

**SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE DENOTATIVE AND CONNOTATIVE
MEANING ON THE BEATLES' SONGS LYRICS**

THESIS

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for Bachelor Degree Requirement of English
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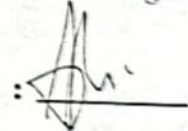
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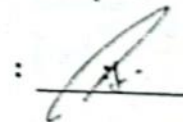
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ABSTRACT

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This study examines semiotics analysis on five Beatles songs, namely *Hey Jude*, *Here Comes The Sun*, *Come Together*, *Yesterday*, and *Let It Be* by using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory of signs. This study aims are to investigate the denotative and connotative meanings contained in the song lyrics and to examine myth in Barthes' theory by examining how the lyrics to The Beatles' song relate to the denotation and connotation meanings. This study is descriptive qualitative research method. The written text or transcript of the song lyrics served as the study data. There are 26 semiotic signs found in five songs of The Beatles which contents have denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and mythical meaning. These five songs of The Beatles can be used to represent characters, feelings, opinions, and experiences from The Beatles' personnel. There were 2 semiotic terms that were most manifested in the lyrics of the Beatles' Five songs namely: sincerity, and modesty or simplicity in life. The Myth's meaning emerges in the lyrics that hit much in reflecting on many aspects of human life.

Keywords: Semiotics, Denotative, Connotative, Myth, Roland Barthes, Lyrics, The Beatles

ABSTRAK

Ishar, Rizky. 2022. *Semiotic Analysis of The Denotative and Connotative Meaning on The Beatles' Songs Lyrics.* Padang: English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini mengkaji analisis semiotika pada lima lagu Beatles yaitu Hey Jude, Here Comes The Sun, Come Together, Yesterday, dan Let It Be dengan menggunakan teori semiotika tanda Roland Barthes. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui makna denotatif dan konotatif yang terkandung dalam lirik lagu dan mengkaji mitos dalam teori Barthes dengan mengkaji bagaimana lirik lagu The Beatles berhubungan dengan makna denotasi dan konotasi. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode penelitian. Teks tertulis atau transkrip lirik lagu dijadikan sebagai data penelitian. Terdapat 26 tanda semiotik yang terdapat dalam lima lagu The Beatles yang isinya memiliki makna denotatif, makna konotatif, dan makna mitos. Kelima lagu The Beatles ini dapat digunakan untuk merepresentasikan karakter, perasaan, opini, dan pengalaman dari personel The Beatles. Ada 2 istilah semiotik yang paling banyak dimanifestasikan dalam lirik lagu The Beatles' Five yaitu: ketulusan, dan kesopanan atau kesederhanaan dalam hidup. Makna Mitos muncul dalam lirik-lirik yang banyak menyentuh dalam merefleksikan berbagai aspek kehidupan manusia.

Kata Kunci: Semiotika, Denotatif, Konotatif, Mitos, Roland Barthes, Lirik, The Beatles

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In writing this research entitled “Semiotic Analysis of The Denotative and Connotative Meaning on the Beatles’ Songs Lyrics“ with the purpose as the partial fulfillment for bachelor degree requirement of English Department, there are many obstacles faced by the researcher, and without help from other people, it might be impossible for him to complete it. Thus, the researcher would like to express his thank to his beloved parents Harnaneli and Ismail for their pray, advise, courage, moral and material support from he was born until forever, may Allah SWT bless them.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research Problem

Language is one of the most important cultural elements among other elements. Through language, people can express and describe what they are doing, thinking, and what they are wanted. Through the language, people can communicate with another people. Linguistics is divided into three categories: language form, language meaning, and language in context. Semantics (the study of meaning) is key to the study of communication, and as communication becomes a more important aspect in social structure, the necessity to comprehend it grows. According to Yule (1985) Semantic analysis is focus on what the words conventionally mean, rather than on what an individual speaker might think they mean, or want them to mean, on a particular occasion. Communication may be formed if the speaker and the hearer understand each other. The basic goal is to express something, some relationships, or even some thoughts, which may be shown or named according to their significance. Meaning is vital and crucial in this circumstance. If the listener does not understand the meanings that the speaker is trying to communicate, the meaning will not be given easily.

The study of meanings is known as semantics. According to (Charles, 1998), the elements of meaning are reference and denotation, connotation, sense connections, lexical and grammatical meaning, morphemes, homonymy, polysemy, lexical ambiguity, sentence and meaning. Furthermore, (Chaer, 2002) distinguishes between lexical, grammatical, and contextual meaning, as well as referential and

non-referential meaning, denotative and connotative meaning, conceptual and associative meaning, and lexeme. Meaning is typically divided into two sub-areas: semantics and pragmatics. Semantics is concerned with literal, denotative meaning (looking only at the linguistic form), whereas pragmatics is concerned with how non-semantic context and semantics interact to generate the broader meaning communicative function of an utterance. According to Saeed (1997), semantics is a sub-discipline of linguistics that focuses on the study of meaning. Semantics has entailed the investigation of connotative sense and denotative reference, truth conditions, argument structure, thematic roles, discourse analysis, and the age of all the above in connection to syntax.

Semiotics is closely connected to the discipline of linguistics, which focuses more precisely on the structure and meaning of language. One of Barthes' key topics, as with many semioticians, was the need of not confusing culture with nature, or naturalizing social processes. Another important topic is the importance of utilizing words and other signs with prudence. People frequently use language to communicate their ideas and feelings, connect with one another, and exchange information. Because human existence is replete with natural and manufactured signals, these many forms of expressions necessitate the usage of several types of signs, each with a distinct meaning depending on the type of interpretation. Song exists to fulfill the human yearning for the beauty of sound, as a songwriter communicates his expression. A song is an ordered and cleanly arranged piece of art in the form of sound, where the sound is formed through a combination. According to Bernstein and Picker (in Hidayat, 2014: 248), song is composed

sounds that have aesthetic value and may be used to express thoughts and feelings from songwriters to listeners. One of the roles of music is to serve as a medium of expression for songwriters.

When listening to music, we connect our emotions, but some People just listen. They do not know the meaning and message of music, furthermore, they listen to the lyrics of many meanings that don't exist in language or dictionary with various expressions which mean to make the song more beautiful. Especially in understanding Known lyrics and meaning the message in the lyrics, we have to learn the meaning of the song lyrics. According to Leech (1974) There are 2 types of meaning in semantics, denotative meaning, and Connotative meaning. Denotation is the meaning of a word which is primarily refers to the real word. According to Widarso (in Nugroho, 2007:10) denotative is a meaning that refers to a word in the dictionary, for example, dog is a very common four-legged animal that is often kept by people as a pet or to guard or hunt. Meanwhile, According to Pateda (2001: 112) Connotative meaning is when a word suggests a set of associations or it is an imaginative or emotional suggestion connected with the words, while readers can relate to such associations. The fundamental, primary parts of meaning provided by the literal use of a word are covered by denotative or conceptual meaning (Yule 2010). One innovative method for conveying meaning through everyday words and expressions is connotation (Philip 2011). As a result, connotations are frequently characterized as "occasional" meanings (Bussmann 1996: 96). Connotation can have varied meanings for different people based on their own thoughts and perception.

Generally, music is made up of two components: the primary one being the sounds, and the secondary one being the words (Dallin 1994). Although they come in second, lyrics make a substantial contribution to the music itself. The information included in the music is thoroughly understood by the audience thanks to the lyrics, which also serve to clarify the song's meaning. Every piece of music has a message. The song's effectiveness and appeal to the listener are determined by its lyrics. Depending on how the lyrics were written, a song's message might be conveyed in several different ways (Bertoli-Dutra and Bissaco, 2006: 1053).

Each songwriter has his or her own reasons for including a message in a song that he or she writes. There are individuals that compose it simply for enjoyment, to fulfill the requirements of the music industry, or to provide information and thoughts on social issues that arise in a community or country. In essence, every human communication process always contains information that is significant to the community, such as popular music lyrics that follow cultural trends and lyrics that are responsible for chronicling the history of social evolution. The Beatles appeared to be a representation of the current generation. Many of The Beatles' albums are still beloved by music fans all around the world. Song lyrics, like language, may be used as a means of communication to reflect societal reality. Song lyrics may also be used to communicate moral lessons and provide support or incentive for a reality; therefore, song lyrics that have been developed and performed to the public have a significant deal of responsibility for changes in attitudes, morals, beliefs, and even certain biases Anderson (2005): 67. The Beatles' song is composed in such a way that it contains rhythm, melody, and harmony. This

is particularly true of sound that is created using audio production equipment. In addition to speaking in many languages, being able to express the authors' emotions, and reflecting cultures from around the world, music is a worldwide language. The Beatles' song lyrics, which convey Joy, Love, Peace, and Freedom, were also utilized as political anthems by young people in the Western world in the 1960s. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison are masters in compiling the history of the 1960s through the lyrics of The Beatles' songs. They wrote 45 protest songs against Western governments and peace songs as a kind of desire to oppose the Vietnam War and support anti-racism. (Cited from the internet: <http://ultimateclassicrock.com/ron-howard-beatles-documentary>).

This issue has been the subject of various studies, the first of which being "Analysis of The Symbols in Westlife's Song Lyrics" by Hanna Eka Rosita. The data from the song lyrics was taken from Westlife's selected songs *entitled Swear it Again, If I Let You Go, Flying Without Wings, I Have a Dream, My Love, Uptown Girl, and You Raise Me Up*, and the symbols were described in several categories such as Symbol of Color (12 items), Symbol of Thing (19 items), Symbol of Situation (18 items), Symbol of Sound (5 items), and Symbol of Imaginative (5 items) (7 items). These songs may be used to represent characters, sentiments, opinions, and experiences. Second, "Connotative Meaning in Ed Sheeran's Song Lyrics" by Wahyu Kusumaningrum 2020 that were examined for connotative significance. This study aims to identify what types of connotative meanings are found in Ed Sheeran's *Multiply and Divide* album, and describe how the connotative are conveyed in the lyric structure, which draws on Gill Philip's (2011) theory and

Terry Cox's theory of lyric structure (2000). Third, research by Fatkurrohman (2014) conducted a study named "The examination of denotative and connotative meaning in Creed's song lyrics." To support this analysis, several ideas supplied by Crystal and Akhmajian, Lyons, Goddard, Wittgenstein, Alfred Korzbsky, Hurford and Heasley, and others are employed in this study. Fourth a final project by Galih Purwanto, 2010; Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta; titled A Symbol Analysis on Punk Song Lyrics American Idiot (Green Day): God Save the Queen Sex Pistols. Fifth, a journal by Arifin and Linda Deviana, Malang, Jawa Timur, 2005, titled A Semiotic Analysis of Angel's Wings by Westlife in Coast-to-Coast Album.

As previously stated, the first research examines the symbols contained in the lyrics of the song, and the next two studies discussed only defined denotation and connotation, categorized it into different types, and indicated how it was used in a text in song lyrics. The next two study mentioned above might be used to highlight how to distinguish between words and phrases' connotative and denotative meanings, as well as to clear up any ambiguity that can make readers think a term has several alternative meanings. By comparing their meanings, it establishes a connection between a word and a phrase. In this study, the researchers combined the two ideas contained in the 5 previous studies, that are examining how symbols in song lyrics produce denotative and connotative meanings supported by Bathes theory, the researcher uses Barthes' theory to analyze some of popular songs by The Beatles.' Barthes' theory has a slight development from other semiotic theories, namely not only focusing on the meaning of denotation and connotation, but also

relating it to myth. Barthes' Semiotic Theory examined the process of interpreting signs and concentrated on how various cultures or communities understand them. Signs, according to Barthes, have a signifier, which is the physical form of the sign as we see it through our senses, and a signified, which is the meaning that is interpreted. In this context, a sign is anything that provides meaning, such as a written or spoken word, a sign, or a myth. Barthes sees Myth as the phenomenon of shifting connotative meaning into denotative meaning because it is influenced by beliefs in a society. The study of myth, as described by Barthes, is frequently undertaken within the discipline of semiotics, which may be defined as an analysis of the implicit signals present in the mental aspect of contact with nature or within a society. For that purpose, Semiotics analysis might be defined as the study of meanings existing in our everyday communication and signification systems. In Roland Barthes' semiology, the denotation is a system of signification (meaning) the first stage, while connotations are second-order, and myths that are final. Denotation uses the meaning of the sign as a definition literally real. Connotation leads to social conditions culture and personal associations. Furthermore, myths (concept) are developed by associating connotative meanings that are true in a community or society.

An example can be taken from the lyrics "*When I find myself in times of trouble, **Mother Mary** comes to me, speaking words of wisdom*" in the song "Let it be" by The Beatles, where in the sentences contains semiotic word song where the word "Mother marry" in first order denotation sign as "a first-century Jewish woman of Nazareth, the wife of Joseph, and the mother of Jesus." However, in

second order of signification that relates figures in Christianity, as the ultimate symbol of motherhood her clothing reflects her virtues such as her purity, modesty, faith, and love for her child. And finally, in the myth meaning (concept) judging from its connotative meaning, myth here based on the song can be interpreted or conceptualized as a spirit when experiencing a problem.

1.2 Identification of Research Problem

Based on the background of the problem above the study of signs and symbols is explored in the semiotic tradition as an important aspect of communication. Ordinary people may have difficulty understanding the lyrics of the song. The message in song lyrics, as a literary text, has a lot of interconnected meanings for the people who hear them. The study of semiotics seeks to comprehend human ability to create and comprehend signs and symbols, as well as the process of knowledge creation that this ability enables (Seobok, 2001). In order to communicate, objects must not only carry information, which is what meaning means, but also create an organized system of signals (Barthes, 1988:179 in Kurniawan, 2001: 53).

In addition, song may be used as a form of expression to communicate the author's emotions and feelings. This is possible because musical elements frequently express feelings. Connotation is one of the creative ways to communicate using common words and phrases. It indicates that there is always another way to utter a word to make the sentence's content more effectively communicated (Philip 2011).

1.3 Limitation and Scope Research Problem

The limitation of the problem in this study is only to focus on analyzing connotative and denotative meanings content by using Barthes' semiotic theory contained in the five lyrics of the Beatles song and relating it to myth.

1.4 Formulation of Research

The problem formulated is how connotative and denotative meanings appear in the lyrics of five Beatles songs using Roland Barthes' stages system of meaning, namely denotation, connotation, and myth.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What denotative meaning (linguistics level) delivered in the five the Beatles' song lyrics.
2. What connotative (myth level) in Barthes theory delivered in song lyrics

1.6 Purposes of Research

1. To find and describe denotative meanings in the Beatles' song's lyrics.
2. To describe and classify the connotative meanings in the song lyrics.

1.7 Significance of Research

The significance of the research is divided into two categories: theoretical benefit and practical benefit.

1.7.1 Theoretical

Semiotic realization was always found in song lyrics, which served to functionally explain the meaning contained in the song and could be extended with further lyrics. Through a semiotic message, the researcher wishes to communicate all types of objects around or the effects of the surrounding social context and expected to contribute to the improvement of linguistic knowledge in the semantic and semiotic studies, particularly connotative and denotative meanings.

1.7.2 Practical

This study will provide knowledge and information about the connotative and denotative meanings of the 5 lyrics of the Beatles song so that it is easy to understand a meaning in a sentence and this research can be used as a material for further research, especially in fields related to connotative and denotative meanings.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

- Denotative : The first order of signification, known as denotation, communicates a sign's literal meaning. Denotation is what recognizes, defines, and identifies a sign.
- Connotative : The second order of signification, Connotation meaning is a combination of denotation meaning and all the thoughts, emotions, and sensations that form when our senses interact with signs. Following the

cultural principles, there will be an interaction when the sign matches the reader's feelings or emotions.

- Myth : The connotations that have been formed for a long time and become the public's view are myths. Myth is a semiology system in the form of a system of signs that humans interpret.
- Semiotics : Semiotics is defined as a sign in a sentence, pictures, gestures, music sounds, objects, and general entertainment that generates information about the meaning of a song's lyrics.
- Song Lyrics : Lyrics are written as a form of interaction between the writer and the listeners.
- The Beatles : The Beatles were an English rock band that became arguably the most successful act of the 20th century.