

## “A Semantics Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meaning in the Song Lyric ‘You’ll Be in My Heart’ by Phil Collins”

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**Abstract.** *This study analyzes the denotative and connotative meanings found in the song lyric “You’ll Be in My Heart” by Phil Collins, featured in the Disney movie Tarzan. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a semantic approach based on the theory of Geoffrey Leech, the data were collected through documentation of words, phrases, and sentences in the lyric. The findings show 20 selected data, with 14 indicating denotative meaning and 19 indicating connotative meaning, revealing that many expressions contain both simultaneously. Literal expressions such as “take my hand” and “stop your crying” represent observable actions, while symbolic expressions such as “you’ll be in my heart” and “bond between us” convey emotional attachment, protection, and unconditional love. The study concludes that song lyrics function as literary texts rich in semantic layers, where simple language conveys deep emotional and social messages through the interaction of denotative and connotative meanings.*

**Keywords:** *denotative meaning; connotative meaning; song lyrics; semantic analysis; Emotional Bonding.*

**Abstrak.** *Penelitian ini menganalisis makna denotatif dan konotatif yang terdapat dalam lirik lagu “You’ll Be in My Heart” oleh Phil Collins, yang ditampilkan dalam film Disney Tarzan. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan pendekatan semantik berdasarkan teori Geoffrey Leech, data dikumpulkan melalui dokumentasi kata, frasa, dan kalimat dalam lirik lagu. Temuan menunjukkan 20 data terpilih, dengan 14 menunjukkan makna denotatif dan 19 menunjukkan makna konotatif, mengungkapkan bahwa banyak ungkapan mengandung keduanya secara bersamaan. Ungkapan literal seperti “take my hand” dan “stop your crying” mewakili tindakan yang dapat diamati, sementara ungkapan simbolik seperti “you’ll be in my heart” dan “bond between us” menyampaikan keterikatan emosional, perlindungan, dan cinta tanpa syarat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa lirik lagu berfungsi sebagai teks sastra yang kaya lapisan semantik, di mana bahasa sederhana menyampaikan pesan emosional dan sosial yang mendalam melalui interaksi makna denotatif dan konotatif.*

**Kata kunci:** *makna denotatif; makna konotatif; lirik lagu; analisis semantik; keterikatan emosional.*

## INTRODUCTION

In linguistic studies, semantics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of meaning in language. It examines how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning in communication. Semantics is defined as the systematic study of meaning and how

language structures express meaning through linguistic forms (Kreidler, 1997). Meaning in language is not only limited to dictionary definitions but also involves how language is interpreted within context.

One important concept in semantics is the distinction between denotative and connotative meanings. Denotative meaning refers to the literal or conceptual meaning of a word, which is objective and directly related to its dictionary definition. In contrast, connotative meaning refers to additional meanings that arise from emotional, cultural, or contextual associations. According to Leech (1981), conceptual (denotative) and associative (connotative) meanings often coexist in language use, especially in literary texts such as poetry and song lyrics.

Semantics also explains that meaning in language is closely related to context and usage in communication (Lyons, 1995). In addition, word meaning is systematically structured in language and can be analyzed based on its lexical and conceptual relations (Hurford et al., 2007). Denotative meaning is considered the basic meaning that is objective and factual, while connotative meaning reflects additional emotional or evaluative meaning (Chaer, 2009).

Song lyrics are considered a form of literary expression that combines language, emotion, and imagination. Lyrics are not only used for entertainment but also function as a medium to express feelings, experiences, and messages indirectly. Through figurative language and symbolic expressions, songwriters can convey deeper meanings beyond literal interpretation (Setiani, 2020). Therefore, song lyrics are suitable objects for semantic analysis because they contain both literal and figurative meanings.

One song that contains rich semantic expressions is *“You’ll Be in My Heart”* by Phil Collins, which was released as part of the soundtrack of the Disney animated movie *Tarzan* (1999). The song conveys themes of love, protection, reassurance, and emotional bonding. Some expressions in the lyrics have literal meanings, while others carry deeper emotional meanings that symbolize unconditional love and lifelong connection.

Previous studies have analyzed denotative and connotative meanings in various song lyrics. Lestari and Nitisari (2022) analyzed Eminem’s *Mockingbird* and found that the lyrics contain both literal and emotional meanings related to family relationships. Prasasti (2023) examined Pamungkas’ *To The Bone* and found that connotative meanings express romantic love in a symbolic way. Hidayah and Bustam (2023) also studied NIKI’s

*La La Lost You*, showing that denotative descriptions can represent emotional experiences such as longing and heartbreak.

However, most previous studies focus on romantic relationships and heartbreak themes. There are still limited studies that explore song lyrics expressing unconditional love, protection, and emotional bonding from a parental perspective, as found in “*You’ll Be in My Heart*.” Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the denotative and connotative meanings in the song using Leech’s semantic theory.

This research is expected to contribute to semantic studies by showing how language in song lyrics can carry both literal and symbolic meanings. In addition, it highlights that popular music is not only a form of entertainment but also a meaningful linguistic object that reflects human emotions and relationships.

## **METHODS**

### **Subject of the Research**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a semantic approach to analyze the meanings found in the song lyric “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” by Phil Collins. This method is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting language in the form of words, phrases, and sentences rather than using numerical data.

The data are analyzed descriptively to identify and interpret the denotative (literal) and connotative (associative) meanings in the lyric. Each linguistic unit is examined to understand how diction and figurative expressions contribute to the overall message of the song.

The analysis is guided by the theory of meaning proposed by Geoffrey Leech, which helps distinguish between literal and associative meanings and explains how both work together to convey messages of love, protection, reassurance, and emotional bonding.

### **Instruments and Interview Questions**

The main instrument of this research is the researcher herself as the primary analyzer of the data. In qualitative semantic research, the researcher plays a central role in interpreting, identifying, and classifying meanings in the text (Kreidler, 1997). The researcher reads the song lyric carefully, identifies linguistic units such as words, phrases,

and sentences, and categorizes them into denotative and connotative meanings based on Leech’s theory.

In addition, a documentation sheet is used as a supporting instrument to record and classify the data from the lyric of “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” by Phil Collins. The sheet is used to organize the data into categories such as lyric excerpt, denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and interpretation.

Although this study is based on document analysis, guiding questions are used to maintain consistency in the analysis process. These questions help direct the interpretation of meanings in the lyrics, as follows:

1. What is the denotative meaning of the selected words, phrases, or sentences in the lyric?
2. Does the lyric contain connotative meanings such as emotional or symbolic expressions?
3. What ideas or feelings are implied beyond the literal meaning?
4. How does connotative meaning contribute to the overall message of the song?
5. What main themes are reflected through denotative and connotative meanings?
6. How do both types of meaning interact in conveying the message of the lyric?

These instruments and guiding questions ensure that the analysis is conducted systematically and consistently based on semantic theory.

### **Data Collection**

The data in this research are collected through a documentation technique. The researcher uses the official lyric of “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” by Phil Collins as the primary data source.

The steps of data collection include: (1) reading the lyric repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the text, (2) identifying words, phrases, and sentences that contain denotative and connotative meanings, and (3) recording the identified data into a documentation sheet for further analysis based on semantic theory as explained by Charles W. Kreidler and Geoffrey Leech.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To understand how denotative and connotative meanings are used in the lyric “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” by Phil Collins, each selected word and phrase was classified based on the type of meaning it conveys. This classification refers to the theory of meaning proposed by Geoffrey Leech, which distinguishes between conceptual (denotative) meaning and associative (connotative) meaning.

**Table 1. Classification of Denotative and Connotative Meaning in the Lyrics**

No	Original Lyric Line	Word/Phrase	Denotative	Connotative
1	Come stop your crying	stop your crying	✓	✓
2	Just take my hand	take my hand	✓	✓
3	Hold it tight	hold it tight	✓	✓
4	I will protect you	I will protect you	✓	✓
5	I will be here, don’t you cry	I will be here	✓	✓
6	My arms will hold you	my arms will hold you	✓	✓
7	Keep you safe and warm	keep you safe and warm	✓	✓
8	This bond between us can’t be broken	bond between us		✓
9	This bond between us can’t be broken	can’t be broken		✓
10	You’ll be in my heart	you’ll be in my heart		✓
11	From this day on	from this day on	✓	✓
12	Now and forever more	now and forever more		✓
13	Don’t listen to them	don’t listen to them	✓	✓
14	We need each other	we need each other	✓	✓
15	Hold on	hold on	✓	✓
16	When destiny calls you	destiny calls you		✓
17	You must be strong	be strong	✓	✓
18	Just look over your shoulder	look over your shoulder	✓	✓
19	I’ll be with you	be with you	✓	✓
20	I’ll be there always	be there always	✓	✓

Frequency: Denotative = 14 | Connotative = 19

The classification shows that denotative meaning appears in 14 data, while connotative meaning appears in 19 data. Several expressions contain only denotative meaning, some contain only connotative meaning, and many contain both simultaneously.

This indicates that the lyric combines clear literal expressions with deeper emotional and symbolic meanings.

Denotative meanings are reflected in expressions that describe observable actions, such as “*stop your crying,*” “*take my hand,*” “*hold it tight,*” and “*look over your shoulder.*” These phrases can be understood directly because they refer to physical actions. In Leech’s terms, this is conceptual meaning based on factual understanding.

Connotative meanings appear in phrases such as “*you’ll be in my heart,*” “*bond between us,*” “*can’t be broken,*” and “*destiny calls you.*” These expressions are symbolic and emotional rather than literal, representing love, attachment, loyalty, and life’s journey. Importantly, many lyrics demonstrate the interaction between denotative and connotative meanings. For example, “*I will protect you*” literally refers to guarding someone from danger, while connotatively expressing parental care and unconditional love. Likewise, “*my arms will hold you, keep you safe and warm*” denotes hugging but symbolizes comfort, security, and reassurance.

The dominance of connotative meaning indicates that the songwriter uses simple language to convey deep emotional messages. Denotative meaning helps listeners grasp the surface actions, while connotative meaning intensifies the emotional impact. This interplay supports Leech’s view that conceptual and associative meanings often coexist in literary texts, including song lyrics.

Therefore, the lyric of “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” can be considered a meaningful object for semantic analysis, as it clearly demonstrates how literal and symbolic meanings work together to communicate messages of protection, reassurance, loyalty, and unconditional love.

### **The Role of Songs in Conveying Messages through Denotative and Connotative Meanings**

Songs function not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying messages through language. In semantic studies, song lyrics can be regarded as texts that contain multiple layers of meaning expressed through denotative and connotative meanings.

Denotative meaning enables listeners to understand the literal actions described in the lyrics, while connotative meaning provides emotional and symbolic depth. As

explained by Geoffrey Leech, conceptual meaning forms the basic understanding of a message, whereas associative meaning enriches it with emotional and contextual interpretation.

The findings of this study show that the lyric of “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” by Phil Collins demonstrates how these two types of meaning work together. Literal expressions such as “*take my hand*” and “*stop your crying*” provide clear surface meaning, while symbolic expressions such as “*you’ll be in my heart*” and “*bond between us*” convey deeper messages of love, protection, reassurance, and emotional attachment.

This combination indicates that songs are effective in delivering meaningful messages through simple language enriched with semantic layers, similar to literary texts such as poetry.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the semantic analysis of the lyric “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” by Phil Collins from Tarzan, it can be concluded that the song contains both denotative and connotative meanings that work together to convey meaningful messages. The findings show 14 instances of denotative meaning and 19 instances of connotative meaning, indicating the dominance of associative meaning in the lyric.

Denotative expressions provide clear and literal understanding of the actions described, while connotative expressions convey deeper emotional values such as protection, reassurance, loyalty, and unconditional love. The interaction of these meanings enables the song to communicate complex feelings through simple language.

This study supports Geoffrey Leech’s theory that conceptual and associative meanings often coexist in literary texts. It also demonstrates that song lyrics can function as meaningful linguistic texts, making them effective objects for semantic analysis due to their rich layers of meaning reflecting human emotions and relationships.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed. First, for students and researchers in linguistics, particularly semantics, song lyrics can serve as meaningful objects of analysis due to their rich denotative and connotative meanings reflecting human emotions and relationships.

Second, for English teachers and learners, songs such as “*You’ll Be in My Heart*” by Phil Collins can be used as instructional media to facilitate the understanding of semantic concepts in an engaging and contextual manner.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore other types of meaning, such as metaphorical, affective, or thematic meanings, across different songs, genres, or literary works to broaden the scope of semantic studies.

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