

Semantic Analysis of the Expressions Interpretation of Bliss Throughout Romantic Context in Taylor Swift's Songs

Agus Syahid*, Alivia Oktaviona Wulandari, Ni Ketut Putri Nila Sudewi

Universitas Bumigora, Mataram, Indonesia

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*Corresponding author. E-mail: agussyahid@universitasbumigora.ac.id.

Abstract

Semantic analysis through the study of contextual meaning theory is a useful approach to examine the meaning of song lyrics in detail. This approach allows us to delve further into the layers of meaning implied behind the series of words contained in the lyrics to reveal aspects that may not be explicitly visible but are at the core of the communication between the songwriter and his audience. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of concepts such as happiness represented and communicated through poetic language in Taylor Swift's songs. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative method of relevant song lyrics and cognitive semantic studies used in analyzing data sourced from several Taylor Swift songs. The results of this study show that Taylor Swift uses conceptual metaphors and figurative meanings to describe happiness in love relationships. In the song "Lover," Taylor Swift uses metaphors of travel and freedom to express happiness in living their relationship. In "Call It What You Want," she uses light and endurance metaphors to convey the happiness gained from lasting love. In "Sweet Nothing," Swift uses the metaphor of physical manifestation to describe happiness in simple moments.

Keywords: Bliss; Contextual Meaning; Expressions; Semantic.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a complex and multifaceted concept studied extensively in linguistics (Muhid et al., 2023). According to Aziz et al. (2024, p. 96), language is a unique human heritage that plays a very important role in human life, such as thinking, exchanging ideas, and negotiating. This is also following Zulaikah et al. (2024, p. 312), Swarniti (2022), and Chaer (2009), who says that language is a sound symbol system, arbitrary, productive, and dynamic. Language is also seen as a means of communication that plays a significant role in human life (Elsawati et al., 2022). It is a system of symbols that allows us to convey meaning and express ourselves effectively. Soegiarto et al. (2024), notes that language is a unique human heritage that plays a very important role in human life, such as thinking, exchanging ideas, and negotiating. This definition underscores the importance of language in facilitating communication and interaction among humans. Language is a complex and multifaceted concept, with many definitions that reflect its intricate nature (Chomsky, 2006). One definition defines language as a set of sentences made up of a limited set of elements, emphasizing the structure and form of language.

According to Hao (2018), semantics as the study of linguistic meaning concerns the relationship between linguistic phenomena (words, phrases, texts) and the semantic concepts they encode. Semantic meaning cannot exist independently of the code representing it or the users interpreting it. Semantic analysis helps reveal how vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and context contribute to deriving meaning from a word, sentence, or text (Colston, 2015; Kroeger, 2019). Semantic analysis in song is related to the meaning or interpretation of the lyrics and music. It involves examining the meaning or significance of words, phrases, or sentences. This is closely tied to meaning analysis that understands the intended meaning or message conveyed, including emotional and cultural contexts. The semantic analysis identifies semantic units and analyzes their relationships to comprehend the overall meaning or message, considering cultural, historical, and social contexts, the intended audience, and the artist's intentions. Brown (2007) state that semantic meaning in lyrics interacts with musical elements like melody, harmony, and rhythm to shape listeners' understanding and emotional response, as melody can highlight or understate particular words, altering their semantic prominence.

In semantics, contextual meaning is studied. Contextual meaning is the meaning derived from the different relationships between a word and its original context (Agustiani, 2016; Depraetere, 2019). The context can be a situation, a circumstance, or the context in which the word is used (Osuchukwu, 2022). Contextual meaning requires an understanding of the context in which the word is used to understand its true meaning (Chen & Lee, 2021). Contextual meaning usually occurs when there is a sentence or utterance whose literal meaning differs from its contextual meaning. According to Saeed (2015) and Yalaha (2018), contextual meaning is "the groupment of relevant situational features with which it is related" or the meaning resulting from the relationship between the word and its context. Cruse (2004) also stated that contextual meaning is "the full set of normality relations which a lexical item contracts with all conceivable contexts" or the meaning resulting from the relationship between a word and its context. For example, in the sentence "I am surfing now", the lexical meaning of surfing is the sport of riding on top of the waves using a board, meanwhile surfing in this example means an activity of searching for information on the internet according to the context.

In contextual meaning analysis, contextual meaning in songs is very important to understand the meaning of words and sentences (Asmin, 2019; Rabi'ah, 2023). Contextual meaning in a song influences the interpretation of song lyrics by means of the meaning contained in it, such as feelings, ideas, and reality.

The research "The Semantics of Bliss: A Study of the Concept of Bliss in the Works of Smith (2020) conducted an in-depth analysis of the concept of "bliss" contained in the works of renowned English poet William Wordsworth from the Romanticism era. The research explores how Wordsworth conveys the semantic meaning of the abstract notion of "bliss" through his diction and lyrical writing style. Meanwhile, the research "The Interpretation of Bliss in the Context of Romanticism: A Study of the Works of John Keats" (2020) focuses on the interpretation of the concept of "bliss" in the context of the British Romanticism movement by analyzing the works of poet John Keats. The research investigates how Keats expresses and interprets the experience of "happiness" through his poetry, which is influenced by the spirit of Romanticism. This study has a different focus from previous studies. This study analyzes different research objects. The research focus of this study is the concept of "bliss" in the works of American singer Taylor Swift.

This research uses Taylor Swift's songs as the object of research because Taylor Swift has established herself as one of the leading songwriters of her generation over the past 15 years. Her extensive song discography provides a wealth of material for in-depth linguistic analysis. Many of her songs focus on expressing intense emotions, including romance, making them particularly suitable for examining how she semantically conveys the abstract notion of "happiness" in romantic narratives. Given these factors, Taylor Swift's song collection is an ideal body of work to analyze in depth how meaning is semantically derived from the romantic context around the concept of "happiness" through expert lyrics and musical storytelling.

So far, other researchers have carried out research related to the interpretation of expressions of happiness. Still, the study-related analysis of the expression's interpretation of bliss throughout the romantic context in three songs by Taylor Swift has never been studied. Therefore, this research is novel, namely analyzing the contextual

and semantic meanings in three songs by Taylor Swift: "Sweet Nothing," "Lover," and "Call It What You Want."

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. The data collection used data reduction based on Taylor Swift's songs that contain elements of romance. All songs that have been selected as research objects in Taylor Swift's official discography were identified and selected based on lyrics and context that explicitly tell the narrative of romance and romantic relationships. The list of songs with titles such as "Sweet Nothing," "lover," and "Call It What You Want" was found as the main data for semantic analysis. A semantic analysis of the song lyrics focused on the expression and interpretation of the concept of "bliss" in a romantic context. The data analysis included identification and categorization of words, phrases, or metaphors that refer to "bliss," analysis of denotative and connotative meanings, interpretation in the context of the romantic narrative of the song, as well as identification of language styles and stylistic elements used to convey the meaning of "bliss."

The data have been interpreted to conclude how Taylor Swift conveys and interprets the concept of "happiness" in the context of romance through her lyrics. The interpretation has been considering patterns, similarities, or differences in the expression of "happiness" throughout Taylor Swift's discography under study and is linked to relevant theories and previous research. Research results and findings are presented as narrative descriptions supported by song lyrics as data. Sample lyrics and their analysis were presented to illustrate the findings. The conclusions and implications of the research are discussed in the discussion section. With this method, it is hoped that an in-depth understanding of the interpretation and delivery of "happiness" in romantic narratives through Taylor Swift's song lyrics will be obtained.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

Contextual meaning is the meaning derived from the different relationships between a word and its original context. Taylor Swift's songs used in this research, such as "Sweet Nothing," "Lover," and "Call It What You Want," have various contextual meanings. The metaphor used in these lyrics also contains certain meanings that can be categorized. Some uses of metaphor and contextual meaning in Taylor Swift's works can be difficult to understand. There are 9 data consisting of song lyrics along with the analysis of contextual meaning and metaphors used. The results of analyzing the contextual and semantic meanings in the songs are described below.

3.2. Contextual Meaning in "Sweet Nothing"

Table 1. Contextual Meaning in "Sweet Nothing"

Lyric	Literal Meaning	Contextual Meaning	Metaphor
"You'll get physical"	<i>Seseorang akan bergerak dengan tubuhnya</i>	Facial expressions or gestures that depict happiness	2 of 3 lyrics
"Your fingerprints around my fingerprints"	<i>Cap jari-jarimu mengelilingi cap jari-jariku</i>	Closeness, intimacy, or togetherness between lovers	2 of 3 lyrics
"We're drunk on sweet nothing"	<i>Kita sedang mabuk karena kekosongan yang manis</i>	Happiness weakens control, as in drunkenness	Intoxication Metaphor

Table 1 shows that the lyrics of "We're drunk on sweet nothing" describe happiness that overflows and weakens control, just like in a drunken state, but in the context of simple moments with a lover. Taylor Swift uses the metaphor "Intoxication" to conceptualize happiness as overpowering drunkenness. This metaphor implies that happiness can be felt as something intense and intoxicating, even if it comes from simple things in relationships. The use of the word 'drunk' gives a powerful image of the intensity and loss of control experienced in moments of happiness with a lover.

In another lyric, "Your fingerprints around my fingerprints," this expression describes one person's finger marks surrounding another person's finger marks. However, in the context of the lyrics, this metaphorical expression has a connotative meaning, as physical and emotional closeness to a lover brings happiness. This meaning can only be understood in the context of the love relationship described in the lyrics. Swift uses the metaphor "Physical Manifestation" to conceptualize happiness as manifesting in physical contact and intimacy in a romantic relationship. This metaphor provides a rich and imaginative depiction of how physical and emotional closeness with a partner can bring happiness. Using the "fingerprints" metaphor creates a strong visual representation of intimacy and physical closeness in relationships.

"You'll get physical" in literal terms, 'physical' means something corporeal or physical. However, in the context of this lyric, 'physical' has a connotative meaning as a physical manifestation or expression of happiness, such as facial expressions or body movements that reflect happiness. This meaning can only be understood in the context of lyrics that describe happiness in a romantic relationship. Taylor Swift uses the metaphor "Physical Manifestation" to conceptualize happiness as something that can be manifested tangibly through physical responses. This metaphor emphasizes that happiness is not only emotional or mental but can also be expressed physically in togetherness with lovers. This provides a more concrete and imaginative picture of how happiness can be experienced and felt holistically, emotionally and physically.

3.3. Contextual Meaning in "Call It What You Want"

Table 2. Contextual Meaning in "Sweet Nothing"

Lyric	Literal Meaning	Contextual Meaning	Metaphor
"My baby climbed the sky to count the stars"	<i>Bayi memanjat langit untuk menghitung bintang-bintang</i>	Couples are willing to make great efforts in the face of challenges to achieve lasting love	Light and Endurance
"My waves meet your shore ever more"	<i>Ombak-ombak saya bertemu dengan Pantai lagi dan lagi</i>	The couple continues to unite and complement each other despite their differences	Light and Endurance Metaphor
"All the drama queens taking swings"	<i>Semua ratu drama memiliki sayap</i>	Drama-filled situations are faced together in the relationship.	Personification Metaphor

Table 2 shows that in the lyrics "My baby climbed the sky to count the stars," Swift uses two metaphors: "climbed the sky" and "count the stars." The metaphor "climbed the sky" suggests an extraordinary effort to achieve a goal. In the context of lyrics that describe a challenging love relationship, this metaphorical expression means that the couple is willing to make great efforts and endure challenges to achieve eternal and infinite love.

In another lyric, "My waves meet your shore evermore," the metaphor "waves meet shore" describes two different things meeting and merging. In the context of the lyrics, this expression means that both partners continue to unite and complement each other despite their differences. Swift uses this metaphor to conceptualize the love relationship as a meeting and union between two different individuals. This metaphor implies that even though couples have differences, they can still unite and complement each other. The word "ever more" suggests that this union is continuous and continues to happen despite the challenges in the relationship.

"All the drama queens taking swings" in this lyric, Swift uses the metaphor of "drama queens taking swings" to describe the drama-filled situations and attacks faced in relationships. This metaphor conceptualizes criticism and relationship conflict as attacks from "drama queens" or people who like to create drama. In the context of a challenging romantic relationship, this expression implies that there are situations full of conflict and criticism that

couples must face, both from within and outside the relationship. This metaphor gives a powerful image of how difficult it is to maintain a relationship amid various challenges and attacks.

3.4. Contextual Meaning of "Lover"

Table 3. Contextual Meaning in "Lover"

Lyric	Literal Meaning	Contextual Meaning	Metaphor
"We could leave the Christmas lights up 'til January"	<i>Kita bisa membiarkan lampu-lampu Natal tetap terpasang sampai bulan Januari</i>	The desire to prolong the moments of happiness in the relationship	Travel and freedom metaphor
"This is our place, we make the rules"	<i>Ini tempat kami, kami yang membuat peraturannya</i>	Freedom and autonomy to live the relationship as you wish	Freedom Metaphor
"I'm highly suspicious that everyone who sees you wants you"	<i>Saya sangat curiga bahwa semua orang yang melihat Anda ingin Anda</i>	Jealousy and fear of losing partner	Personification Metaphor

Table 3 shows that in the song "Lover," Taylor Swift uses metaphors of travel and freedom to express the happiness of being in a romantic relationship. One metaphor that stands out is 'leave the Christmas lights up 'til January,' which implies Swift's desire to prolong the moments of happiness and warmth in her relationship, just like the Christmas atmosphere. The 'Christmas lights' metaphor represents the happiness and warmth of love that Swift wants to continue to feel.

Swift also uses the metaphors 'our place' and 'make the rules' to depict the freedom and autonomy of living the relationship on one's own terms without being bound by external restrictions. These metaphors reflect the happiness felt in having the space and freedom to express love in one's own way.

In addition, Swift uses the metaphor 'suspicious...wants you' to convey a sense of jealousy and protectiveness towards her partner, which shows how precious the relationship is to her. This metaphor shows the intensity of emotions and attachment in a relationship that brings happiness. Based on the analysis, this research is in line with research conducted by Smith (2020) who stated that songs can express the concept of bliss or happiness. Through conceptual metaphors, figurative language, and poetic devices, happiness can be described.

4. CONCLUSION

The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Taylor Swift uses semantic analysis and contextual meaning to represent and communicate the concept of "bliss" or happiness in her romantic songs. The researchers analyzed the lyrics of three specific Taylor Swift songs - "Sweet Nothing," "Lover," and "Call It What You Want" to examine how Swift uses conceptual metaphors, figurative language, and poetic devices to express the meaning and experience of happiness in romantic relationships. The findings indicate that Swift utilizes various metaphorical frameworks to convey happiness. In the song "Lover," she uses metaphors of travel and freedom to express happiness in living their relationship. In "Call It What You Want", she uses light and endurance metaphors to convey the happiness gained from lasting love. In "Sweet Nothing," Swift uses the metaphor of physical manifestation to describe happiness in simple moments. Through these semantic and contextual analyses, the study reveals how Swift's songwriting skillfully layers meaning and taps into the emotional resonance of "bliss" or happiness within the romantic genre. The research demonstrates how semantic and contextual meaning analysis can provide deeper insights into the nuanced ways that popular music, specifically the lyrics of Taylor Swift, communicates complex emotional experiences and concepts like happiness, love, and romance results.

This research only focuses on the concept of happiness in three Taylor Swift songs: "Lover," "Call It What You Want," and "Sweet Nothing." However, further research can be carried out using the same approach,

namely, semantic analysis, which considers contextual meaning to represent and communicate concepts other than happiness, such as sadness, silence, and so on.

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