, the researcher also found that the songs in this album contain 4 categories of affective meaning: Inclination, Happiness, Security, and Satisfaction.

**Keywords:** *Semantic; denotative meaning; affective meaning; song; lyrics*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Different people define love in different ways. This can be seen in how concepts, ideas, and images of love are created and shared through literary and non-literary media, publishing, and social networks (Lukšík & Guillaume, 2018). Love is a feeling of strong or constant affection for a person (Love Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary, 2023). Because of love, a person's life becomes very happy and colorful. Once you have felt love, you will decide to make a commitment.

Then, according to Robert Sternberg (1986), "love has three components of interpersonal relationships: passion, commitment, and intimacy". Sternberg listed three elements that make up love (Taneja & Goyal, 2020). Intimacy, defined as "feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships," is the first element (Taneja & Goyal, 2020). Passion was described as the "romantic and physical components of a relationship" and is the second element (Taneja & Goyal, 2020). Sternberg defines the third element, commitment as "the decision that one loves a particular person in the short term and to maintain that love as one's commitment" in the long term (Taneja & Goyal, 2020). Commitment is an important element in developing and maintaining faith in a romantic relationship, as well as influencing a person to evaluate their relationship as something positive, in a spirit of happiness, and more competitive (Taneja & Goyal, 2020).

To build a commitment in love communication is needed. This communication can be a verbal message or a written message (Merriam Webster, 2023). Moreover, communication requires something called language. Then, according to Aristotle, language is a system of communication that consists of a set of sounds and written symbols that are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing (Tierney, 2002). Language is a means of communication that acts as a link between one person and another in carrying out daily activities (Gee et al., 2022). Language itself has a role to connect people through its use to convey

ideas (Gee et al., 2022). As a means to communicate, language is conveyed in two ways, namely directly and indirectly (Gee et al., 2022). Direct language delivery is done by speaking, while other language delivery can be done through songs (Gee et al., 2022). Language delivery in both activities is called the verbal language delivery process (Gee et al., 2022). Then, the indirect or non-verbal delivery process is realized in a form such as symbols, signs, gestures, and so on (Gee et al., 2022).

When experiencing what is called love, someone usually creates beautiful sentences for his or her partner. These beautiful sentences can be poems or songs. A song is a short musical composition of words and music (Merriam Webster, 2023). A song has lyrics as one of its components. Sometimes, a songwriter writes a lyric that represents his personal feelings. So, the lyrics of a song contain implicit and explicit meaning.

In this study, researchers chose Charlie Puth's songs, because Charlie has won several categories in the music world and he is also often included in several award nominations (An Amazon Company, 2023). One of the awards he won was the Song of the Year category at the Hollywood Film Award in 2015 (An Amazon Company, 2023). Then in the following year he won several awards and entered into several nominations (An Amazon Company, 2023). Charlie has also achieved platinum certification from the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) which can only be achieved by a handful of songs (McIntyre, 2019). Not only that, based on the television program hosted by Jammy Fallon, we can see how

Charlie creates music using the items around him and in the television program he uses a mug and a spoon (Charlie Puth Creates an Original Beat on the Spot With a Mug and a Spoon | The Tonight Show, 2022) . In addition, Charlie Puth created songs inspired by his life (Arthur, 2022).

Therefore, to find out the meaning and the writer feeling of a song, we need a tool that can detect the meaning of the song's lyrics. Thus, analyzing this data requires tools related to linguistics. The study of language is called linguistics, according to Sapir (1921). Linguistics is divided into microlinguistics, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, and macrolinguistics, including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, anthropology, and computational (Muslimah, O. A. & Devita, 2023). Semantics is one of the studies in linguistics that study meaning (Asriati & Asmayanti, 2020). Semantics is also one of the language's internal elements (Gee et al., 2022). According to Hurford (2007:1), semantics is the study of meaning in language. Then, scientifically, semantics aims to analyze language, which means a meaning is contained in the language (Gee et al., 2022). According to Riemer (2010:3), "meaning is the essence of language. Meaning, we might say, is the purpose of language; having language without meaning is like having wheels without air." So in this case, the importance of knowing the meaning of a word cannot be denied (Gee et al., 2022). Moreover, in using language, the meaning is very important to know, whatever the purpose is (Gee et al., 2022). Semantics is a discipline of linguistics that

offers the discussion on meaning (Gee et al., 2022). Thus, the "meaning" of a language is what gives it its fundamental significance (Gee et al., 2022). Then, one of the studies that discusses meaning in semantic studies is called denotative and connotative meaning. Denotative meaning is the actual meaning of the word with the dictionary as the source. While connotative meaning is the implied meaning in a sentence. In addition, to find out the writer's feelings in a song lyric, semantics has a branch of science called affective meaning.

In analyzing the meaning and the song writer's feelings that contained in some of the lyrics on Charlie Puth's "Charlie" album, it takes context for the meaning to be found. Therefore, this study uses a semantics approach called the study of meaning. Apart from that, researchers also use this approach because it is related to Geoffrey Leech and J.R. Martin and P. R. R. White. Meaning can be defined as an utterance form accurately if it relates to something of which one has natural knowledge.

Using the theory of J.R. Martin, the researchers will find out that in making a song, a writer puts in his personal experience. Besides, having found the writer's feelings, we can understand more and more the meaning of the author. Then, when we experience the same thing as the songwriter, we can follow the steps he took to get out of trouble.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a descriptive-qualitative method that focuses on the denotation meaning and affective meaning contained in Charlie Puth's song

albums. This qualitative research was chosen because the data analyzed is in the form of written text, namely song lyrics. Then, according to Ali and Yusof, qualitative research is any research that does not involve statistical procedures and focuses on emphasizing the observation of phenomena and examining the essence of the meaning of a phenomenon. In addition, Basri (2014) argues that qualitative research focuses on the process and meaning of the results.

Then, in collecting the data, the researcher takes several steps. According to Ridwan (2010: 51), data collection strategies are approaches or procedures that researchers might utilize to gather data (Aulia et al., 2023). First, to collect information related to research through journals, articles, dictionaries, and books. Second, to find song lyrics, the researcher opens the link: <https://genius.com/>. Third, to search and collect lyrics for several songs via the Genius Web. Then, in analyzing the data, the researcher uses the theory by Geoffrey Leech to find the denotative meaning and the theory by J.R. Martin and P. R. R. White to find the affective meaning.

### **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Denotative Meaning**

##### **1. Denotative meaning about Broken Hearth**

(TH.04) You didn't *love* when you had meThe song lyric "You didn't love when you had me" is indicated in the song titled That's Hillarious, which has the theme of broken heart. In the song, there is a word containing a denotative meaning and an affective meaning

that reflects the theme. Then, the denotative meaning contained in this song is the word "love," which according to the Cambridge online dictionary means to like something. Therefore, if the meaning is connected to this song, it will refer to his feelings, where during the relationship with the woman, the man did not get the same feelings as he gave to his girlfriend.

## 2. Denotative meaning about Love In Silence

(CBQ.08) If she knows you're in love, she's gonna run, ***run away***

The song lyric "If she knows you're in love, she's gonna run, *run away*" is indicated in the song titled Charlie Be Quiet!, which has the theme of love in silence. In the song, some words contain denotative meanings and affective meaning that reflect the theme. Then, the denotation meaning contained in this song is the phrase "run away," which according to the Cambridge online dictionary means to leave a place or person secretly and suddenly. Therefore, if the meaning is connected to the song, the meaning will refer to his lover's feelings, which means that if she knows he has feelings for her she will leave suddenly.

## 3. Denotative meaning about Fail in Move On

(LS.10) But you never wanna be ***each others'?***

The song lyric "But you never wanna be each others'?", is indicated in the song titled Light Switch, which has the theme of fail in move on. In the song, some words contain denotative meanings and

affective meanings that reflect the theme. Then the denotative meaning contained in this song is the word "each others'," which according to the Cambridge online dictionary means used to show that each person in a group of two or more people does something to the others. Therefore, if the meaning is connected to the song, the meaning will refer to his feelings, which means his effort means nothing for her lover.

#### 4. Denotative meaning about Falling In Love

(TAFTFE.13) Thinkin' 'bout you really *messed with my heartbeat*

The song lyric " Thinkin' 'bout you really messed with my heartbeat" is indicated in the song titled There's A First Time For Everything, which has the theme of falling in love theme. In the song, some words contain denotative meaning and affective meaning that reflects the theme. Then the denotative meaning contained in this song is the phrase " messed with my heartbeat " which according to the Cambridge online dictionary means becoming involved with something. Therefore, if the meaning is connected to the song, the meaning will refer to his feelings, which means that he feels that a small change has occurred within him because of her.

#### 5. Denotative meaning about Hopelessness In Love Affairs

(L.22) I'll never *recover*, I'll never be fine 'cause I



The song lyric "I'll never recover, I'll never be fine 'cause I " is indicated in the song titled Loser, which has the theme of hopelessness in love affairs. In the song, there is a word containing a denotative meaning and an affective meaning that reflects the theme. Then the denotative meaning contained in this song is the word "recover" which according to the Cambridge online dictionary means to become completely well again after an illness or injury. Therefore, if the meaning is connected to the song, the meaning will refer to his feelings, which means that he came to the conclusion that he would not get well from the pain caused by his girlfriend.

#### 6. Denotative meaning about Interconnected Feeling

(WYSIS.25) In the past, *put you back* there

The song lyric "In the past, put you back there" is indicated in the song titled When You're Sad I'm Sad, which has the theme of interconnected feeling. In the song, some words contain denotative meaning and affective meaning that reflects the theme. Then the denotative meaning contained in this song is the phrase "put you back" which according to the Cambridge online dictionary means to return something to where it belongs. Therefore, if the meaning is connected to the song, the meaning will refer to his feelings, which means he wants to go back to the past to make another decision about his lover.

7. Denotative meaning about Feel Grateful For Being Free From Love Problems

(NMD.36) Oh, I got no more *drama* in my life

The song lyric "Oh, I got no more drama in my life" contained is indicated in the song titled No More Drama, which has the theme of feel grateful for being free from love problems. In the song, there is a word containing a denotative meaning and an affective meaning that reflects the theme. Then the denotative meaning contained in this song is the word "drama" which according to the Cambridge online dictionary means an event or situation, especially an unexpected one, in which there is worry or excitement and usually a lot of action. Therefore, if the meaning is connected to the song, the meaning will refer to his feelings, which means that he does not need to worry about going about his days.

**B. Affective Meaning**

1. Inclination Category

(CBQ.07) You got to lower the noise a little bit now

The song lyrics "You got to lower the noise a little bit now" indicated in the song entitled Charlie Be Quiet! fall into the category of negative inclination, this can be seen in the meaning of the song's lyrics. The lyrics of this song reference a negative inclination category known as wariness. This is because he has to

keep his feelings to himself as much as possible to avoid being found out.

## 2. Happiness Category

(TH.06) You didn't love when you had me

The song lyric "You didn't love when you had me" found in That's Hillarious falls into the negative happiness category, this can be seen in the meaning of the song's lyrics. The lyrics refer to the negative tendency category known as sadness. This happens because his girlfriend doesn't love him the way he does.

## 3. Security Category

(TH.05) Now you put the blame in reverse

The song lyric " Now you put the blame in reverse " found in That's Hillarious falls into the negative security category, this can be seen in the meaning of the song's lyrics. The lyrics refer to the negative tendency category known as anxious. This happened because his ex-girlfriend wants him to take responsibility for something bad happening.

## 4. Satisfication Category

(TH.01) Guess you're finally realizin' how bad you *messed it up*

The song lyric " Guess you're finally realizin' how bad you *messed it up* " found in That's Hillarious falls into the negative satisfication category, this can be seen in the meaning of the song's lyrics. The

lyrics refer to the negative tendency category known as angry. This happened because his feelings are damaged by his girlfriend.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The researcher examined 12 songs and discovered 39 denotative data points with denotative meaning for this study. Several songs have varied themes as a result of the information in the song. Researchers discovered four songs with broken hearts theme and one song with a love in silence theme based on the data they have gathered. There are also songs with the themes of falling in love, which has one song, and fail in move on, which has three songs. Then, each theme comprises one song, such as hopelessness in love affairs, interconnected feeling, and feel grateful for being free from love problem. From some of the data that has been collected, it can be found that the songs contained in Charlie Puth's "Charlie" album have many songs with the theme of broken hearts.

Then, in the second problem, the researcher found data containing affective meaning in as many as 39 data points. In this affective meaning, the researcher found that this meaning is divided into four categories. The first category is inclination, which amounts to 4 data points and consists of 1 positive inclination and 3 negative inclinations. The second category is happiness, which consists of 21 data points: 7 positive happiness and 14 negative happiness. The third is the security category, which consists of 4 data points, and the data consists of 1 positive security and 3 negative security. The last is the satisfaction category, which consists of 10 data

points and is divided into two categories, namely positive and negative, which amount to 1 and 9.

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