

**LOVE AND LOSS LANGUAGE: A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE 1975'S
"ABOUT YOU"**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the denotative and connotative meanings found in the song "About You" by The 1975 using a semantic approach. The purpose of this research is to explain how linguistic expressions in the song lyrics construct the intertwined themes of love and loss. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, with the song lyrics serving as the primary data source. The analysis is conducted through three stages: identifying linguistic units containing semantic meaning, classifying these units into denotative and connotative meanings, and interpreting how these meanings contribute to the thematic construction of love and loss. The findings reveal that denotative meaning dominates the song by presenting a clear narrative of memory, reflection, and emotional questioning. Literal expressions enable listeners to understand the storyline of a past romantic relationship without relying heavily on figurative language. Meanwhile, connotative meaning appears selectively in certain expressions to convey deeper emotional attachment, imagined commitment, and emotional vulnerability. These connotative elements play a significant role in strengthening the representation of lingering love and unresolved loss. Overall, the song "About You" portrays the experience of a person who is unable to move on from a past relationship, where love persists through memory and imagination while loss is expressed through emotional distance and longing. This study demonstrates that semantic analysis is an effective approach for understanding how song lyrics convey complex emotional experiences through both literal and associative meanings.

Keywords: Semantic analysis; denotative meaning; connotative meaning; song lyrics; love and loss

ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti makna denotatif dan konotatif yang terdapat dalam lagu "About You" karya The 1975 menggunakan pendekatan semantik. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan bagaimana ekspresi linguistik dalam lirik lagu tersebut membangun tema cinta dan kehilangan yang saling terkait. Studi ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, dengan lirik lagu sebagai sumber data utama. Analisis dilakukan melalui tiga tahap: mengidentifikasi unit linguistik yang mengandung makna semantik, mengklasifikasikan unit-unit ini ke dalam makna denotatif dan konotatif, dan menafsirkan bagaimana makna-makna ini berkontribusi pada konstruksi tematik cinta dan kehilangan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa makna denotatif mendominasi dalam membangun narasi lagu tentang ingatan, refleksi, dan pertanyaan emosional, sementara makna konotatif secara selektif memperkuat keterikatan emosional, keintiman yang dibayangkan, dan kerentanan. Interaksi

antara kedua jenis makna ini secara efektif mewakili tema cinta abadi dan kehilangan yang belum terselesaikan yang saling terkait. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menunjukkan bahwa analisis semantik memberikan pendekatan yang efektif untuk memahami bagaimana lirik lagu kontemporer mengkomunikasikan pengalaman emosional yang kompleks melalui makna literal dan asosiatif.

Kata kunci: Analisis semantik; makna denotatif; makna konotatif; lirik lagu; cinta dan kehilangan

A. Introduction

Language plays a fundamental role in human life, not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for expressing thoughts, emotions, and personal experiences. According to Saeed (2015), language conveys meaning through linguistic expressions that are interpreted within particular contexts, making meaning an essential aspect of human communication. Through language, individuals are able to articulate feelings, recall memories, and construct meaning from everyday interactions. Therefore, understanding meaning is one of the central concerns in semantic studies. Kreidler (1998) explains that semantics focuses on how linguistic expressions communicate meaning and how speakers and listeners interpret those meanings in different contexts. Language functions as a system of symbols used by humans to convey meaning that reflects both cognitive

and emotional aspects (Chaer, 1990). In artistic forms such as music, language is often used more expressively, allowing emotional experiences to be conveyed in a reflective and personal manner. Song lyrics are not merely aesthetic arrangements of words but function as a form of written discourse that conveys meaning and emotional expression. Lyrics often represent personal experiences, emotional states, and inner reflections of the songwriter through language choices. Song lyrics serve as a medium for expressing emotional experiences and personal narratives through linguistic expression (Fauziyah et al., 2024). Because of this function, song lyrics can be examined as linguistic texts that contain meaningful patterns worthy of academic analysis.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of meaning in language. Hurford et al. (2007) further explain that semantics

is concerned with how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning and how those meanings are interpreted by language users in different contexts. According to Lyons (1977), semantics examines how linguistic expressions convey meaning and how those meanings are interpreted by language users in different contexts. Meaning in semantics is examined at various linguistic levels, including words, phrases, and sentences. Semantics examines how meaning is structured and interpreted within language use (Chaer, 1990). In addition, meaning is not always fixed or purely literal, as interpretation may vary depending on context and speaker intention (Yule, 2010). Therefore, semantic analysis allows researchers to understand how linguistic expressions convey meaning beyond surface structure. In the semantic analysis of song lyrics, meaning is often conveyed not only through literal expressions but also through implied and emotional associations. Palmer (1981) argues that literal meaning serves as the foundation for semantic. Denotative meaning refers to the literal or dictionary meaning of a word, while connotative meaning involves

additional associations influenced by emotion, culture, or personal experience (Leech, 1981). Connotative meaning allows songwriters to express feelings indirectly, enabling listeners to interpret lyrics based on their own emotional understanding. Emotional depth in song lyrics is frequently constructed through such implicit meanings rather than explicit statements (Fanani & Malikha, 2025).

Themes of love and loss frequently appear in song lyrics because they reflect fundamental human experiences. Love in song lyrics is often represented through emotional attachment, imagination, and memory, as these elements allow songwriters to express intimacy and personal connection (Fauziyah et al., 2024). Loss, on the other hand, is commonly portrayed through emotional absence, longing, and the fading of shared memories, which emphasize emotional separation and unresolved feelings (Jakautama & Bustam, 2022). These two themes are closely interconnected, as expressions of love in lyrics often coexist with the possibility of loss. Their frequent use in popular music demonstrates how song lyrics function

as a space for articulating complex emotional experiences.

Fanani and Malikha (2025) explain that emotional themes in song lyrics are predominantly conveyed through connotative meanings, associative imagery, and affective expressions, allowing listeners to perceive emotional depth beyond literal interpretation. Similarly, Ngailo et al. (2022) found that figurative language particularly metaphor, hyperbole, and personification plays a crucial role in intensifying emotions such as heartbreak, longing, and vulnerability. Research by Putra et al. (2024) further supports this view, demonstrating that themes of love, memory, and loss are often articulated through metaphorical expressions that symbolize emotional emptiness, remembrance, and separation.

Within this context, The 1975 is an indie rock band based in Manchester, widely recognized for its introspective, poetic, and emotionally expressive lyrics. Their song "About You", taken from the album *Being Funny in a Foreign Language*, exemplifies the band's exploration of themes related to past relationships, longing, nostalgia, and emotional ambiguity. Since their debut, The 1975

has been recognized for combining indie rock with introspective lyricism, often exploring themes of identity, relationships, nostalgia, and emotional vulnerability throughout their music (Petridis, 2022). Ngailo et al. (2022) explain that contemporary songwriters often employ introspective language to convey emotional narratives. The song "About You" reflects this tendency through its focus on memory, emotional attachment, and lingering feelings toward a past relationship. The song's fragmented narrative voice, melancholic tone, and reliance on evocative imagery make it a compelling subject for semantic analysis. Similar to many emotionally driven songs, "About You" relies on both denotative and connotative expressions to articulate the lingering presence of a past relationship and the emotional impact it leaves behind.

Fauziyah et al. (2024) examined semantic and figurative meanings in song lyrics by highlighting how metaphor and connotative expressions are used to convey emotional experiences. Similarly, Kayla and Simatupang (2025) analyzed song lyrics by focusing on the role of figurative language and emotional expression in constructing

meaning. Fanani and Malikha (2025) further emphasized that connotative meaning plays a crucial role in expressing emotional vulnerability in popular music. However, these studies primarily focus on different artists and musical texts. To date, limited attention has been given to “About You” by The 1975, particularly in examining how denotative and connotative meanings interact to construct the intertwined themes of love and loss within a single song. This gap highlights the need for a focused semantic analysis of this song.

From the statements above, the researcher argues that song lyrics serve not only as artistic expressions but also as meaningful linguistic texts that reflect emotional experiences through language. Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that the interpretation of love and loss in song lyrics requires attention to both denotative and connotative meanings. Therefore, this study focuses on a semantic analysis of the song “About You” by The 1975 to examine how literal and associative meanings are employed to express love and loss. This research applies a qualitative descriptive method to identify and analyze denotative and connotative

meanings within the lyrics, aiming to reveal how language constructs emotional meaning in contemporary song lyrics.

B. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the meanings contained in the song lyrics. Qualitative research is appropriate for studies that aim to interpret meaning rather than measure numerical data. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena through detailed textual analysis and interpretation. This approach allows the researcher to explore how meaning is constructed in song lyrics. The data source of this study is the song “About You” by The 1975, taken from the album *Being Funny in a Foreign Language*. Song lyrics are considered suitable data for semantic analysis because they contain linguistic expressions that represent emotional and experiential meaning. Griffie (1992) explains that song lyrics represent authentic language because they combine linguistic forms with emotional expression, making them appropriate materials for linguistic and semantic

analysis. Laskowski (1995) argues that song lyrics provide meaningful linguistic input because they combine language with emotional and cultural elements, enabling listeners to construct meaning beyond individual lexical items. Murphey (1992) argues that song lyrics provide authentic linguistic data because they naturally combine language, emotion, and cultural experience, making them valuable materials for language research. Fauziyah et al. (2024) explain that song lyrics function as expressive texts that reflect emotional experiences through language. The primary data consist of words, phrases, and clauses found in the lyrics of "About You". Mawaddah (2023) states that linguistic units such as words and phrases are essential elements in identifying meaning in song lyrics. Similarly, Sholihah and Pratiwi (2018) emphasize that identifying words, phrases, and clauses is an important step in revealing semantic meaning within song lyrics. Therefore, the researcher focuses on these linguistic units to examine meaning systematically. The data collection technique used in this study is documentation. The researcher collected the lyrics from an

official and reliable source and then carefully read the lyrics to identify meaningful expressions. According to Sugiyono (2016), documentation is an effective technique for collecting textual data in qualitative research, particularly when analyzing written or recorded texts. Ary et al. (2010) also explain that document analysis enables researchers to obtain rich textual data without influencing the natural context of the research object.

The data analysis procedure follows three stages. The first stage is identifying linguistic units that potentially contain semantic meaning. Sholihah and Pratiwi (2018) explain that identifying meaningful linguistic units is a crucial initial step in semantic analysis. In this stage, the researcher examines each line of the lyrics to locate words or phrases related to emotional expression. The second stage is classifying the identified linguistic units into denotative and connotative meanings. Chaer (1990) defines denotative meaning as the literal meaning of a word, while connotative meaning refers to additional meaning influenced by emotional or contextual associations. Denotative and connotative meanings are central concepts in semantic

studies, as meaning in language involves both literal interpretation and associative meaning shaped by context (Cruse, 2011). Saeed (2015) further explains that distinguishing literal meaning from associative meaning is essential for understanding how language conveys emotional and contextual messages. This classification enables the researcher to distinguish between literal meaning and implied emotional meaning in the lyrics. The third stage is interpreting how denotative and connotative meanings contribute to the construction of love and loss themes in the song. Fanani and Malikha (2025) argue that thematic meaning in song lyrics emerges through the interaction between literal expressions and emotional associations. Through this interpretative stage, the researcher explains how the meanings identified in the lyrics represent experiences of love and loss.

To ensure the validity of the findings, the researcher applies theoretical triangulation by comparing the analysis with established semantic theories. According to Denzin (2012), theoretical triangulation strengthens qualitative research by supporting

interpretation with relevant theoretical frameworks. Patton (1999) similarly argues that triangulation increases the credibility of qualitative findings by allowing researchers to interpret data from multiple theoretical perspectives. This step helps ensure that the interpretation of meaning is consistent with linguistic theory.

C. Findings

This section presents the findings of the semantic analysis of "About You" by The 1975. The analysis examines the lyrics sequentially by identifying linguistically significant units, explaining their denotative meanings, and interpreting connotative meanings where applicable in relation to the themes of love and loss. Before proceeding to the analysis, the complete lyrics of the song "About You" are presented as the primary reference in this study. The following are the lyrics of "About You" by The 1975:

Lyris of "About You" by The 1975

I know a place
It's somewhere I go when I need to
remember your face
We get married in our heads
Something to do while we try to recall how
we met

Do you think I have forgotten?
Do you think I have forgotten?
Do you think I have forgotten about you?

You and I (don't let go), we're alive (don't let go)
With nothing to do, I could lay and just look in your eyes
Wait (don't let go), and pretend (don't let go)
Hold on, and hope that we'll find our way back in the end (in the end)

Do you think I have forgotten?
Do you think I have forgotten?
Do you think I have forgotten about you?
Do you think I have forgotten?
Do you think I have forgotten?
Do you think I have forgotten about you?

And there was something 'bout you that now I can't remember
It's the same damn thing that made my heart surrender
And I miss you on a train, I miss you in the morning
I never know what to think about
I think about you (don't let go)
About you (don't let go)

Do you think I have forgotten about you?
(Don't let go)
About you
About you
Do you think I have forgotten about you?
(Don't let go)

Excerpt 1

The opening line, "I know a place," denotatively refers to a location

that is familiar to the speaker. At the literal level, this line suggests that the speaker has a specific place in mind, indicating personal familiarity and repeated experience. When followed by the line "It's somewhere I go when I need to remember your face," the denotative meaning becomes clearer: the speaker goes to this place with the intention of recalling the image of another person. Literally, this action implies a conscious effort to remember someone who is no longer physically present. However, the phrase "a place" also carries a significant connotative meaning. Rather than referring solely to a physical location, it suggests an internal emotional or psychological space where memories are stored. This interpretation indicates that the act of remembering does not necessarily involve physical movement but instead reflects an inward emotional process. The speaker's return to this "place" symbolizes a mental retreat into memory, where emotional attachment continues to exist despite physical separation. Connotatively, the need to "remember your face" implies that the memory of the loved person is at risk of fading, which introduces a sense of

emotional vulnerability. The speaker's deliberate effort to remember suggests an ongoing struggle against forgetting, highlighting the persistence of emotional attachment. This emotional persistence reflects the theme of love, as the speaker continues to maintain a connection through memory, even in the absence of direct interaction. At the same time, the act of remembering also implies loss. The fact that memory must be actively recalled suggests that the relationship no longer exists in the present. Thus, this opening lyric establishes both love and loss simultaneously: love is expressed through continued emotional attachment, while loss is implied through absence and reliance on memory. Through this combination of denotative clarity and connotative depth, the opening lines set the emotional tone of the song and introduce the central narrative of lingering affection and unresolved separation.

Excerpt 2

The lyric "We get married in our heads" denotatively describes an imagined act of marriage that occurs only in the minds of the speaker and

the person being addressed. Literally, this line indicates that no actual marriage takes place; instead, it exists purely as a thought or fantasy. At the denotative level, the lyric presents marriage as a mental activity rather than a real-life event, emphasizing that the commitment being described has no physical or legal realization. Connotatively, this imagined marriage represents emotional commitment and idealized intimacy. Marriage is culturally associated with long-term dedication, unity, and emotional security. By placing marriage "in our heads," the lyric suggests that the speaker experiences these feelings internally, even though they are not manifested in reality. This connotation reflects a deep emotional bond that remains meaningful to the speaker, despite the absence of an actual relationship. The use of imagination in this line also implies emotional limitation. The speaker's desire for commitment exists only as a fantasy, indicating that external circumstances prevent the relationship from progressing. This contrast between internal desire and external reality reinforces the theme of loss, as the emotional connection cannot be fulfilled in the real world. At the same

time, the continued presence of this imagined scenario demonstrates lingering love, showing that the speaker still emotionally invests in the relationship. Furthermore, the plural pronoun “we” suggests mutual involvement, even though the marriage exists only mentally. This linguistic choice reinforces the speaker’s emotional attachment and longing for shared intimacy. Through this combination of denotative meaning and connotative implication, the lyric illustrates how love persists through imagination while loss is experienced through the inability to transform emotional desire into reality.

Excerpt 3

The line “Something to do while we try to recall how we met” denotatively refers to an activity undertaken while attempting to remember the beginning of the relationship. At the literal level, this lyric suggests that the speaker and the other person are engaged in recalling the moment they first met, but the act of remembering appears unclear or incomplete. The phrase “something to do” indicates that recalling the past is not immediate or effortless, implying a passage of time that has affected

memory. From a connotative perspective, this line reflects the gradual fading of shared memories. The difficulty in recalling how the relationship began suggests emotional distance and temporal separation. Memories that were once vivid now require effort to retrieve, indicating that the relationship belongs to the past rather than the present. This fading memory reinforces the theme of loss, as it symbolizes how time erodes emotional clarity and shared experiences. At the same time, the act of attempting to remember together implies that emotional connection still exists. The use of the pronoun “we” connotes shared history and mutual experience, even though the relationship has changed. This suggests that love persists through memory, as the speaker continues to value the past connection despite its diminishing clarity. Moreover, the phrase “something to do” carries a subtle connotation of emotional avoidance. It implies that recalling memories serves as a distraction from the reality of separation. By focusing on the past, the speaker momentarily escapes the emotional discomfort of the present. This emotional tension between remembering and forgetting

highlights the coexistence of love and loss within the song. Through this line, the song emphasizes how memory functions both as a source of emotional connection and as a reminder of emotional separation. The denotative meaning establishes the narrative of recollection, while the connotative meaning deepens the emotional impact by illustrating how love endures even as memories fade.

Excerpt 4

The repeated question “Do you think I have forgotten about you?” denotatively functions as a direct inquiry from the speaker to the person being addressed. At the literal level, the speaker is asking whether the other person believes that they have forgotten them. This question appears simple in structure and meaning, focusing explicitly on memory and remembrance. However, connotatively, the repetition of this question reveals emotional insecurity and unresolved attachment. Rather than seeking factual confirmation, the speaker appears to be expressing inner doubt and emotional vulnerability. The repeated questioning suggests that the speaker is struggling with the fear of emotional

disconnection, both from the other person and from their own past feelings. This connotation shifts the meaning from a literal question to an emotional expression of anxiety and longing. The emphasis on “forgotten” highlights the central emotional conflict in the song. Forgetting, in this context, does not merely refer to memory loss but symbolizes emotional abandonment. The speaker’s concern indicates that remembering the other person is closely tied to maintaining emotional identity and connection. As long as the speaker remembers, the emotional bond remains intact. Furthermore, the repetitive structure of the question reinforces emotional fixation. By repeating the same line, the song mirrors the speaker’s cyclical thoughts, suggesting that the speaker is trapped in a loop of memory and uncertainty. This repetition intensifies the theme of loss, as it reflects an inability to move forward emotionally. Through both denotative clarity and connotative depth, this line demonstrates how love persists through constant remembrance, while loss is experienced through fear of emotional erasure. The repetition serves as a linguistic strategy that

emphasizes emotional instability and unresolved longing, reinforcing the song's portrayal of lingering attachment.

Excerpt 5

The lines "You and I, we're alive / With nothing to do, I could lay and just look in your eyes" denotatively describe two people who are alive and spending time together without any specific activity. At the literal level, these lines depict a moment of stillness and simplicity, where the speaker and the other person share time together without external obligations. The phrase "nothing to do" suggests a state of calm and absence of urgency, while "look in your eyes" refers to direct visual and emotional engagement. From a connotative perspective, these lines represent emotional intimacy and presence. The act of simply looking into someone's eyes suggests closeness, trust, and deep emotional connection. This form of interaction does not rely on actions or words but emphasizes shared existence and emotional understanding. Connotatively, being "alive" extends beyond physical existence and implies emotional vitality that arises from

being with the loved person. At the same time, the simplicity of this moment suggests idealization. The absence of conflict or complexity indicates that the speaker is recalling or imagining a perfect version of the relationship. This idealization implies that such moments may no longer exist in reality, reinforcing the theme of loss. The memory of quiet togetherness contrasts with the speaker's present emotional state, where such intimacy is absent. Additionally, the line "I could lay" implies potential rather than actuality. The use of modal expression suggests possibility instead of certainty, indicating that this scene may exist only in memory or imagination. This subtle linguistic choice strengthens the interpretation that the speaker is recalling past experiences rather than describing present reality. Through these lines, the song presents love as a form of emotional presence that does not require action, while loss is implied through the temporal distance between memory and present experience. The denotative meaning establishes a peaceful scene, while the connotative meaning reveals longing for emotional closeness that can no longer be fully realized.

Excerpt 6

The lines “Wait and pretend / Hold on and hope that we’ll find our way back in the end” denotatively describe actions of waiting, pretending, holding on, and hoping. At the literal level, these expressions indicate a passive state in which the speaker delays action while maintaining hope for reconciliation. The phrase “find our way back” suggests the possibility of returning to a previous state or relationship that once existed. Connotatively, these lines express emotional persistence and denial. The act of “pretending” implies that the speaker is consciously avoiding the reality of separation by maintaining an illusion of eventual reunion. This suggests emotional resistance to acceptance, where hope functions as a coping mechanism rather than a realistic expectation. The speaker’s emotional attachment prevents them from fully confronting the loss. The phrase “hold on” carries strong emotional weight. Connotatively, it suggests clinging to emotional memories and feelings that have not been resolved. Rather than moving forward, the speaker remains emotionally suspended between past and present. This emotional

suspension reinforces the theme of loss, as it reflects an inability to let go of what has already ended. Meanwhile, “hope that we’ll find our way back in the end” conveys longing for restoration. The idea of “finding a way back” implies that the relationship has been lost or disrupted. This reinforces the notion that love is no longer present in reality but survives in hope and imagination. The uncertainty implied by “hope” highlights emotional vulnerability and the lack of control over the outcome. Through these lines, love is portrayed as endurance—the willingness to wait and continue believing in emotional reconnection. Loss, however, is revealed through denial and uncertainty, as the speaker struggles to reconcile emotional attachment with separation. The denotative meaning establishes the narrative of waiting and hoping, while the connotative meaning deepens the emotional complexity by showing how hope can both sustain and trap the speaker emotionally.

Excerpt 7

The line “And there was something ’bout you that now I can’t remember” denotatively states that the

speaker is unable to recall a specific quality or detail about the person being addressed. At the literal level, this lyric indicates a loss of memory regarding a particular characteristic that once stood out. The phrase "something 'bout you" is intentionally vague, suggesting that the speaker cannot clearly identify what has been forgotten. Connotatively, this inability to remember signifies emotional fading and the passage of time. The forgotten "something" represents not just a specific trait but the emotional clarity that once defined the relationship. This fading memory reflects the gradual erosion of emotional connection, emphasizing the theme of loss. Forgetting becomes a symbol of emotional distance, where the intensity of past feelings no longer holds the same clarity. At the same time, the acknowledgment of forgetting implies awareness and emotional conflict. The speaker recognizes that something meaningful has been lost, which suggests lingering emotional attachment. Rather than complete detachment, the speaker is caught between remembering and forgetting, illustrating the internal struggle to preserve emotional significance while

facing inevitable change. Furthermore, the vagueness of the phrase enhances its emotional impact. By not specifying what is forgotten, the lyric allows the loss to feel more profound and universal. It suggests that what has been lost is not easily articulated, reinforcing the sense of emotional emptiness that accompanies fading memory. Through this line, loss is expressed through the deterioration of memory, while love persists in the speaker's awareness of that loss. The denotative meaning presents a simple statement of forgetting, while the connotative meaning reveals the emotional consequences of time and separation on personal attachment.

Excerpt 8

The line "It's the same damn thing that made my heart surrender" denotatively states that a particular quality or experience caused the speaker to emotionally give in. At the literal level, this lyric indicates that the "thing" previously mentioned had a significant emotional impact on the speaker, leading to a loss of emotional control or resistance. The phrase "heart surrender" denotes an emotional response in which the

speaker allows themselves to be emotionally overcome. Connotatively, “heart surrender” represents falling in love or becoming emotionally vulnerable. The heart is commonly associated with emotions and affection, while surrender implies giving up control. Together, these terms suggest a deep emotional commitment that left the speaker emotionally exposed. This connotation emphasizes the intensity of love experienced by the speaker, highlighting how deeply affected they were by the relationship. The inclusion of the word “damn” intensifies the emotional tone of the lyric. Connotatively, it reflects frustration, regret, or emotional overwhelm. This emotional intensity suggests that the speaker’s love was not only powerful but also emotionally challenging. The emotional surrender implied here contrasts sharply with the present state of emotional uncertainty, reinforcing the theme of loss. Additionally, the phrase “the same thing” connects the present inability to remember with the past emotional impact. This linguistic link suggests that even though memory is fading, the emotional effect of that forgotten quality remains. This highlights the

paradox of love and loss: emotions persist even when memories become unclear. Through this line, love is portrayed as emotional vulnerability and surrender, while loss is implied through regret and emotional aftermath. The denotative meaning explains emotional causation, while the connotative meaning deepens the emotional complexity by illustrating how love can leave lasting emotional traces even after separation.

Excerpt 9

The line “And I miss you on a train, I miss you in the morning” denotatively expresses the speaker’s feeling of missing someone during specific moments, namely while traveling on a train and in the morning. At the literal level, these lines indicate that the speaker experiences absence in ordinary situations that are part of daily life. The mention of specific times and places suggests that the feeling of missing someone is not limited to special moments but occurs repeatedly throughout the day. Connotatively, these everyday settings symbolize routine and continuity. A train often represents movement, transition, or journey, while the morning commonly signifies

beginnings and daily renewal. By associating missing someone with these moments, the lyric suggests that the sense of loss accompanies the speaker through ongoing life processes. The absence of the loved person is not momentary but persistent, affecting even the most ordinary aspects of life. The repetition of the phrase "I miss you" emphasizes emotional consistency and reinforces the speaker's emotional fixation. Connotatively, this repetition suggests that the speaker cannot escape feelings of longing, regardless of time or location. The loved person becomes mentally present even in their physical absence, highlighting how love continues to shape the speaker's emotional reality. Furthermore, the contrast between movement (on a train) and stillness (in the morning) broadens the emotional scope of the lyric. Whether the speaker is in motion or at rest, the feeling of loss remains constant. This reinforces the idea that the emotional impact of the relationship is deeply internalized and not dependent on external circumstances. Through this lyric, loss is portrayed as an emotional state embedded in everyday life, while love persists as an ongoing emotional

attachment. The denotative meaning presents simple expressions of missing someone, while the connotative meaning deepens the emotional resonance by illustrating how absence permeates routine existence.

Excerpt 10

The lines "I never know what to think about / I think about you" denotatively express the speaker's mental state. At the literal level, the speaker admits uncertainty about what occupies their thoughts, followed immediately by a clear statement that their thoughts are focused on the person being addressed. This juxtaposition creates a simple but effective narrative of mental confusion that resolves into a singular emotional focus. Connotatively, these lines reflect emotional dominance and fixation. The initial uncertainty suggests internal disarray and lack of direction, which is then resolved by the presence of the loved person in the speaker's thoughts. This implies that the emotional attachment is so strong that it overrides other concerns or considerations. The loved person becomes the central point of emotional orientation in the speaker's

mind. The contrast between confusion and clarity emphasizes the depth of emotional dependence. The speaker's inability to think about anything else suggests that love has become intertwined with their emotional identity. At the same time, this mental fixation also reinforces the theme of loss, as the focus on the absent person highlights the emotional void left behind by the relationship. Additionally, the simplicity of the language strengthens its emotional impact. The straightforward expression mirrors the speaker's emotional honesty, making the sentiment feel immediate and genuine. This linguistic simplicity allows the emotional meaning to emerge clearly without the need for elaborate figurative devices. Through these lines, love is portrayed as emotional centrality, where one person dominates the speaker's thoughts. Loss, however, is implied through the imbalance this fixation creates, as the speaker struggles to move beyond the past. The denotative meaning establishes the narrative of thought and focus, while the connotative meaning reveals emotional dependence and unresolved longing.

Excerpt 11

The repeated phrase "About you / About you" denotatively emphasizes the object of the speaker's thoughts and emotions. At the literal level, this repetition simply restates that the focus of the speaker's thinking is the person being addressed. There is no additional narrative information introduced; instead, the repetition functions as reinforcement. Connotatively, the repetition intensifies emotional fixation. By isolating and repeating the phrase, the lyric mirrors the speaker's mental state, in which thoughts continuously return to the same person. This cyclical repetition suggests emotional entrapment, where the speaker is unable to redirect their attention or move beyond the emotional connection. The absence of additional descriptive language further enhances the emotional effect. The minimalistic repetition reflects emotional exhaustion and surrender, as if the speaker no longer has the capacity to articulate complex feelings. This simplicity conveys emotional depth through restraint rather than elaboration. Moreover, the repeated phrase functions as a form of

emotional echo, reinforcing the persistence of love despite the ongoing experience of loss. The lack of resolution in the repetition suggests that the speaker remains emotionally suspended, unable to reach closure. Through this repetition, love is portrayed as emotional persistence, while loss is represented by emotional stagnation. The denotative meaning confirms emotional focus, while the connotative meaning deepens the portrayal of unresolved attachment and continuous longing.

Excerpt 12

The repeated line “Do you think I have forgotten about you?” denotatively functions as a direct question concerning memory and remembrance. Literally, the speaker asks whether the other person believes they have been forgotten. Connotatively, the repetition of this question reflects emotional insecurity and unresolved attachment. Rather than seeking an answer, the speaker expresses lingering doubt and fear of emotional disconnection. The continued repetition emphasizes fixation on the past relationship and highlights the difficulty of letting go. Through this line, love is shown

through persistent remembrance, while loss is conveyed through uncertainty and emotional vulnerability. The repetition reinforces the song’s central message of enduring attachment despite separation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that “About You” predominantly relies on denotative meaning to construct a coherent narrative centered on memory, reflection, and emotional questioning. Literal expressions enable the song to communicate its storyline clearly, allowing listeners to follow the speaker’s experience without heavy dependence on figurative language. Connotative meaning appears selectively in specific lines to intensify emotional attachment, imagined intimacy, and the sense of loss. This selective use of connotation shows that the emotional depth of the song does not emerge uniformly across all lyrics, but rather through particular expressions that carry strong emotional associations. As a result, the interaction between denotative clarity and limited connotative depth effectively conveys the intertwined themes of enduring love and unresolved loss.

Discussion

The distinction between denotative and connotative meaning in this study aligns with semantic theory, which views meaning as both literal and associative in nature (Cruse, 2011). The findings indicate that denotative meaning plays an essential role in establishing narrative clarity within the song. Most of the lyrics convey their literal meanings directly, enabling listeners to follow the progression of the speaker's emotional experience. For example, the lines "It's somewhere I go when I need to remember your face" literally describe the speaker returning to a familiar place to recall the image of a loved one, while "I miss you on a train, I miss you in the morning" explicitly expresses the speaker's feeling of missing someone in everyday situations. These literal expressions construct a coherent narrative of remembering, longing, and reflecting on a past relationship before deeper emotional interpretations emerge. This finding is consistent with Chaer (1990) explanation that denotative meaning functions as the primary layer of meaning, allowing readers or listeners to understand linguistic expressions in their most direct sense.

This result also supports the study conducted by Sholihah and Pratiwi (2018), who found that literal meaning serves as the primary semantic layer in song lyrics, enabling listeners to understand the narrative before interpreting deeper emotional meanings.

Similarly, Jakautama and Bustam (2022) state that denotative meaning functions as the foundational level of meaning that allows readers or listeners to grasp explicit information conveyed in a text. However, the findings also reveal that denotative meaning alone is insufficient to convey the emotional depth of the song. Fauziyah et al. (2024) argue that song lyrics often contain layered meanings in which emotional experiences are conveyed implicitly rather than directly. In line with this view, the present study shows that certain expressions in "About You" carry additional emotional significance beyond their literal meanings.

Connotative meaning emerges selectively in particular parts of the lyrics and plays a crucial role in expressing emotional attachment and vulnerability. For example, the line "We get married in our heads" connotes imagined commitment and

idealized intimacy, while “Do you think I have forgotten about you?” conveys emotional insecurity and unresolved attachment rather than a simple question about memory. In addition, “It’s the same damn thing that made my heart surrender” suggests emotional vulnerability and falling in love, and “I miss you on a train, I miss you in the morning” implies that loss is deeply felt in everyday life. These expressions show that the song’s emotional depth is built through selective connotative meaning rather than through every line of the lyrics. This interpretation is also supported by Evans and Green (2006), who argue that linguistic expressions frequently evoke conceptual and emotional associations beyond their literal meanings, allowing listeners to construct richer interpretations based on experience and context. Stockwell (2002) explains that readers and listeners often derive emotional meaning through cognitive interpretation, enabling literary and musical texts to communicate ideas that extend beyond their literal wording. Fanani and Malikha (2025) emphasize that connotative meaning is frequently used in popular music to express emotional sensitivity and

inner feelings that are difficult to state explicitly. Song lyrics often function similarly to poetic texts in conveying emotional meaning. This is evident in the song through expressions related to memory, imagined intimacy, and repetition, which subtly communicate feelings of love and unresolved attachment.

The theme of love in “About You” is primarily represented through emotional attachment and imagined closeness rather than direct declarations. Fauziyah et al. (2024) note that love in song lyrics is often conveyed through symbolic and associative language that reflects internal emotional states. The findings of this study support this view, as love in the song is expressed through memory, imagination, and emotional focus rather than through explicit romantic statements. Meanwhile, the theme of loss is conveyed through expressions of absence and emotional distance. Ngailo et al. (2022) explain that loss in song lyrics is frequently represented through references to longing, uncertainty, and the repetition of emotionally charged expressions. In “About You,” the repeated questioning and references to everyday situations indicate a sense of emotional absence

and lingering loss rather than a clearly stated separation.

Compared with previous semantic analyses of song lyrics, this study confirms that denotative meaning functions to establish narrative structure, while connotative meaning contributes emotional depth. Kayla and Simatupang (2025) highlight that figurative and connotative expressions often strengthen emotional meaning in song lyrics. The present study supports this claim by demonstrating how selective connotative meanings intensify the emotional impact of the song. A similar finding was reported by Pratiwi et al. (2020), who found that denotative and connotative meanings work together to construct emotional messages in song lyrics. Their study also shows that literal meaning provides the narrative foundation, while connotative meaning enriches the emotional interpretation, which is consistent with the findings of the present study. Similarly, Simpson (2004) explains that literary texts, including song lyrics, often create emotional effects through the interaction of linguistic choices and contextual interpretation. This perspective supports the present

finding that the emotional impact of "About You" develops through the combination of literal narrative and selective connotative expressions.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that the emotional meaning of "About You" emerges from the interaction between denotative and connotative meanings. Denotative meaning explains what happens in the song, while connotative meaning reveals how those experiences are emotionally perceived. This confirms that semantic analysis is an effective approach for understanding how language is used to express love and loss in contemporary song lyrics.

D. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the denotative and connotative meanings found in the song "About You" by The 1975 by applying a semantic approach. The primary objective was to explain how linguistic expressions in the lyrics construct the interconnected themes of love and loss. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, and the analysis was carried out through three stages: identifying linguistic units with potential semantic meaning, classifying these units into denotative

and connotative meanings, and interpreting how these meanings contribute to the overall thematic message of the song. The findings indicate that denotative meaning plays a dominant role in presenting the narrative structure of the song. Literal expressions related to remembering, questioning, and reflecting on a past relationship enable listeners to follow the storyline clearly. Through denotative meaning, the song portrays everyday experiences and simple emotional states that form the foundation of the lyrical narrative. This dominance of literal meaning demonstrates that emotional expression in song lyrics does not always depend on complex figurative language. Nevertheless, connotative meaning appears selectively and functions as a crucial element in deepening emotional interpretation. Certain expressions, such as imagined marriage and emotional surrender, carry connotative meanings that represent emotional commitment, vulnerability, and idealized intimacy. These connotative elements reveal the speaker's inability to fully let go of the past and highlight the emotional persistence of love despite the absence of an actual

relationship. In this way, connotative meaning enhances the emotional depth of the song without overwhelming the literal narrative.

Overall, "About You" can be interpreted as telling the story of a person who continues to be emotionally attached to a former partner after a romantic relationship has ended. Love is depicted as an enduring emotional bond maintained through memory and imagination, while loss is conveyed through emotional distance, fading recollection, and repeated questioning. The interaction between denotative and connotative meanings illustrates how love and loss are experienced simultaneously, reflecting the complexity of human emotional experience. This study demonstrates that semantic analysis is an effective approach for uncovering how language in song lyrics conveys emotional meaning. By examining both denotative and connotative meanings, researchers can gain deeper insight into how songs express personal experiences and emotional states. Future studies may expand this research by analyzing other songs by The 1975 or comparing similar themes across

different artists to further explore the role of semantics in popular music. This study may also contribute to English language teaching, particularly in teaching semantics. Teachers may use song lyrics as authentic learning materials to help students distinguish denotative and connotative meanings while improving their vocabulary and interpretation skills.

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