

Connotative Meanings of Emotion Words in Conan Gray's *Superache* Album

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Abstract

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This research aims to analyze the connotative meanings of emotion words in Conan Gray's *Superache* Album. This study focuses on identifying the types of connotative meanings associated with emotion words in the lyrics and examining how these contribute to the emotional messages conveyed in the songs. A qualitative approach, incorporating text analysis, is employed to analyse and interpret emotion words and their connotative meanings. The theories used in this study are the theory of Connotative Meaning by Leech (1981) and the Theory of Emotion Words by Kövecses (2000). The research revealed that Conan Gray's *Superache* album encompasses a diverse range of emotions, with connotative meanings in its song lyrics, primarily centered around themes such as love, heartbreak, and emotional vulnerability, which are predominantly associated with the emotion of sadness. The results of the findings indicate that 10 emotion words with connotative meanings were identified in the album's lyrics, with sadness being the most dominant emotion, appearing at a frequency of 6. Negative connotations occur most frequently, followed by positive connotations. This study highlights how Conan Gray effectively communicates deep emotional and social messages through emotionally charged lyrics.

Kata Kunci:

Conan Gray

Kata emosi

Lirik lagu

Makna konotatif

Superache

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna konotatif dari kata-kata emosi dalam album *Superache* milik Conan Gray. Penelitian ini berfokus dalam mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis makna konotatif yang terkait dengan kata-kata emosi dalam lirik dan meneliti bagaimana hal tersebut berkontribusi terhadap pesan emosional yang disampaikan dalam lagu. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis teks digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menginterpretasikan kata-kata emosi dan makna konotatifnya. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori Makna Konotatif oleh

Leech (1981) dan teori Kata Emosi oleh Kövecses (2000). Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa album *Superache* dari Conan Gray mengandung berbagai macam emosi, dengan makna konotatif dalam lirik lagunya, terutama berpusat pada tema-tema seperti cinta, patah hati, eksistensi, dan kerentanan emosional, yang sebagian besar terkait dengan emosi kesedihan. Hasil temuan menunjukkan bahwa 10 makna konotatif diidentifikasi dalam lirik album ini, dengan emosi kesedihan sebagai emosi yang paling dominan, muncul dalam 6 frekuensi. Konotasi negatif paling sering muncul, diikuti oleh konotasi positif. Penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana Conan Gray secara efektif mengkomunikasikan pesan-pesan emosional dan sosial yang mendalam melalui lirik-lirik yang penuh emosi.

INTRODUCTION

Semantics is the study of meaning, encompassing how words, phrases, and sentences are understood and interpreted. (Leech, 1981). It examines the connections between phrases and their implications, in addition to the literal or explicit meanings of language phrases. According to (Griffiths, 2014, p. 1) The study of word and phrase meanings apart from usage contexts is known as semantics, which aims to describe and understand the kind of information that people possess about the meaning of their language simply by speaking it.

Meaning is expressed by the speaker, and it may fail to be delivered to the other person if that person doesn't understand it. (Triana, 2023). However, according to Leech (1981), meaning in its general form is divided into seven types: conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. In this study, the types of meaning that are going to be discussed are connotative meaning, with denotative meaning described as a comparison to the connotative meaning.

According to Leech (1981), denotative meaning can be described as the literal meaning of a word or phrase. Yule (2010) describes the conceptual meaning as a meaning that dictionaries are designed to describe. In contrast, connotative meaning refers to the subjective, emotional, and culturally associated meaning. For example, the word "needle" might be associated with 'pain', or 'knitting', or 'hard

to find', and these associations may differ from one person to another. Barker (2001) explains that connotative meaning is the part of a word's meaning that conveys an implicit meaning. It can be positive (e.g., "home" implying warmth), negative (e.g., "childish" implying immaturity), or neutral (e.g., "book" with no strong emotion). Connotation refers to the emotional and imaginative associations surrounding a word, which can be interpreted as positive or negative depending on its context (Rao, 2017). For instance, the word "dog" may suggest companionship or loyalty. This aspect of meaning is subjective and has various interpretations among individuals based on their personal experiences and social influences. Connotative meaning is often found in literary works, especially in song lyrics, because music serves as an excellent medium for conveying emotion, thereby enhancing the interaction between words and emotions.

Words in literary works like music carry emotional meaning beyond neutral symbols, shaping perceptions and desires. According to Plutchik's (1980, as cited in Mulder, 2018), eight core emotions, such as anger, anticipation, joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, and disgust, constitute the foundation of human emotional experience. Words that have been paired with these emotions are referred to as emotion words. Kövecses, in his book *Metaphor and Emotions* (2000), describes emotion words as those directly or indirectly express emotions and feelings. In musical compositions, emotion words serve as a crucial means for songwriters to articulate their sentiments both denotatively and connotatively. Additionally, emotion words can combine to create secondary emotions; for example, "love" is a blend of "joy" and "trust."

In music, emotion words in song lyrics carry both denotative meanings and connotative meanings. Songs, composed of words arranged in verses and refrains, use connotative meaning to convey deeper emotions, cultural references, and personal resonance, enriching the listener's experience and interpretation (Logan et al., 2004). While song lyrics are a catch-all term for any text sung in any vocal music (Low, 2017). This study focuses on identifying the connotative meanings of emotion words in Conan Gray's *Superache* album, known for its emotionally powerful lyrics.

Based on previous studies, an article entitled *Connotative Meanings In 'The Internship' Movie's Dialogue: A Semantics Study* (Jayana, 2022) utilized a movie as the data source to analyze three types of connotative meaning, drawing on the theory proposed by Leech (1974). Another review is an article entitled *Connotative Meaning of Olivia Rodrigo's Selected Song Lyrics* by Syafitri (2023), this study purpose is similar to the Jayana's one, she determined the types and meanings of connotations in Olivia Rodrigo's song lyrics which claims that there are two types of connotative meaning: positive connotative (such as the phrase "snoring") and negative connotative (such as the word "growling") based on Chaer (2007) . An example from that study includes the lyric "everlasting pain, how can I escape?" where the word "escape" was interpreted denotatively as getting away from a place of confinement and connotatively as a desire to move on from emotional pain, such as a past relationship.

While Jayana and Syafitri's research provided insight into the general use of connotative meaning in song lyrics, it did not explore the emotional depth or nuanced personal experiences conveyed through these meanings in detail. This current study seeks to address that gap by using different theoretical frameworks and a more emotionally intricate object of analysis. Specifically, this research applies Kövecses' (2000) Emotion Theory to identify emotion words, and Leech's (1981) Theory of Meaning to analyze connotative meanings in the lyrics of Conan Gray's *Superache* album. Unlike previous studies, which have broadly categorized types of connotative meaning, this research centers specifically on how profound emotional experiences, such as heartbreak, abuse, friendship, and love, are intricately conveyed through connotative meaning. By doing so, it offers a deeper, more focused analysis of the emotional layers within lyrics, making a significant contribution to the field of meaning analysis in music.

Through this analysis, the researcher hopes to contribute to the field of language studies and provide insights into the rich and complex meanings within Conan Gray's song lyrics. To guide this inquiry, the research centers on two primary questions: (1) What kinds of emotion words are employed by Conan Gray in the *Superache* album? and (2) What types of connotative meaning are found in the

Superache album? By addressing these issues, the research aims to provide insight into how language influences emotional expression in modern songwriting, offering valuable information to linguists, music academics, and music enthusiasts alike.

METHOD

This study employed qualitative descriptive methods as its analytical approach. According to Creswell (2009), the qualitative descriptive method involves collecting and examining data related to a particular topic or phenomenon through detailed descriptions of the findings, thereby serving to deepen the understanding of the subject of the study. In this study, qualitative research is used, where data was analysed through interpretation and cannot be measured.

The data of this study is obtained from the *Superache* album by Conan Gray. Five songs were analysed in this album: “Movies”, “Disaster”, “Astronomy”, “Jigsaw”, and “Family Line”, with the lyrics accessed from Genius. This album is chosen as the object because it contains numerous implied meanings in its songs, conveying emotional depth that can be interpreted, such as heartbreak, abuse, friendship, and love. The data was collected through documentation techniques to identify the emotion words and the connotative meanings of the words by listening to and taking notes of the songs before classifying them. The lyrics were examined using the qualitative-descriptive method to answer the problems in the process of analyzing the data, by focusing on interpreting the implied meanings and emotional words mentioned in the lyrics based on the theory of meaning by Leech (1981) and Kövecses (2000). After analyzing the data is presented using the informal method, which involves analyzing and presenting the results through descriptions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results and discussions about the connotative meaning of Conan Gray’s songs from his *Superache* album. Five songs are analyzed by examining the types of emotion words and the types of their connotative meaning. The discussion focuses on the results of answering the research's primary purpose, which was to determine the types of emotion words and

various connotative meanings present in the emotion words of Conan Gray's album, *Superache*, song lyrics, as well as the meanings and messages the artist intended to convey. The findings also link to the theoretical frameworks of emotion words by Kövecses (2000) and connotative meaning by Leech (1981).

Movies

1. “I want a love like the movies”

The lyric “a love like the movies” conveys a strong emotion of longing, aligning with the primary emotion of sadness because it implies yearning, based on Kövecses' theory as this lyric embodies a metaphorical understanding of desire and absence. Denotatively, a *movie* is a series of moving pictures recorded with sound that tells a story and belongs to various genres (Oxford Dictionary). However, the line used the verb “want”, which reveals that the writer is yearning for something they do not currently have, an idealized version of love, just like what they see in the movies, romantic and perfect. Furthermore, based on Leech's (1981) connotative meaning theory, the line “I want a love like the movies” is associated with the negative connotation because the phrase “love like the movies” conveys sadness, yearning, and longing.

2. “We’re so sweet, so sweet”

According to the data, “sweet” as an emotional word refers to the feeling of love, which is a secondary emotion to joy, as it implies warmth and closeness between “we”, who are the writer and his crush, using the conceptual metaphor by Kövecses (2000). According to Oxford Dictionary, *sweet* is the feeling of pleasant and does not contain any harmful substances. However, the line “we’re so sweet” refers to the sense of romantic love the writer has for the person he is with. Nevertheless, the sweetness only happened in his head. The line refers to the songwriter's imagination, where he envisions himself happy and romantic with his partner, until their friends become jealous, as interpreted from the previous line, “all of our friends think of us jealously.” Connotatively, based on Leech's theory, the data is associated with a positive connotation because “sweet” suggests warmth, affection, or pleasantness.

Disaster

1. “I’m pedaling backwards by sayin’ that ‘I’m drunk’”

The line “pedaling backwards” in the data describes the emotion of shame as a secondary emotion, part of the primary emotion of fear. According to Kövecses’ theory, it refers to the physical action of undoing progress, like backpedaling on a bike. According to Oxford Dictionary, the phrase *pedaling backwards* refers to physically rotating the pedals of a bicycle in reverse. However, the lyric talks about the writer's situation where he said “I love you” but did not get an answer. He felt ashamed of his action and then retreated by ‘pedaling backwards’, suggesting retreat or backing away and blaming the alcohol for dodging the shame. This is supported by the phrase “I’m drunk,” which functions as a socially accepted reason for impulsive behaviour.

This defensive approach reveals an internal struggle and anxiety in the writer, which is compounded to create shame as a secondary emotion. The interpretation is supported by the following lyric: “I really shouldn't have called, I'm a little bit plastered” where the writer thought he should not have called his crush, and now, he is plastered by his own action and said that he was drunk as an excuse for his action. This supports the idea that the emotion described in the line is shame. Connotatively, in accordance with Leech's (1981) connotative meaning theory, the phrase “I’m pedaling backwards by saying' that ‘I’m drunk’” aligns with negative connotation because it evokes feelings of regret, fear, and anxiety.

2. “Let me just lose my mind”

The lyric “lose my mind” in the data reflects the emotion of frustration, a secondary emotion derived from the primary emotion of anger, as it implies the frustration the writer felt because the person he liked confused him with their attitude. Kövecses highlights how abstract emotional emotions are frequently conceived through more real, intense, or physical experiences. Denotatively, *lose my mind* means someone’s mind that is lost. However, connotatively, the lyric expresses the writer's frustration with his crush's behavior, which confuses him, such as calling him every night despite not having any feelings for him. This

interpretation supported by the previous line, the writer questioned “is it purely platonic to call me, like, every night?” shows the confusion of the writer towards the person who called him every night without having a single clue whether the person is into him or not and that leads to the feeling of frustration as a combination of anger and sadness. According to the connotative meaning theory proposed by Leech (1981), the phrase “lose my mind” in the data consists of irritation, disappointment, and frustration, which are associated with negative connotations.

Astronomy

1. “It's astronomy, we're two worlds apart”

According to the lyric, “two worlds apart” in the data refers to the emotion of acceptance, which is a secondary emotion of sadness, because according to Kövecses’ theory of emotions, it implies an emotional drift and disconnect in a friendship that once seemed close. The literal meaning of *worlds apart*, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is to be opposed entirely or different. However, the line implies a slow drift friendship, a natural separation that has only now been recognized by the writer in his own relationship. Using the metaphor of planets separating in space, the song highlights the gradual, uncontrollable nature of their emotional distance. Instead of blame, it conveys a quiet acceptance of lost closeness. Following on Leech's (1981) connotative meaning theory, the line “two worlds apart” in the data can be seen as having negative connotations because it evokes sadness, disconnection, and acceptance.

2. “You can’t force the stars to align, when they've already died”

The lyric “they've already died” in the data refers to the primary emotion of sadness and the secondary emotion of acceptance. The word “they” in the line refers to the stars. Culturally, aligned stars refer to a sign of destiny and harmony, aligning with Leech's (1981) explanation that connotative meaning can also depend on social culture. Nevertheless, here, the stars have already “died,” which changes things. *Died*, according to the Oxford Dictionary, denotes the cessation of existence. However, the word ‘dead’ in the line connotes emotional drift, loss, and the finality of the relationship's dissolution instead of the death of something. The lyric

essentially talks about a friendship that was once as bright as the stars, but will eventually fade away, despite being forced to align. The writer associated his drifted friendship to a star that no longer aligned, showing the pain of accepting that not all love is eternal. And they need to accept the fate. According to the connotative meaning theory proposed by Leech (1981), the phrase “they've already died” can be aligned with negative connotation, because it suggests loss, acceptance, and grief.

Jigsaw

1. “If changing my hair would make you care”

According to the data, the line “changing my hair” reflects a deep feeling of insecurity, a secondary emotion that emerges from the primary emotions of fear and sadness. Denotatively, *changing my hair* means altering the style, color, or overall appearance of one’s hair. However, the line implies someone who despairs of self-transformation in hopes of earning love or attention from the other person. The hypothetical nature of the line (“if... would...”) reveals emotional vulnerability. The phrase taps into Kövecses's concept of "folk theories" of emotion, where emotions are often conceptualized as affecting the body. It implies that the writer is considering altering their physical identity as an attempt to gain emotional attention or affection from his crush. Based on Leech’s (1981) theory of connotative meaning, the phrase “changing my hair” in the data has negative connotation because it implies fear, sadness, and insecurity, implying an emotionally painful attempt to gain approval by compromising one’s identity.

2. “And cut myself to slivers for you”

The phrase “cut myself” in this line reflects sadness as the primary emotion, and more specifically, frustration as a secondary emotion, implying that the writer would do anything, including cutting himself, just for the person he loved to love him back. According to Oxford Dictionary, the word *cut* refers as causing injury to one’s own body using a sharp object, resulting in an open wound. However, according to the lyric, the line connotes too much self-diminishment, highlighting the writer’s willingness to emotionally or symbolically kill himself to meet the

expectations or desires of another person, including cutting himself into slivers. This aligns with Kövecses' theory that emotions are often expressed through the body using metaphors. According to the connotative meaning theory proposed by Leech (1981), the phrase "cut myself" is associated with negative connotation, because the word evokes self-harm, emotional suffering, and grief.

Family Line

1. "How the holidays will always hurt"

The line "holidays will always hurt" suggests sadness as an emotion, followed by the feeling of loss the writer had, implying the sadness over the absence of a nurturing and loving family dynamic that is no longer there. Culturally, holidays symbolize warmth, joy, and happiness. Hurt, according to Oxford Dictionary, is to cause physical pain to somebody or yourself.

However, in this line, the writer's trauma transforms a culturally joyful period into a reminder of personal loss. Holidays are then described as triggering grief over the absence of a loving family. The word "always" is used to emphasize a wound that is repetitive and never fully heals. The lyric talks about the writer's trauma towards holiday, watching his own father with his other little girls makes the writer feel left out and abandoned, this interpretation is supported by the following lyric "I watch the fathers with their little girls, and wonder what I did to deserve this". Based on Leech's (1981) theory, it is seen that the line has a negative connotation because it is aligned with grief, loss, and sadness.

2. "God, i have my father's eyes"

According to the line, "I have my father's eyes" shows a sense of frustration as a secondary emotion, with fear as the primary emotion. Denotatively, *I have my father's eyes* means the writer physically has the eyeballs of his father. However, according to the line, the writer expressed his frustration of having the physical resemblance to his father, as it reminded him of inherited trauma he cannot escape. The invocation of "God" at the beginning of the line adds intensity, as if pleading or crying out in frustration, possibly to a higher power. This aligns with the theory of emotion words proposed by Kövecses (2000), abstract emotional states are

frequently conceived using more actual, emotional, or physical experiences. Family Line talks about the writer's abusive behaviour towards his family that has been passed from one generation to the next. He talks about having the same eyes as his father, which haunted him, reminding him of what his father had done. Connotatively, according to Leech (1981) theory of connotative meaning, the phrase "I have my father's eyes" implies negative connotation because the line evokes pain, fear, and trauma.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of emotion words and their connotative meanings in *Superache* album, this study concludes that Conan Gray's song lyrics consist of various kinds of primary and secondary emotion words that have connotative meaning in them, revealing the depth and complexity of emotional expression through his lyrics. The analysis reveals a clear predominance of negative connotative meanings throughout the album, with sadness emerging as the most dominant emotional theme. This recurring emotional tone is evident across multiple tracks, where lyrics frequently reflect experiences of emotional pain, loss, heartbreak, or loneliness. By consistently using language with negative connotations, the artist highlights their intention to portray a deeply personal story influenced by melancholic experiences. Consequently, it can be said that sadness not only functions as an ongoing subject matter but also as a common emotional thread that defines the album's entire tone and message.

These findings demonstrate how emotionally expressive language in music communicates deeper meanings beyond the literal. The connotative use of emotion words enhances the emotional depth of the lyrics and reflects the deeper nature of human feelings conveyed through popular music. While this study focused on a single album and artist, future research could explore connotative emotional language across multiple genres or compare different artists to identify broader patterns in emotional expression. This study concludes that emotional language in song lyrics is not only expressive but also rich in connotative meaning, offering a deeper understanding of the emotional expression in contemporary pop music.

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