

## **DENOTATIVE AND CONNOTATIVE MEANING IN LYRIC “MOCKINGBIRD” SONG BY EMINEM**

**Indah Lestari<sup>a</sup>, Dwi Nitisari<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> Faculty of Letters and Culture, [Indahlestari004@gmail.com](mailto:Indahlestari004@gmail.com), Gunadarma University

<sup>b</sup> Faculty of Letters and Culture, [Dnitisari@gmail.com](mailto:Dnitisari@gmail.com), Gunadarma University

### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims at analyzing several words, phrases, and clauses in 'Mockingbird' song sung by Eminem (2004) which have denotative and connotative meaning and finding the relation between the meaning found to the context of the singer's real life. In analyzing the denotative and connotative meaning of the selected words, phrases, and clauses, this study uses Palmer's theory of denotative and connotative (1976) as a theoretical basis. The source of data was from "Mockingbird" song lyric by Eminem. This study uses descriptive qualitative as the design of study. After analyzing the data from the lyrics, this study found that (1) some lyrics contained with connotative and denotative meaning on referring a specific object or emotion. (2) Connotative meaning of these lyric have a relation with context family relationship in Eminem's real life

**Keywords:** Connotative, Denotative, Meaning, Lyrics.

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa sekumpulan kata, frasa, dan klausa dalam lagu 'Mockingbird' yang dinyanyikan oleh Eminem (2004) yang memiliki makna denotatif dan konotatif, serta menemukan hubungan antara makna lagu tersebut dengan konteks kehidupan nyata sang penyanyi. Dalam menganalisa makna denotatif dan konotatif pada pilihan kata, frasa, dan klausa, penelitian ini menggunakan teori Palmer mengenai denotasi dan konotasi (1976) sebagai teori dasar. Sumber data didapatkan dari lirik lagu 'Mockingbird' oleh Eminem. Penelitian ini menerapkan desain kualitatif deskriptif. Setelah menganalisa data, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa 1) beberapa lirik mengandung makna denotatif dan konotatif yang merujuk pada objek emosi; dan 2) makna konotatif dari lirik ini memiliki hubungan dengan konteks hubungan keluarga dalam kehidupan nyata Eminem.

**Kata Kunci :** Konotatif, Denotatif, Makna, Lirik.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Language has an important function in society since language is a way to interact one with the other person, especially in communication. Through language, speakers can identify themselves as well as they view their language as a symbol of their identity. And so it is with music especially music with a vocal where the speaker can send a message to another person with music.

Music is a form of language which is arranged in such a way with interpolate of various instruments to produce harmony for entertain the people. Music has many types and one of them is rap music. Rap is a vocal technique that is pronounced rapidly, while the singer is called rapper. Typically, rap is accompanied by DJ or band. Rap is part of African roots before music hip-hop. Many people consider rap music to be minority music because it is considered to have no artistic value. So do Indonesians. Rap music is not part of eastern culture for rap music comes from Africa. In Indonesia the development of rap music genre is not fast as the development of pop or dangdut music genre because of the background of Indonesian culture. Rap music is considered a music that originated in the west so it does not reflect eastern culture and is identical with bold diction. In facts, this kind of music has artistic value and it has existed since decades ago. Therefore, the researcher is interested in choosing this music genre to convey to Indonesia that rap music is a genre that

must be taken into account in the Indonesian music scene because in rap music there are obscure and implied messages that are rarely known by many people. Also the researcher assumes that by appointing this genre the misunderstanding as mentioned above can be cleared up.

Eminem is the stage name of a person whose real name is Marshall Bruce Mathers III, who was born in the United States on October 17, 1972. In 1996, Eminem chose to start a solo career to launch of his debut album entitled INFINITE and began to find his popularity to launch a next album, one of them is Encore in 2004. It is a fifth album studio by Eminem which achieved success by selling over 1.7 million in just two weeks after released. The album also reached number one in ten other countries and the album has sold 11 million copies worldwide and was certified quadruple platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on December 17, 2004. In this album features more comedic themes and lyric than Eminem's previous album. The album contains several lyric themes, most notably is Eminem's opposition to President of the United States Gorge W. Bush and parody toward Michael Jackson. Encore provoked some controversy over anti-Bush lyrics and lyrics that parodied and targeted Jackson, who was upset about Eminem's depiction of him in the video for "Just Lose It". Tough that some songs like "Mockingbird" and "Like Toy Soldier" were particularly highly praised and retrospectively have been noted as being some of Eminem's best songs.

In this research, researcher chooses the semantics approach to find out the denotative and connotative meaning of the lyrics Mockingbird song. In Semantics, every phenomenon that occurs in life can be learned as a form of communication that can be implemented in a work of art such as lyrics in a song. In this regard, through a semantic approach the researcher can identify the signs or meanings that are explicit and implied in a phenomenon that gives certain codes that can represent cultural, social, moral or other values. There are several important figures in the science of semantics. One of them is Frank Robert Palmer (1922-2019). Palmer was a British linguist who was instrumental in the development of the Department of Linguistic Science at the University of Reading. In Palmer's view (1976), denotative and connotative meaning could be discovered by relating the language composition in a sentence with an experience of the real world. It indicates that denotative meaning explicates a literal meaning of the word and it contains a revealed meaning of the sentence structure, whereas connotative meaning has concealed the meaning of the word. The researcher chooses Mockingbird lyrics because there are explicit meaning in this song about the relationship between parents and children that need to be explained and implemented for parents. The meaning implied in this song is a phenomenon that often occurs in the life of today's society so that researchers assume the meaning in the lyrics of this song need to be known.

Many studies that have discussed semantics include connotative and denotative. (1) Sari, A., & Kusumawardhani, P. (2016) with their study "Denotative and Connotative Meaning in One direction's Songs Lyric: A Semantic Perspective"; (2) Edwan Ali Firdaus (2013) also discusses about meaning in his thesis entitled "Textual Meaning in Song Lyrics". This research is aimed to find out the most frequent Topical Theme in the song lyrics.; (3) Fauziyah, N., & Ilmi, R. (2018) also discuss about denotation and connotation meaning in her journal entitled " Denotative and Connotative Analysis On Ellia Petite's Short Story " This study was conducted to analyze several words which have denotative and connotative meaning and find the relation of those words with the context of a love relationship in real life; and (4) Chandra Sekhar Rao (2017) in his research entitled "A Brief Study of Words used in Denotation and Connotation". This research aims how denotative and connotative meanings of words used in English.

The related research regarding this discussion contains the main theories of a related research and research as a supporting theory and some reliable sources that support the theory used in this research. The similarities and differences of this research and previous researches are that research Sari, A., & Kusumawardhani, P. chose a song by One Direction while in this research, and the researcher chooses a song by Eminem. Similarities between both are object of research and both of those use qualitative method. Then, the difference between Edwan research and this research is Edwan research aims to find out the most frequent tropical theme by using systematic functional grammar while in this research aims to find connotative and denotative by using semiotic approach. Meanwhile the similarity between both is a song lyrics as object. Then, the similarities between Nur N. & Nur R. is using Palmer's theory for analysis data instrument. The difference is the object where Nur N. & Nur R. using a short story for a data. Then, the difference between Chandra research and this research is data. Chandra research used daily English words while in this research the researcher uses a song lyrics. Meanwhile, similarity between Chandra research and this research is to discuss about connotative and denotative. Based on this explanation, this research is entitled as "The Analysis of Denotation and Connotation of Eminem's Song "Mockingbird" ".

The scope of the research is the denotation meaning and connotation meaning that contained in one of the Eminem's song entitled Mockingbird which is analyzed by using Frank Robert Palmer denotative and connotative theory. Based on the description above, the focus of the problem can be formulated as:

- 1) What is the denotative and connotative meaning contained in the lyrics of Eminem's song Mockingbird?
- 2) What is the context attached in the meaning contained in the lyrics of Eminem's song Mockingbird?

Based on the problem formulation, then the purpose of this research are

- 1) To describe the denotative and connotative meaning contained in the lyrics of Eminem's song Mockingbird.
- 2) To describe the context attached in the meaning contained in the lyrics of Eminem's song Mockingbird.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Meaning**

Based on Merriam Webster Dictionary (1989 p.629) 'meaning' can be interpreted as something useful to a desired end should appear in the singular or plural form. Based on Cambridge University Dictionary 'meaning' definition is the meaning of something is what it expresses or represents. Based on Collins Cobuild Dictionary 'meaning' definition is the meaning of a word, expression, or gesture is the thing or idea that it refers to or represents and which can be explained using other words.

From those definition above, the researcher can interpret overall that 'meaning' is a things intends to express or convey something useful by using language to get implication of a hidden signification in a word, phrase, idea, etc. Simply, it can be interpreted as denotation word or phrase.

### **2.2. Types of Meaning**

According to Leech (1974), there are seven types of meaning in semantics:

- 1) conceptual meaning (denotative / cognitive meaning), the meaning related to syntactic and phonological levels of language. It is logical meaning and "the central factor of linguistic communication" (Leech, 1981, p. 9)
- 2) connotative meaning, the meaning derived from various factors, such as age, society, or individual (Leech, 1981, p.12)
- 3) social meaning, the meaning derived from all social circumstances. It includes dialect, time, province, status, modality, and singularity (Leech, 1981, p.14)
- 4) affective meaning, a word can reflect the personal feeling of the speaker. This is the meaning derived from the emotion of the speaker. (Leech, 1981, p. 15)
- 5) reflected meaning, the meaning derived when one sense of a word influences our response to another sense. A word can be judged as a bad word or a good word when it is compared to another word in the same situation. (Leech, 1981, p.16)
- 6) collocative meaning, the meaning derived when the word is associated with another word. (Leech, 1981, p.17)
- 7) thematic meaning, it means the meaning can have different emphasis if one element of the sentence construction is substituted, such as in active or passive voice.

### **2.3. Palmer's Approach of Meaning (1976)**

Compared to Leech's concept of meaning, Frank Palmer focused his discussion of meaning on the conceptual (denotative / kognitif) and connotative meaning. He refers the conceptual meaning as **sense** and connotative meaning as **reference**.

#### **A. Sense**

According to Palmer, sense means the original meaning or a true meaning possessed by a lexeme. It means that in denotative, the meaning in accordance with the way it is. Palmer (1976) uses the term sense in talking about the denotation of the words and explains that denotative does not have any physical existence. The sense is the one that deals with semantic structures or intra-linguistic relationship. In some cases, several words may have the same sense.

#### **B. Reference**

Reference is the meaning of a word that linked to thoughts, feelings, etc. that create a certain sense of value. In other words, connotative meaning refers to a specific thing and it contains implicit things. Palmer (1976) uses the term reference in talking about the connotation of a word. In this case, the reference refers to something that has a physical existence, and it contrasts with a sense that doesn't have any physical existence. In reference, the main focus is the relationship between linguistics and non-linguistics element or between language and world. The reference here means the idea to relate the composition of a sentence with what happens in the real-world (Palmer, 1976). For instance, in the sentence "My nephew is in the cherry tree",

analyzing connotative meaning may focus on the phrase “my nephew” which refers to a person and the phrase “the cherry tree” which refers to things. Due to this fact, it can be concluded that reference is the relationship between languages, including the part of the language itself with something outside the language.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The method that used by the researcher in this study is a qualitative method. Qualitative method is a qualitative research is research used to investigate, find, describe, and explain the quality or features of social influences that cannot be explained, measured or illustrated through a quantitative approach (Saryono, 2010, p.1). The reason why this research used qualitative method is because in this case, the research chose the lyrics in a song which the lyrics in the song are a literary work in the form of songs that cannot be measured in numbers.

The data was collected using documentation technique by gathering any information about Eminem or in this case is primary data and the data analysis and interpretation method used in this research is inductive method. Inductive method is a moving from the specific to the general (Trochim: 2006, p.1)

### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Stanza 1

*Yeah  
I know sometimes things may not  
Always make sense to you right now.*

In the lyrics above, the noun “ things ” as a connotative meaning refers to a ‘condition’ where the speaker try to explain what was going on with their family or in this case, the speaker is Eminem himself. Which are difficult to explain by speakers in a way that Eminem’s children will understand by supported “may not always make sense” in the lyrics. Literally, the word “things” as a denotative meaning is used to refer in an approximate way to an object or to avoid naming it. Based on the music video on at the second 0.14- 0.17 Eminem watching his children in a video on a project reel. In the music video scene shows Eminem’s children is a baby.

#### Stanza 2

*But hey  
What daddy always tell you?*

In the lyric above, the word “Daddy” as a connotative meaning refers to speaker, on this case the speaker is Eminem himself. As a person who will always be there, care for and guide their children supported by “always tell you” where shows their time spend together as a father and children. Literally as a denotative meaning, the noun “Daddy” is a child word for father in this case is a male parent. Based on music video on 0.22-23 shows Eminem watching a project reel which is showing him and his children on the couch.

#### Stanza 3

*Straighten up little soldier  
Stiffen up that upper lip  
What you cryin’ about?  
you got me*

In this lyric above, the noun “Soldier” as a connotative meaning refers to Hailie who is Eminem child. In this case Eminem implies that Hailie has survived from all the problems that exist in the family and her parents which are described as "war" during raising her. Literally as a denotative meaning, the noun “Soldier” is a person who is in an army and wears its uniform, especially someone who fights when there is a war. Based on the music video on 0.23- 0.29 the videos shows projection reel show Eminem is on parenting his baby which is Hailie and feeding her.

#### Stanza 4

*Hailie I know you miss your mom and I know you miss your dad  
Well I'm gone but I'm trying to give you the life that I never had.*

In the lyrics above, the word “life“ as a connotative meaning is a condition that Eminem want raise their children to be better and more prosperous and growth in good condition in lives of their children than he had before, his daughter namely Hailie. Which is supported by the lyrics "I'm trying to give you" where this lyric shows a desire to give something and the lyric "that I never had" shows the condition of lacking against something that is sufficiency. Literally as a the word “ life “ as a denotative meaning is the period between birth and death, or the experience or state of being alive. Based on music video on 00.30-00.35

showing Kimberly as Eminem's wife and as a mother of Hailie was carrying Hailie as a baby and waving to the camera.

**Stanza 5**

*I can see you're sad, even when you smile, even when you laugh  
I can see it in your eyes, deep inside you want to cry  
Cause you're scared, I ain't there?  
Daddy's with you in your prayer*

In the lyric above, the phrase "deep inside" is a connotative meaning that how she really feels about the situation that happened to her parents. Eminem as a biological father of Hailie, He know well his children, he know that Hailie hiding a sad feeling in front of him that supported by lyric "I can see you're sad, even when you smile, even when you laugh" because she felt afraid of the family condition she was experiencing which was supported by "Cause you're scared, I ain't there?". Literally as a denotative meaning, the phrase "deep inside" meaning is part, space, or side of something that is inside. Based on the music video on 0.35-0.42 shows a video of Hailie as a baby smiling and laugh at the camera. Eminem try to described how when Hailie smiled happily.

**Stanza 6**

*No more crying, wipe them tears  
Daddy's here, no more nightmares  
We gon' pull together through it, we gon' do it  
Laney uncle's crazy, ain't he?*

In this lyric, the noun "Nightmares" in a connotative meaning refers to a bad situation that Hailie experienced that both her parents divorced. Eminem implies a "nightmare" on this lyric because Eminem hope it just a dream and after awake Hailie would be just fine. Eminem tried to make Hailie remained calm and steadfast because Eminem himself would protect and be beside her that supported by lyric on "Daddy's here," and Eminem assured his daughter that they would go through this difficult time together which supported by lyric "We gon' pull together through it, we gon' do it". Literally as the denotative meaning, the word "nightmares" means a very upsetting or frightening dream in a sleep. Based on the music video on 0.45-0.50 shows a video of Hailie as a baby carried by her daddy which is Eminem after passed from his mom. It can mean that Eminem will take good care of his children.

**Stanza 7**

*ookin' puzzle, in a daze, I know it's confusin' you  
Daddy's always on the move, Momma's always on the news*

In the lyrics above, the word "puzzle" as a connotation meaning is Eminem know that Hailie's feeling "confused" which is makes Hailie feel confused and a little anxious is because she cannot understand the problems her parents are facing because at that time Hailie was still a child. Supported by phrase "in a daze" described Hailie's inability to think clearly about the problems that happened to her. And supported by "Daddy's always on the move, Momma's always on the news" lyric that is a problem Hailie facing that time. Literally as a denotative meaning, the word "puzzle" is a game or toy in which you have to fit separate pieces together, or a problem or question which you have to answer by using your skill or knowledge. Based on the music video on 1.00-1.07 that shows a video that Hailie and Lainie as a child in it. Lainie is Eminem niece by marriage whom Eminem adopted.

**Stanza 8**

*Daddy's always on the move, Momma's always on the news  
I try to keep you sheltered from it, but somehow it seems  
The harder that I try to do that, the more it backfires on me*

In this lyric above. The word "sheltered" as a connotative meaning is a "cover". Eminem tries to cover up the problems that exist in his family so that his children don't know and don't worry about their parents. Supported by "Daddy's always on the move, Momma's always on the news" lyric that is a problem that Eminem tries to cover from his children. But Eminem's plan to cover up the problem failed and only made matters worse. That supported by "The harder that I try to do that, the more it backfires on me" lyric. Literally as a denotative meaning, the adjective "sheltered" is protected from wind, rain, or other bad weather. Based on the music video on 1.07-1.10 shows that Eminem is looking after his children Hailie and Lainie.

Stanza 9

*Now hush, little baby, don't you cry  
Everything's gonna be alright*

*Stiffen that upper lip up, little lady, I told ya  
Daddy's here to hold ya through the night*

In the lyric above, the phrase “stiffen that upper lip up” as a connotative meaning is that typically when people are on the verge of tears their upper lip begins to quiver, it shows a sign of weakness. Using his paternal instincts, Eminem tells Hailie not to worry because he is there to comfort her. That supported by lyric “Daddy's here to hold ya through the night”. Literally as a denotative meaning in this phrase meaning strengthen an upper part of lips. Based on the music video on 1.44-1.48 shows Hailie looking at camera with messy food on she's lip at the dining table.

**Stanza 10**

*It's funny, I remember back one year when Daddy had no money  
Mommy wrapped the Christmas presents up and stuck 'em under the tree  
And said some of 'em were from me 'cause Daddy couldn't buy 'em*

In the lyric above, the word “funny” as a connotative meaning is an opposite meaning of funny or happiness because is not funny for Eminem at that time with his condition where when he just started rapping, he also held a minimum wage job of cooking and dish washing at the restaurant Gilbert's lodge at St. Clair Shores. That supported by “Mommy wrapped the Christmas presents up and stuck 'em under the tree and said some of 'em were from me 'cause Daddy couldn't buy 'em” lyric that shows Eminem condition. But now, Em is a multi-platinum selling artist, producer and actor who has a net worth of \$140 million. It shouldn't be a problem anymore to buy his daughter some Christmas gifts. Literally as a denotative meaning, the adjective “funny” means a humorous or causing laughter. Based on the music video on Based on the music video on 2.00-2.05 show Hailie and her sister sit and playing close a Christmas tree and show Kim carry a bunch of present of her daughter show a condition that time.

**Stanza 11**

*Tryna start a piggy bank for you so you could go to college  
Almost had a thousand dollars till someone broke in and stole it  
And I know it hurt so bad it broke your momma's heart  
And it seemed like everything was just startin' to fall apart*

In this lyric above, the noun “piggy” as a connotative meaning refers to a container for saving money in, especially one shaped like a pig, Hailie's mother, Kim try to saving money to get Hailie to go to college but someone stole and broke it. Literally as a denotative meaning, the word “Piggy” means a pig, Pigs are mammals with stocky bodies, flat snouts that can move independently of their heads, small eyes and large ears. They are highly intelligent, social animals, and are found all over the world. Based on the music video at 2.30-2.34 shows Hailie and Kim, her mother was play at the park.

**Stanza 12**

*Papa was a rolling stone, Momma developed a habit  
And it all happened too fast for either one of us to grab it  
I'm just sorry you were there and had to witness it first hand*

In this lyric above, the phrase “rolling stone” as a connotative meaning refers to the music and politics magazine which Eminem has been on cover that magazine no less than 13 times. Literally as a denotative meaning. The phrase “rolling stone” means is someone who moves around constantly. Eminem constantly had a tour to promote his rap and music. He always moving around the country and could not back to home. Because that, he almost got no time to see his family. And then, Kim as a mother of Hailie started using drugs. That makes bad example for his child. That supported by lyric “Momma developed a habit”. Based on the music video on 3.01-3.05 shows Eminem singing a rap with the crowd. And then shows a news with a headline Kim in it.

**Stanza 13**

*Now I'm sittin' in this empty house  
Just reminiscin', lookin' at your baby pictures, it just trips me out*

In the lyric above, the phrase “empty house” as a connotative meaning is does not mean a house without furniture or an abandoned house, the meaning is that no one occupies the house apart from Eminem. In the phrase “empty house” could meaning emotionally feel lonely. Literally as a denotative meaning. The phrase “empty house” is a house without furniture or an abandoned house. Based on music video on 3.13-3.17 shows that Eminem sit on his couch on the room alone with a projector watch a video of Hailie as a his child and open an album photo of Hailie as child.

---

**Stanza 14**

*And if you ask me to, Daddy's gonna buy you a mockingbird  
I'ma give you the world  
I'ma buy a diamond ring for you, I'ma sing for you  
I'll do anything for you to see you smile*

In the lyric above, the clause “I'ma give you the world” is a hyperbole because no one can give or buy the world. As a connotative meaning Eminem as a father could do anything for his children to make them feel happy. Eminem said that he will go to the ends of the earth to make his kids happy. That supported by “I'll do anything for you to see you smile”. Literally. There are no denotative meaning for this clause. Based on the music video on shows Eminem with his children as a baby.

**5. CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of the meaning contained in the lyrics of the song Mockingbird. There are some word, phrase and clause that implied denotation and connotation meaning based on Palmer theory there are *Things, Daddy, Little Soldier, Life, Deep Inside, Nightmares, Puzzle, Sheltered, Stiffen up upper lip, Funny, Piggy, Rolling Stone, Empty house, imma give you the world.*

The researcher conclude that meaning in the lyric of this song is the family issues is the main factor that the Eminem want to tell to their children. Where a parent should live in peace and harmonious in the household so that they can give love and can be exemplified by their children. This is also conveyed in this song where the Eminem as a parent want to give a better life for his child. In addition, this song means that their children who grows in inharmonious family environment because a divorce and some bad habits that parents do.

**REFERENCE**

- [1]. Cambridge University Dictionary. (n.d.). Dictionary.Cambridge.Org; Cambridge. Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/meaning>
- [2]. Leech, G. (1974). *Semantics—The Study of Meaning*. Penguin.
- [3]. Palmer, F. (1976). *Semantics: A New Outline*. Cambridge University Press.
- [4]. Sari, A., & Kusumawadhan, P. (2016). Denotative and Connotative Meaning in One direction's Songs Lyric: A Semantic Perspective. Researchgate. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320585480\\_Denotative\\_and\\_Connotative\\_Meaning\\_in\\_One\\_direction's\\_Songs\\_Lyric\\_A\\_Semantic\\_Perspective](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320585480_Denotative_and_Connotative_Meaning_in_One_direction's_Songs_Lyric_A_Semantic_Perspective)
- [5]. Cruse, a. (2006). *A Glossary of Semantics and Pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- [6]. Crystal. (1987). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge University Press