



## A Semantic Analysis of Referential and Contextual Meaning in the Song *Lose You to Love Me* by Selena Gomez

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to analyze referential and contextual meanings in the song Lose You to Love Me performed by Selena Gomez. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to examine how meaning is constructed within song lyrics. Referential meaning refers to the direct relationship between words and real-world entities, while contextual meaning is influenced by emotional, situational, and experiential factors. The data were collected from the official lyrics of the song and analyzed using semantic theories proposed by George Yule and Geoffrey Leech. The findings indicate that contextual meaning is more dominant than referential meaning. Many expressions in the lyrics are metaphorical and reflect emotional experiences such as heartbreak, self-reflection, and personal growth. The study concludes that understanding song lyrics requires contextual interpretation beyond literal meaning.*

**Keywords:** *semantics, referential meaning, contextual meaning, song lyrics, analysis*

**Abstrak.** *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna referensial dan kontekstual dalam lagu "Lose You to Love Me" yang dibawakan oleh Selena Gomez. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk mengkaji bagaimana makna dibangun dalam lirik lagu. Makna referensial mengacu pada hubungan langsung antara kata-kata dan entitas di dunia nyata, sedangkan makna kontekstual dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor emosional, situasional, dan pengalaman. Data dikumpulkan dari lirik resmi lagu tersebut dan dianalisis menggunakan teori semantik yang dikemukakan oleh George Yule dan Geoffrey Leech. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa makna kontekstual lebih dominan daripada makna referensial. Banyak ungkapan dalam lirik bersifat metaforis dan mencerminkan pengalaman emosional seperti patah hati, refleksi diri, dan pertumbuhan pribadi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa memahami lirik lagu memerlukan interpretasi kontekstual yang melampaui makna literal.*

**Kata kunci:** *semantik, makna referensial, makna kontekstual, lirik lagu, analisis*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Several previous studies have examined semantic meaning in song lyrics, particularly focusing on figurative language and contextual interpretation. These studies provide important insights into how meaning is constructed in lyrical texts, although they differ in focus and analytical approach.

A study conducted by Sari (2020) analyzed the types of meaning in English song lyrics using semantic theory. The findings revealed that contextual meaning, especially connotative meaning, plays a dominant role in understanding song lyrics. The study emphasized that literal meaning alone is often insufficient to interpret the intended message, as many expressions are influenced by emotional and situational contexts.

Similarly, a study by Putri (2021) investigated figurative language and its meanings in popular songs. The results showed that metaphors, symbols, and idiomatic

expressions are widely used to convey deeper emotional experiences. The researcher concluded that listeners need to consider context in order to fully understand the meaning behind the lyrics.

Another relevant study was conducted by Rahman (2022), who analyzed referential and non-referential meanings in song lyrics. The study found that referential meaning tends to appear in words with direct real-world references, while contextual meaning is more dominant in expressions related to feelings and personal experiences. This study supports the idea that song lyrics are rich in contextual meaning rather than purely literal interpretation.

Furthermore, a study by Lestari (2023) focused on semantic analysis in emotional songs. The findings indicated that affective meaning plays a significant role in expressing emotions such as sadness, love, and disappointment. The researcher highlighted that semantic analysis helps reveal the deeper psychological aspects behind the lyrics.

Although these studies provide valuable contributions, most of them focus on general semantic meaning or figurative language without specifically distinguishing between referential and contextual meanings in detail. In addition, there is still limited research analyzing the song *Lose You to Love Me* by Selena Gomez using this specific semantic approach.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing a more focused analysis of referential and contextual meanings in the song. By applying the semantic theories of George Yule and Geoffrey Leech, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed in song lyrics, particularly in expressing emotional experiences.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the referential and contextual meanings found in the song *Lose You to Love Me* performed by Selena Gomez. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on interpreting meaning rather than dealing with numerical data. The purpose of this method is to describe and explain how meaning is constructed within song lyrics in a systematic and detailed manner. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems.

In this context, the study focuses on how emotional and linguistic meanings are conveyed through song lyrics.

The data of this study consisted of words, phrases, and sentences taken from the lyrics of the song *Lose You to Love Me*. The data source was the official lyrics of the song, which were selected due to their rich use of figurative language and emotional expression. The data were collected through a documentation technique, in which the researcher carefully read and examined the lyrics several times to gain a comprehensive understanding. Relevant linguistic units that potentially contained referential and contextual meanings were then identified and selected for analysis.

The data analysis was conducted through several steps. First, the researcher identified significant words, phrases, and sentences within the lyrics. Second, the data were classified into referential meaning and contextual meaning based on semantic theory. Third, the meanings were interpreted using the theoretical frameworks proposed by George Yule and Geoffrey Leech. Referential meaning was analyzed based on its literal relationship with real-world objects, while contextual meaning was interpreted based on emotional, situational, and figurative aspects. Finally, conclusions were drawn to determine the dominant type of meaning in the song lyrics.

In this study, the researcher acted as the primary instrument, as is common in qualitative research. The researcher played a central role in collecting, classifying, and interpreting the data. Supporting tools such as note-taking and classification tables were also used to organize the data systematically and to ensure clarity in the analysis process.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the results of the analysis of the song *Lose You to Love Me* performed by Selena Gomez. The analysis focuses on identifying referential and contextual meanings based on the semantic framework used in this study.

The data consist of words, phrases, and sentences taken from the song lyrics. Each data item is classified into referential and contextual meaning, and then interpreted to reveal its underlying meaning. The findings are presented in the form of a table for clarity, followed by a detailed discussion to explain the results more comprehensively.

**Table 1.** Analysis of Referential and Contextual Meaning in the Song *Lose You to Love Me* by Selena Gomez

*A Semantic Analysis of Referential and Contextual Meaning  
in the Song Lose You to Love Me by Selena Gomez*

No	Lyrics	Referential Meaning	Contextual Meaning
1	You promised the world	The earth/world	Unrealistic or exaggerated promises
2	I put you first	To place someone first	Prioritizing someone over oneself
3	Set fires to my forest	Fire burning a forest	Emotional destruction
4	And you let it burn	Allow something to burn	Ignoring someone's pain
5	Sang off-key in my chorus	Singing out of tune	Disharmony in the relationship
6	'Cause it wasn't yours	Not belonging to you	Lack of emotional ownership
7	I saw the signs	Physical signs	Awareness of problems
8	Rose-colored glasses all distorted	Glasses with pink tint	Unrealistic perception of love
9	Set fire to my purpose	Burning something	Destroying life goals
10	And I let it burn	Letting something burn	Allowing emotional damage
11	You got off on the hurtin'	Feeling pleasure	Enjoying causing pain
12	When it wasn't yours	Not belonging to you	Not experiencing the pain
13	We'd always go into it blindly	Without seeing	Entering a relationship without awareness
14	I needed to lose you to find me	Losing someone	Self-discovery through loss
15	This dancing was killing me softly	Dancing	Toxic relationship harming gradually
16	I needed to hate you to love me	Hate	Emotional healing process
17	To love, love, yeah	Loving	Emphasis on emotional expression
18	I needed to lose you to love me	Losing someone	Learning self-love
19	I gave my all	Giving everything	Total emotional commitment
20	You tore me down and now it's showing	Destroying	Emotional damage becomes visible
21	In two months, you replaced us	Replacing something	Moving on quickly
22	Like it was easy	Something simple	Lack of emotional value
23	Made me think I deserved it	Thinking	Emotional manipulation
24	In the thick of healing	Thickness	Deep healing process
25	This dance, it was killing me softly	Dancing	Repeated emotional suffering
26	You promised the world and I fell for it	World	False expectations

No	Lyrics	Referential Meaning	Contextual Meaning
27	I put you first and you adored it	Putting first	Unbalanced relationship
28	Set fires to my forest	Fire & forest	Emotional destruction
29	And you let it burn	Burning	Neglect of feelings
30	Sang off-key in my chorus	Singing	Lack of harmony
31	I needed to hate you to love me	Hate	Self-healing process
32	I needed to lose you to love me	Losing	Personal transformation
33	And now the chapter is closed and done	Book chapter	End of a life phase
34	And now it's goodbye for us	Saying goodbye	Final separation

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the song *Lose You to Love Me* by Selena Gomez, it can be concluded that both referential and contextual meanings are present in the lyrics. However, contextual meaning is more dominant than referential meaning. Although some words such as *world*, *fire*, *forest*, and *chapter* have clear referential meanings, their interpretations in the song are largely influenced by emotional and situational contexts.

The findings reveal that most of the lyrics contain figurative language, including metaphorical expressions that represent emotional experiences such as heartbreak, disappointment, and self-healing. Expressions like “*set fires to my forest*” and “*I needed to lose you to love me*” cannot be understood literally, but require contextual interpretation to grasp their deeper meanings.

Furthermore, the analysis supports the semantic theories proposed by George Yule and Geoffrey Leech, which emphasize that meaning is not only derived from literal reference but also from context, emotion, and speaker intention. Therefore, understanding song lyrics requires more than just identifying the literal meaning of words; it also involves interpreting the emotional and situational background behind them.

In conclusion, the song demonstrates that contextual meaning plays a significant role in conveying messages in song lyrics. This study highlights the importance of semantic analysis in uncovering deeper meanings and provides insight into how language is used to express complex human emotions.

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