

DENOTATIVE AND CONNOTATIVE MEANING IN WENDY OF RED VELVET'S SONG "HIS CAR ISN'T YOURS"

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Abstract

Melody and lyrics. This study analyses the denotative and connotative meanings in Wendy's song "His Car Isn't Yours" from Red Velvet, using Kreidler's semantic framework. The research aims to uncover how metaphors, particularly "car," depict themes of emotional detachment and relational dynamics. A descriptive qualitative approach is employed to explore the linguistic nuances that construct an emotional narrative in the lyrics. The analysis reveals that the "car," as a central metaphor, transitions from a denotative meaning as a physical object to a connotative symbol of emotional separation and relational boundaries. Elements such as "driveway" and "headlights" further emphasize themes of loss and emotional transformation. Repetition within the lyrics deepens emotional resonance, portraying the narrator's struggle to accept a new reality. This study highlights how the interplay of linguistic and symbolic elements creates narratives that resonate personally and universally with listeners. This research contributes to understanding linguistic creativity in contemporary song lyrics and the relevance of metaphor in expressing human emotional experiences. It recommends further exploration of similar techniques across genres and cultural contexts to gain broader insights into the semantic meanings embedded in lyrics.

Keywords: connotation, denotation, lyrics, semantics

Abstrak

Musik sebagai bentuk seni kontemporer memiliki kemampuan unik untuk menyampaikan makna melalui kombinasi melodi dan lirik. Penelitian ini menganalisis makna denotatif dan konotatif dalam lagu "His Car Isn't Yours" karya Wendy, anggota grup Red Velvet, dengan menggunakan kerangka teori semantik Kreidler. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap bagaimana metafora dalam lirik lagu, khususnya "mobil," menggambarkan tema keterpisahan emosional dan dinamika relasional. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif untuk mengeksplorasi nuansa bahasa yang menciptakan narasi emosional dalam lirik lagu. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa "mobil," sebagai metafora utama, beralih dari makna denotatif sebagai objek fisik menjadi simbol konotatif keterpisahan emosional dan batas relasi. Elemen-elemen seperti "driveway" dan "headlights" juga memperkuat tema kehilangan dan transformasi emosional. Repetisi dalam lirik memperdalam resonansi emosional, menggambarkan perjuangan narator untuk menerima kenyataan baru. Studi ini menyoroti bagaimana penggabungan elemen linguistik dan simbolik menciptakan narasi yang relevan secara personal dan universal bagi pendengar. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang kreativitas linguistik dalam lirik lagu modern dan relevansi metafora dalam menggambarkan pengalaman

emosional manusia. Studi ini merekomendasikan penelitian lebih lanjut untuk membandingkan teknik serupa pada genre dan konteks budaya lain guna memahami makna semantik dalam lirik secara lebih luas.

Kata kunci: konotasi, denotasi, lirik lagu, semantik

INTRODUCTION

Literature, as a distinctive form of linguistic art, masterfully blends aesthetics and meaning to communicate messages, evoke emotions, and reflect on life's multifaceted nature. Across its various forms prose, poetry, drama, and music literature serves as a bridge between artistic expression and human experience. Among these forms, music holds a unique position as it transcends cultural boundaries and resonates universally. Within music, song lyrics often parallel poetry, sharing the ability to articulate profound thoughts and emotions through beautifully crafted language (Sari et al., 2021). These lyrics, far from being a random assembly of words, are the fruit of an artist's creative imagination, skillfully designed to harmonize aesthetic appeal with meaningful content (Erlangga, Utomo, & Anisti, 2021).

In the modern era, music has become an indispensable aspect of daily life, serving a dual purpose: as entertainment and as a medium for expressing complex emotions and ideas. Songs often carry intricate layers of meaning both denotative and connotative that resonate deeply with listeners. These layers can reflect personal experiences, societal norms, or collective emotional landscapes. Wendy, a prominent member of the Korean girl group Red Velvet, exemplifies this dynamic through her song *"His Car Isn't Yours."* The song stands out for its rich symbolism and narrative depth, particularly through the metaphor of a "car." While ostensibly referencing a vehicle, the "car" in Wendy's lyrics signifies a broader spectrum of emotions, relationships, and existential reflections.

Semantic analysis, as a branch of linguistics that delves into meaning, provides a critical framework for unpacking these dual aspects of song lyrics. This approach enables an understanding of how language constructs meaning both literally (denotatively) and through associations, emotions, and cultural implications (connotatively). Denotative meanings represent the literal, dictionary-defined sense of words, while connotative meanings encompass the emotional or symbolic nuances that words acquire within specific contexts (Antika, Ningsih, & Sastika, 2020; Syah, 2021). In Wendy's *"His Car Isn't Yours,"* semantic analysis unravels how the metaphor of a "car" transitions from a literal object to a profound symbol of emotional detachment, longing, and relational complexity.

Music, as an art form, holds a unique capacity to convey layered meanings through a synthesis of melody and words. The lyrical component of music often acts as a narrative medium, weaving stories that resonate with listeners on both cognitive and emotional levels.

Songwriters employ linguistic tools such as metaphors, symbols, and imagery to craft lyrics that transcend literal interpretations, inviting audiences into a realm of personal and collective reflection. This interplay between language and emotion is particularly evident in contemporary music, where lyrics frequently explore themes of identity, relationships, and societal challenges.

In this context, Wendy's *"His Car Isn't Yours"* emerges as a poignant example of how modern song lyrics can encapsulate complex emotional narratives. The song's use of the "car" metaphor serves as a linchpin for exploring themes of loss, nostalgia, and emotional detachment. Unlike generic representations, the metaphor in this song carries a deeply personal yet universally relatable resonance, offering listeners a multifaceted lens through which to interpret the lyrics. By combining subtle linguistic elements with evocative imagery, Wendy creates a narrative space where individual and collective emotions intersect.

Semantic analysis provides a systematic approach to understanding the meanings embedded within song lyrics. By differentiating between denotative and connotative meanings, this method allows researchers to dissect how words and phrases operate within a lyrical context to convey layered messages. Denotative meanings represent the literal interpretation of words, as commonly found in dictionaries. For example, in *"His Car Isn't Yours,"* the term "car" in its denotative sense refers to a mode of transportation. However, the connotative meaning extends beyond this literal definition, invoking associations with emotional journeys, relational dynamics, and the passage of time.

The connotative dimension of song lyrics often hinges on the cultural and emotional contexts in which they are created and consumed. For instance, in Wendy's song, the "car" metaphor may evoke feelings of disconnection or unresolved emotions, reflecting the songwriter's intent to explore the intricacies of human relationships. This duality of meaning where a single word operates on both denotative and connotative levels underscores the richness of semantic analysis as a tool for interpreting song lyrics.

While extensive research has been conducted on semantics in song lyrics, much of the focus has been on broad thematic analyses or cultural interpretations. For example, Pratiwi et al (2021) examined the semantic elements in Ariana Grande's lyrics, highlighting how the interplay between literal and figurative meanings enhances the emotional depth of her songs. Similarly, Chapman et al (2022) explored gender differences in the perception of connotative meanings, revealing how individual experiences influence the emotional resonance of words. These studies underscore the importance of semantic analysis in uncovering the layers of meaning within song lyrics.

Moreover, research by Kearney (2020) investigated the use of metaphors in Taylor Swift's lyrics, emphasizing how they contribute to narrative storytelling and emotional engagement. In another study, Smith & Jones (2021) analyzed the role of imagery in pop music, demonstrating how visual language enhances the listener's emotional experience. Additionally, Lee (2022) focused on the cultural implications of metaphors in K-pop lyrics, revealing how they reflect societal values and norms. However, a notable gap in the literature pertains to the analysis of specific recurring symbols within individual songs. While previous research has provided valuable insights into general patterns and themes, there remains a lack of focused studies on how specific metaphors, such as the "car" in Wendy's *"His Car Isn't Yours,"* function as central narrative devices. The study draws on Charles W. Kreidler's theory of semantics, which emphasizes the distinction between denotative and connotative meanings. Kreidler's framework is particularly well-suited for analysing song lyrics, as it provides a structured approach to understanding how language operates across different levels of meaning. By applying this theory, the study aims to uncover how Wendy's use of symbolic language in *"His Car Isn't Yours"* creates a rich tapestry of emotional and cultural connotations.

This study seeks to address this gap by applying a robust semantic framework to explore the dual meanings of the "car" metaphor, examining its role in articulating emotional and relational complexities. The study draws on Charles W. Kreidler's theory of semantics, which emphasizes the distinction between denotative and connotative meanings. Kreidler's framework is particularly well-suited for analysing song lyrics, as it provides a structured approach to understanding how language operates across different levels of meaning. By applying this theory, the study aims to uncover how Wendy's use of symbolic language in *"His Car Isn't Yours"* creates a rich tapestry of emotional and cultural connotations.

For example, the "car" metaphor in Wendy's lyrics, while ostensibly denoting a physical object, acquires a deeper connotative significance within the song's narrative. This duality of meaning reflects Kreidler's assertion that language often functions simultaneously on multiple levels, enabling artists to convey complex ideas and emotions through seemingly simple words. By analysing the lyrics through this theoretical lens, the study seeks to illuminate how symbols and metaphors in song lyrics operate as vehicles for artistic and emotional expression.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the recurring metaphor of the "car" in Wendy's *"His Car Isn't Yours,"* which has not been extensively explored in previous semantic research. By examining how this metaphor functions within the lyrical narrative, the study aims to provide new insights into the interplay between language, emotion, and cultural context in contemporary music. The research has two primary objectives: to analyse the denotative and connotative meanings of specific metaphors in Wendy's lyrics, with a particular focus on the "car" symbol, and to explore how semantic elements in the lyrics contribute to the portrayal of emotional and relational dynamics. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, the study seeks to uncover the multilayered meanings embedded within the lyrics, offering a deeper understanding of how songwriters use language to convey complex emotional narratives.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on semantics in song lyrics by focusing on a specific metaphor within a contemporary song. By analysing Wendy's *"His Car Isn't Yours"* through the lens of semantic theory, the research highlights the intricate relationship between language, emotion, and culture in modern music. The findings are expected to enrich our understanding of how song lyrics function as a medium for artistic and emotional expression, underscoring their enduring significance as a form of cultural and linguistic art.

METHOD

The methodology employed in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach, which focuses on analysing the song lyrics of Wendy Red Velvet's *"His Car Isn't Yours"*. This approach is suitable for exploring the layered meanings embedded in the text, particularly the interplay between denotative and connotative meanings. As noted by Bogdan & Biklen (1992), qualitative research is descriptive by nature and prioritizes the understanding of human experiences through textual and contextual analysis rather than numerical data. This method enables an in-depth exploration of how the lyrics convey complex emotions and narratives, which aligns with the study's objectives to uncover deeper meanings in artistic expression.

The data collection process focuses on extracting specific words, phrases, and lines from the song, which serve as the primary data source. These elements are analyzed within their linguistic and contextual frameworks to uncover nuanced meanings. The use of thematic analysis allows the study to identify key themes and compare the denotative (literal) meanings of the text with its connotative (symbolic and emotional) interpretations. This methodology builds on existing literature that highlights the significance of qualitative approaches in analyzing artistic works, particularly song lyrics (Sari et al., 2020). Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how language is used to evoke emotions and construct narratives in music.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Wendy's song "His Car Isn't Yours" highlights five metaphorical expressions and emotional complexities conveyed through the lyrics. Using Charles W. Kreidler's semantic theory, the study explores how the denotative and connotative meanings in the song's metaphors contribute to its emotional depth and narrative impact.

The First Data

"His car isn't yours"

The phrase *"His car isn't yours"* serves as a powerful metaphor for emotional separation and the acceptance of a breakup. From a denotative perspective, the "car" refers to a physical object a vehicle that belongs to someone else. However, the connotative meaning emerges when the "car" becomes a symbol of emotional detachment and relational boundaries. This dual meaning highlights the narrator's realization that the relationship is no longer theirs to hold onto. The metaphor encapsulates the finality of the breakup, emphasizing a sense of closure and emotional distance. By transforming a mundane object into a profound symbol, the lyric conveys the narrator's journey of letting go, reflecting assertion that language can operate on both literal and symbolic levels simultaneously.

The Second Data

"It's not you anymore in my driveway"

The phrase *"It's not you anymore in my driveway"* transforms a physical location (the driveway) into an emotional space. Denotatively, the driveway is simply a part of a house where vehicles are parked. Connotatively, the driveway becomes a symbolic representation of the narrator's personal space and emotional domain. The absence of "you" in the driveway signifies the loss of a once-intimate connection, highlighting the shift in relational dynamics. The driveway, once a place of shared moments, now stands as a reminder of emotional distance. This metaphor resonates deeply, as it captures the way physical spaces can hold emotional weight, turning ordinary settings into significant markers of memory and change.

The Third Data

"He's pulling up, oh my God, I see the headlights"

The lyric *"He's pulling up, oh my God, I see the headlights"* uses the metaphor of headlights to symbolize anticipation and potential disappointment. From a denotative standpoint, headlights are simply the lights of an approaching vehicle. Connotatively, the headlights evoke feelings of suspense and emotional uncertainty. The narrator's reaction to the headlights reflects their inner conflict hopes for reconciliation clashing with fears of rejection. This interplay of literal and implied meanings underscores how seemingly simple imagery, like headlights, can be infused with emotional complexity. The lyric aligns with principle that words and phrases can simultaneously carry practical and symbolic meanings, enabling listeners to engage with the narrative on multiple levels.

The Fourth Data

"It's not you anymore in my driveway"

The repetition of the phrase *"It's not you anymore in my driveway"* reinforces its emotional significance. As noted earlier, the driveway operates as a dual symbol: denotatively, it is a location tied to the home. connotatively, it becomes a space imbued with personal meaning. According to this repetition intensifies the emotional resonance, emphasizing the narrator's process of grappling with loss. The driveway transforms from a neutral space into a poignant metaphor for absence and the passage of time. By revisiting this line, the songwriter deepens its connotative impact, reflecting the narrator's struggle to reconcile their current reality with the memories of the past.

The Fifth Data

"I just wanna have a good night"

The repeated line *"I just wanna have a good night"* represents an internal struggle between wanting to enjoy the present moment and holding onto lingering emotions from the past. Denotatively, the lyric expresses a desire for a pleasant evening, free from complications. However, as Kreidler's theory explains, the connotative meaning reveals the narrator's attempt to mask deeper emotional conflicts. The phrase carries an undertone of escapism, suggesting that the desire for a "good night" is not just about physical enjoyment but also an effort to move forward emotionally. The repetition of this line underscores the narrator's inner turmoil, highlighting the tension between the need for closure and the difficulty of fully letting go.

The study concludes that Wendy's lyrics use metaphorical language and emotional imagery to capture the complexities of moving on from a past relationship. These metaphors and symbols contribute to the song's emotional depth, allowing listeners to connect with the narrator's experience. Additionally, the findings show that contemporary songwriting often uses everyday objects and situations to explore deep emotional themes. By highlighting the interplay between denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) meanings, this research adds to the understanding of how music lyrics convey emotional narratives. Future studies could expand on this by comparing these techniques across different genres or artists, or by examining how cultural contexts shape the interpretation of metaphors in music.

CONCLUSION

The study of Wendy's song *"His Car Isn't Yours"* demonstrates the intricate interplay between denotative and connotative meanings in contemporary songwriting, as analysed through Charles W. Kreidler's semantic framework. This research concludes that the song's lyrical construction effectively transforms ordinary objects and scenarios into powerful symbols of emotional detachment, longing, and personal growth. Specifically, the metaphor of the "car" exemplifies the duality of meaning, transitioning from a literal object to a profound emblem of relational boundaries and emotional separation.

By applying Kreidler's theory, the analysis reveals how Wendy's use of metaphorical language and contextual repetition deepens the emotional resonance of her lyrics, creating a narrative that connects with listeners on multiple cognitive and emotional levels. The findings emphasize the potential of semantic analysis to uncover the layered complexities in song lyrics, showcasing how modern artists employ language to articulate universal human experiences.

Furthermore, this study establishes that everyday objects in songwriting such as cars, driveways, or headlights can carry rich symbolic weight when framed within personal or cultural contexts. Wendy's ability to blend these elements into a cohesive emotional narrative underscores the evolving role of lyrics as both artistic and communicative tools.

This research not only contributes to the understanding of linguistic creativity in music but also highlights the enduring significance of metaphor and symbol as vehicles for emotional expression in popular culture. Future research is encouraged to explore similar techniques across genres and cultural contexts, to further investigate how semantic nuances contribute to the universal relatability of music lyrics.

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