



A Lexical Semantic Analysis of Love And Loss in Lord Huron's "The Night We Met"

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Abstract. *This study explores the semantic fields of love and loss in Lord Huron's song "The Night We Met," using a lexical semantics framework. Song lyrics, known for their emotional depth, serve as a rich source for analyzing affective meaning, particularly through word selection and repetition. The primary research question addresses how semantic fields are constructed within minimalist lyrical compositions to convey complex emotional states. In this analysis, a qualitative descriptive method is applied to examine the song's lexical items and group them into thematic semantic fields. The study finds that the song uses a concise set of lexemes connected to themes of memory, temporal disorientation, grief, and love. These thematic fields intertwine, interacting to depict a narrative that encapsulates unresolved emotional pain. Love and loss are not presented in isolation but are embedded in a broader emotional context, where words evoke both the sweetness of past affection and the sorrow of its absence. The overlap of these semantic fields reflects the internal conflict experienced by the narrator, torn between cherished memories and the painful realization of loss. The study concludes that despite the song's brevity, the lyrics effectively evoke profound emotional responses through a meticulous choice of words and thematic consistency. The semantic fields constructed within the song illustrate how even minimal language can convey intense emotional content, providing valuable linguistic insight into the function of lyricism in popular music. The research demonstrates the ability of short, poignant lyrics to engage listeners emotionally, revealing how lyricists use limited language to encapsulate complex feelings of love and loss.*

Keywords: *Affective meaning, Grief, Lexical semantics, Love, Semantic field.*

Abtrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bidang semantis cinta dan kehilangan dalam lagu "The Night We Met" karya Lord Huron, dengan menggunakan kerangka semantik leksikal. Lirik lagu dikenal sebagai sumber yang kaya untuk menganalisis makna afektif, terutama melalui pemilihan kata dan pengulangan. Pertanyaan utama yang dibahas dalam penelitian ini adalah bagaimana bidang semantis dibentuk dalam komposisi lirik minimalis untuk menyampaikan kompleksitas emosional. Dalam analisis ini, metode deskriptif kualitatif diterapkan untuk memeriksa item leksikal dalam lagu dan mengelompokkan kata-kata tersebut ke dalam bidang semantis tematik. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa lagu tersebut menggunakan set kata yang ringkas yang terkait dengan tema memori, disorientasi temporal, kesedihan, dan cinta. Bidang semantis ini saling tumpang tindih dan berinteraksi untuk membentuk narasi yang menggambarkan rasa sakit emosional yang belum terselesaikan. Cinta dan kehilangan tidak disajikan secara terpisah, melainkan dimasukkan dalam konteks emosional yang lebih luas, di mana kata-kata mengungkapkan baik manisnya kenangan masa lalu maupun kesedihan atas ketidakhadirannya. Tumpang tindih bidang semantis ini mencerminkan konflik internal yang dialami oleh narator, yang terpecah antara kenangan yang dihargai dan kenyataan menyakitkan tentang kehilangan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun lirik lagu ini singkat, lirik tersebut berhasil membangkitkan respons emosional yang mendalam melalui pemilihan kata yang cermat dan konsistensi tematik. Bidang semantis yang dibangun dalam lagu ini menggambarkan bagaimana bahasa minimal dapat menyampaikan konten emosional yang intens, memberikan wawasan linguistik yang berharga tentang fungsi lirik dalam musik populer. Penelitian ini menunjukkan kemampuan lirik yang singkat dan tajam untuk melibatkan pendengar secara emosional, mengungkapkan bagaimana penulis lagu menggunakan bahasa terbatas untuk merangkum perasaan cinta dan kehilangan yang kompleks.

Kata Kunci : Makna afektif, Kesedihan, Semantik leksikal, Cinta, Bidang semantik.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of language in song lyrics serves as an important cultural and emotional artifact. Contemporary ballads, particularly in indie folk and alternative pop genres, often depict emotional depth with minimalistic language. Lord Huron's 2015 song "The Night We Met" is a popular example, recognized for its melancholic tone and lyrical subtlety. The song gained mainstream attention through its use in the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*, which further highlighted its emotional resonance with themes of loss and longing.

A number of linguistic studies have focused on metaphor, emotional discourse, and stylistics in song lyrics (e.g., Simpson, 2004; Leech, 1981; Danesi, 2019). However, specific attention to semantic field theory in relation to emotional meaning in minimalist lyricism remains limited. This research seeks to fill that gap by applying a semantic field analysis to Lord Huron's lyrics.

The research problem is: How do the lyrics of "The Night We Met" construct semantic fields of love and loss? The objective is to identify and interpret the lexical items that form those fields and explain how they interact to generate affective meaning.

Lyricism in modern popular music has evolved to embrace not only narrative and rhythmic devices but also profound emotional content expressed with lexical economy. As noted by Allan (2016), the ability of lyrics to encapsulate emotional depth in minimal words reflects both linguistic creativity and the universality of affective expression. Similarly, Jovanović (2020) points out that the semantic structure of emotionally charged songs often mirrors the inner turmoil or longing experienced by the listener, creating a resonance effect through shared symbolic language.

Moreover, scholars such as Pandey and Chaudhary (2022) emphasize the role of metaphor and semantic clustering in songs as tools for encoding abstract concepts like grief, nostalgia, or hope. In the case of "The Night We Met," this phenomenon is evident in the consistent reference to time, memory, and spectral presence, all of which serve to enhance the emotional landscape of the piece. These perspectives reinforce the relevance of lexical semantics as a method for decoding the deeper meanings embedded in seemingly simple lyrical compositions.

2. THEORITICAL REVIEW

The theoretical basis of this study is grounded in semantic field theory, which postulates that meanings of words are understood not in isolation but in relation to other words within the same conceptual domain (Trier, 1931; Lehrer, 1974).

Semantic fields function as networks of interrelated lexemes that collectively construct specific areas of meaning. Cruse (2011) elaborates on the interconnectedness of lexical items within semantic fields, emphasizing their contextual and affective dimensions.

This study also draws upon Leech's (1981) concept of affective meaning, which focuses on the emotional response evoked by linguistic choices. Leech suggests that language can carry emotional weight that transcends its denotative content, a notion particularly relevant in the context of lyrical expression.

Several previous studies have applied semantic analysis to literary texts and lyrics. For instance, Simpson (2004) demonstrates how stylistic analysis can uncover deeper layers of meaning in poetic texts, while Danesi (2019) investigates how semiotics and cultural references in lyrics construct emotional narratives. Although these works do not focus on Lord Huron specifically, they provide foundational insights that support the current analysis.

Given the song's lyrical economy and emotional density, the hypothesis guiding this study is that the song constructs overlapping semantic fields of love and loss through a carefully selected and repeated set of lexemes. These semantic choices are hypothesized to generate a powerful emotional effect with minimal linguistic input.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach with a lexical semantics framework. The primary data consist of the official lyrics to "The Night We Met." Analytical procedures include identifying keywords, categorizing them by semantic domain, and interpreting their emotional impact. No experimental tools or software were required; the analysis was conducted through close reading and manual coding of lexemes.

Semantic field theory as proposed by Trier (1931), Lehrer (1974), and supported by more recent works (Cruse, 2011; Geeraerts, 2010), serves as the primary analytical tool. Emotional categories are further informed by Leech's (1981) classification of affective meaning.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted through a qualitative-descriptive analysis using a lexical semantic approach. The data, in the form of the official lyrics of "The Night We Met," were collected and analyzed in May 2025 at the Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The process involved identifying key lexemes, grouping them into semantic fields, and interpreting their affective implications.

Semantic Field of Love and Memory

Phrases such as “the night we met,” “take me back,” and “I had all and then most of you” reflect a semantic domain of love and nostalgic memory. The line “I had all and then most of you / Some and now none of you” conveys the gradual erosion of intimacy, indicating deep emotional loss. The repetition of the refrain “take me back to the night we met” functions as both a lyrical and semantic anchor, reinforcing the longing to return to an emotionally significant moment.

a Subtle Expressions of Emotional Attachment

The minimalist structure of the lyrics suggests profound emotional attachment through the repetition of few yet meaningful lexemes. This aligns with Leech’s (1981) notion of affective meaning, where emotional content is encoded beyond the literal sense of words.

Semantic Field of Loss and Disorientation

Lines like “I don’t know what I’m supposed to do,” “I’m lost without you,” and “haunted by the ghost of you” establish a semantic field of loss and existential confusion. The word “ghost” operates symbolically, indicating emotional residue that persists beyond the physical departure of a loved one. “Everything I did / I did for you” emphasizes emotional sacrifice and unresolved regret.

a Emotional Regression and Cognitive Fragmentation

The language suggests a breakdown in the speaker’s cognitive and emotional framework, marked by confusion and dependency. These themes resonate with Cruse’s (2011) idea of semantic interaction, where overlapping fields intensify interpretive complexity.

b Table of Semantic Fields and Emotional Functions

Lexical Item	Semantic Field	Emotional Function
The night we met	Love/Memory	Temporal anchor of nostalgia
I had all and then most of you	Love/Loss	Indication of gradual detachment
Take me back	Memory/Desire	Plea for emotional restoration
I don't know what i'm supposed to do	Confusion/Disorientation	Existential crisis
Haunted by the ghost of you	Grief/Loss	Lingering emotional presence
Everything i did, i did for you	Love/Regret	Self-sacrifice and emotional exhaustion
Some and now none of you	Love/Absence	Contrastive scale of emotional proximity
I'm lost with you	Confusion/Grief	Sense of dependency and emotional void

Theoretically, the findings support the idea that minimalist lyrical language can convey a high degree of emotional intensity, echoing Leech's (1981) theory of affective meaning. These findings also align with Simpson's (2004) view that repetition and lexical economy enhance emotional resonance. The data suggest that lexical selection in lyrics constructs semantic structures that mirror the psychological state of the lyric's persona.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis concludes that Lord Huron's "The Night We Met" constructs semantic fields of love and loss through a minimalist yet affectively rich vocabulary. These fields interact to form a melancholic narrative that resonates with listeners. The song is a compelling case of how linguistic economy can heighten emotional impact in lyrical expression. Future research may explore comparative studies with other minimalist songs across genres or languages.

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