



A Semantic Analysis of Meaning Types in Bruno Mars's "*Talking to the Moon*": A Leechian Perspective

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Abstract

This study investigates the types of meaning found in Bruno Mars's *Talking to the Moon* using Geoffrey Leech's theory of meaning. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with the song lyrics serving as the primary data source. Data were collected through documentation techniques and analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that four types of meaning were identified in the lyrics, namely conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, affective meaning, and social meaning. Among these categories, connotative meaning appeared most frequently. This suggests that the songwriter tends to express emotional experiences through symbolic and figurative language rather than direct statements. The use of expressions related to longing, hope, and emotional distance allows listeners to interpret the song in ways that connect with their own experiences. The study also highlights that song lyrics can serve as valuable linguistic resources for understanding how language conveys feelings and personal realities. Despite being limited to a single song, this research contributes to semantic studies by demonstrating the relevance of Leech's theory in analyzing contemporary popular music.

Kata kunci:
Semantik,
Jenis Makna,
Geoffrey Leech,
Lirik Lagu,
Talking to the Moon,
Bruno Mars

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki jenis-jenis makna yang ditemukan dalam lagu Bruno Mars, *Talking to the Moon*, menggunakan teori makna Geoffrey Leech. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dengan lirik lagu sebagai sumber data utama. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif yang diusulkan oleh Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña, yang meliputi kondensasi data, tampilan data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa empat jenis makna diidentifikasi dalam lirik, yaitu makna konseptual, makna konotatif, makna afektif, dan makna sosial. Di antara kategori-kategori ini, makna konotatif muncul paling sering. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa penulis lagu cenderung mengekspresikan pengalaman emosional melalui bahasa simbolis dan figuratif daripada pernyataan langsung. Penggunaan ekspresi yang berkaitan dengan kerinduan, harapan, dan jarak emosional memungkinkan pendengar untuk menafsirkan lagu dengan cara yang terhubung dengan pengalaman mereka sendiri. Studi ini juga menyoroti bahwa lirik lagu dapat berfungsi sebagai sumber daya linguistik yang berharga untuk memahami bagaimana bahasa menyampaikan perasaan dan realitas pribadi. Meskipun terbatas pada satu lagu, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada studi semantik dengan menunjukkan relevansi teori Leech dalam menganalisis musik populer kontemporer.

ملخص

الكلمات المفتاحية:
الدلالة،
أنواع المعنى،
جيفري ليتش،
كلمات الأغاني،
أغنية "Talking to the
Moon"،
برونو مارس

يتناول هذا البحث أنواع المعاني الكامنة في أغنية برونو مارس "Talking to the Moon"، مستخدمةً نظرية المعنى لجيفري ليتش (Geoffrey Leech). اعتمد البحث منهجًا وصفيًا نوعيًا، مع التركيز على كلمات الأغنية كمصدر أساسي للبيانات. جُمعت البيانات من خلال تقنيات التوثيق، وحُللت باستخدام نموذج تفاعلي اقترحه مايلز وهوبيرمان وسالداña (Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña)، ويتضمن تكثيف البيانات وعرضها واستخلاص النتائج. تشير النتائج إلى وجود أربعة أنواع من المعاني في كلمات الأغنية: المعنى المفاهيمي، والمعنى الضمني، والمعنى العاطفي، والمعنى الاجتماعي. ومن بين هذه الأنواع، يبرز المعنى الضمني أكثر شيوعًا. وهذا يدل على أن كتاب الأغاني يميلون إلى التعبير عن تجاربهم العاطفية من خلال اللغة الرمزية والمجازية بدلًا من التصريحات المباشرة. إن استخدام تعابير مرتبطة بالشوق والأمل والبعد العاطفي يُمكن المستمعين من تفسير الأغنية بطرق تتصل بتجارِبهم الشخصية. كما تُبرز الدراسة أن كلمات الأغاني تُعد مصدرًا لغويًا قيمًا لفهم كيفية نقل اللغة للمشاعر والحقائق الشخصية. على الرغم من اقتصار هذه الدراسة على أغنية واحدة، إلا أنها تُساهم في الدراسات الدلالية من خلال إظهار أهمية نظرية ليتش في تحليل الموسيقى الشعبية المعاصرة.

INTRODUCTION

Language is more than a means of conveying information; it is also a medium through which people express emotions, construct identities, and share experiences. In everyday life, language appears in various forms, including conversations, literary works, films, advertisements, and songs. Among these forms, songs occupy a unique position because they combine linguistic expressions with melody to create a powerful emotional effect on listeners. Through song lyrics, composers and singers often communicate feelings that are difficult to express directly. Therefore, song lyrics can be viewed not merely as entertainment products but also as linguistic texts that deserve scholarly attention.

In recent years, the study of language in popular culture has gained increasing recognition within the field of linguistics. Researchers have become more interested in examining how meaning is constructed in media that are familiar to the public, including music. Songs frequently contain words, phrases, and expressions that carry meanings beyond their literal interpretations. These layers of meaning often reflect the songwriter's emotional state, cultural background, social context, and artistic intentions. Consequently, understanding the meaning embedded in song lyrics requires more than simply translating individual words; it requires a semantic analysis that explores how meanings are organized and interpreted.

Semantics, as one of the major branches of linguistics, focuses on the study of meaning in language. According to Leech (1981), meaning is a complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced solely to dictionary definitions. He proposes seven types of meaning, namely conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. Each type contributes differently to the interpretation of linguistic expressions. Conceptual meaning refers to the denotative or literal meaning of a word, whereas connotative meaning relates to the associations that a word evokes. Social meaning reflects the social circumstances surrounding language use, while affective meaning reveals the speaker's feelings or attitudes. Reflected meaning emerges when one sense of a word influences another sense, collocative meaning is associated with habitual word combinations, and thematic meaning concerns how messages are organized and emphasized.

Among these seven types, song lyrics often exhibit multiple layers of meaning simultaneously. A single line in a song may carry conceptual meaning while also conveying emotional nuances through affective or connotative meanings. This complexity makes song lyrics an interesting object of semantic investigation. Moreover, examining semantic meanings in songs may help readers and listeners appreciate literary creativity while enhancing their understanding of how language functions in artistic contexts.

One song that has attracted widespread public attention is *Talking to the Moon* by Bruno Mars. Released as part of the album *Doo-Wops & Hooligans* in 2010, the song portrays feelings of longing, loneliness, and hope experienced by someone who has been separated

from a loved one. The lyrics depict a speaker who metaphorically communicates with the moon, believing that it may somehow connect him with the person he misses. The emotional intensity conveyed throughout the song has contributed to its enduring popularity across different generations and cultural backgrounds. Even years after its release, the song continues to circulate widely through digital platforms and social media, making it a relevant subject for contemporary linguistic inquiry.

Despite its popularity, listeners may interpret the lyrics of *Talking to the Moon* differently. Some may perceive the song as a straightforward expression of romantic longing, while others may identify deeper symbolic meanings embedded within the lyrics. For instance, the phrase "talking to the moon" itself cannot be interpreted literally because human beings do not engage in actual conversations with celestial bodies. Instead, the phrase invites listeners to explore figurative and emotional dimensions of meaning. This phenomenon highlights the importance of semantic analysis in uncovering how meaning operates within song lyrics.

Previous studies have examined semantic meanings in various songs using Leech's theory. Several researchers have focused on identifying types of meaning in selected song lyrics and determining which meanings occur most frequently. Their findings generally indicate that conceptual and connotative meanings tend to dominate because songwriters often rely on figurative expressions to evoke emotional responses. However, many of these studies have concentrated on songs from diverse genres without exploring in detail how multiple categories of meaning interact to construct a coherent emotional narrative within a single song.

Furthermore, existing studies frequently prioritize classification over interpretation. In other words, they identify whether an expression represents conceptual, affective, or connotative meaning but devote limited attention to explaining how these meanings contribute to the overall message of the song. As a result, the relationship between semantic choices and thematic development remains underexplored. This limitation creates an opportunity for further investigation, particularly concerning songs that are rich in emotional and metaphorical content.

Another issue identified in previous research concerns the object of study. Although Bruno Mars' songs have occasionally been analyzed from linguistic perspectives, investigations specifically focusing on *Talking to the Moon* through the lens of Leech's seven types of meaning remain relatively limited. Although Bruno Mars's songs have occasionally been examined from linguistic perspectives, systematic investigations specifically focusing on *Talking to the Moon* through the lens of Leech's seven types of meaning remain scarce. Prior studies of popular music lyrics emphasize stylistic devices, figurative language, or experiential meaning using frameworks such as Systemic Functional Linguistics (Simbolon et al., 2025; Wilson, 2026), but they rarely apply a comprehensive semantic model. Recent applications of Leech's theory to Taylor Swift's songs (Nasution et al., 2025), YOASOBI's *IDOL* (Alfuadi &

Mazidah, 2026), and Malay traditional songs (Farhan & Yusnizam, 2025) demonstrate its potential to reveal layered meanings and cultural values. However, no study has yet systematically explored Bruno Mars's *Talking to the Moon* using this framework. This gap underscores the need for research that identifies the semantic dimensions in the song and explains how they contribute to its portrayal of emotional experiences. Existing analyses often emphasize figurative language, stylistic devices, or general interpretations of meaning without comprehensively examining the semantic dimensions proposed by Leech. Consequently, there is still a need for research that systematically explores the types of meaning found in the song and explains their contributions to the portrayal of emotional experiences.

Research on popular song lyrics has been conducted from various linguistic perspectives, with many studies emphasizing figurative language, stylistics, or Systemic Functional Linguistics to explore meaning and discourse. However, the application of Leech's semantic framework remains relatively limited. To clarify the position of the present study within this body of work, Table 1 summarizes several previous investigations relevant to the linguistic analysis of song lyrics.

Researcher & Year	Object of Study	Approach/Theory	Main Findings	Limitations/Research Gap
Wilson (2026)	UK chart-topping songs	Stylistics	Focused on figurative language, repetition, and discourse structures	Did not apply Leech's semantic framework
Simbolon et al. (2025)	Contemporary song lyrics	Systemic Functional Linguistics	Highlighted experiential meaning through transitivity analysis	Did not address Leech's seven types of meaning
Nasution et al. (2025)	Taylor Swift's songs	Leech's semantic framework	Found affective meaning to be dominant in expressing emotions	Limited to one artist, not extended to Bruno Mars

Alfuadi & Mazidah (2026)	YOASOBI's <i>IDOL</i>	Leech's semantic framework	Revealed balanced distribution of conceptual, connotative, and affective meanings	Focused on Japanese lyrics, different cultural context
Farhan & Yusnizam (2025)	Malay traditional songs	Leech's semantic framework	Demonstrated cultural values through semantic dimensions	Applied to traditional genre, not Western pop

As shown in Table 1, prior research has predominantly focused on stylistic features and figurative expressions, while comprehensive applications of Leech's seven types of meaning have been rare. Although some studies have demonstrated the usefulness of Leech's framework in analyzing the lyrics of Taylor Swift, YOASOBI, and Malay traditional songs, no systematic investigation has yet applied this model to Bruno Mars' works. This gap highlights the novelty of the present study, which aims to analyze *Talking to the Moon* through Leech's semantic categories and to explain how these meanings contribute to the representation of emotional experiences in contemporary popular music.

The present study seeks to address these gaps by investigating semantic meanings in Bruno Mars' *Talking to the Moon* based on Leech's theory of meaning. Unlike earlier studies that primarily categorize linguistic units, this research aims to provide a more nuanced interpretation of how different types of meaning interact within the lyrics. By doing so, the study not only identifies the presence of semantic categories but also demonstrates how they shape listeners' understanding of longing, separation, and emotional vulnerability.

The novelty of this study lies in three aspects. First, it employs Leech's comprehensive framework of seven types of meaning to analyze a song that has not been extensively investigated within recent semantic scholarship. Second, the study moves beyond descriptive categorization by connecting semantic findings with the emotional and thematic development of the lyrics. Third, the research contributes to the growing body of linguistic studies that engage with contemporary popular culture, thereby demonstrating that semantic theories remain relevant for interpreting texts encountered in everyday life.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches discussions concerning the applicability of Leech's semantic framework in analyzing artistic discourse. Although the theory has been widely used in linguistic research, its implementation across different genres and contexts continues to reveal new insights regarding the dynamic nature of meaning. From a practical

standpoint, the findings may support language educators in incorporating authentic materials such as songs into language learning activities. Songs can stimulate students' interest while simultaneously encouraging critical engagement with linguistic forms and meanings.

Moreover, this study responds to the broader academic trend emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches to language analysis. Contemporary linguistics increasingly recognizes that language cannot be separated from cultural products that influence human experiences. Songs, as cultural artifacts, provide valuable opportunities for examining how meanings are negotiated, interpreted, and emotionally experienced by audiences. Therefore, semantic analysis of song lyrics represents not only a linguistic endeavor but also an exploration of human communication in its aesthetic dimensions.

Based on the issues discussed above, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What types of meaning based on Geoffrey Leech's theory are found in Bruno Mars's *Talking to the Moon*? and (2) Which type of meaning is dominantly represented in the song lyrics? Correspondingly, the objectives of this study are to identify the types of meaning present in the lyrics and to determine the dominant type of meaning employed by the songwriter.

The significance of this study can be viewed from several perspectives. For linguists and researchers, the study provides empirical evidence regarding the application of semantic theory to contemporary song lyrics. For educators, the findings may offer alternative teaching materials that encourage students to appreciate the richness of meaning in authentic texts. For students of English language and literature, the study may deepen their understanding of semantic concepts by illustrating how theoretical categories operate in real contexts. Finally, for general audiences, the research may enhance awareness that songs contain intricate layers of meaning that extend beyond surface interpretations.

In conclusion, investigating semantic meanings in Bruno Mars's *Talking to the Moon* represents an important endeavor for understanding how language functions within popular music. The emotional resonance of the song, combined with the complexity of its linguistic expressions, makes it a compelling object of semantic inquiry. By utilizing Leech's theory of meaning, this study seeks not only to classify semantic categories but also to illuminate how meaning contributes to the construction of emotional experiences conveyed through song lyrics. Through this approach, the study aspires to bridge theoretical discussions in semantics with the realities of language use in contemporary cultural practices.

THEORY AND METHOD

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the field of semantics, a branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning in language. Meaning plays a central role in communication because it

enables speakers and listeners to interpret linguistic expressions within particular contexts. In literary texts such as song lyrics, meaning often extends beyond literal interpretation and involves emotional, cultural, and associative dimensions. Therefore, semantic analysis becomes an appropriate approach for uncovering the layers of meaning embedded in artistic language.

The primary theory employed in this study is Geoffrey Leech's theory of meaning. In his seminal work *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*, Leech (1981) argues that meaning is not a single, uniform phenomenon but rather a multidimensional concept that can be categorized into different types. He states that "meaning is a complex phenomenon involving several interrelated components" (Leech, 1981, p. 9). This perspective suggests that understanding language requires attention not only to its literal content but also to the associations and emotions attached to it.

Leech (1981, pp. 23–26) classifies meaning into seven categories, namely conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. Conceptual meaning refers to the logical and denotative content of an expression. It is often regarded as the core meaning because it provides the basic conceptual framework required for communication. According to Leech (1981, p.13), conceptual meaning possesses "a complex and sophisticated organization comparable to the syntactic and phonological levels of language."

In contrast, connotative meaning relates to the additional values associated with an expression beyond its conceptual content. These associations may emerge from cultural experiences, personal beliefs, or social conventions. Leech (1981, p. 12) explains that connotative meaning refers to "the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content". In song lyrics, connotative meaning frequently appears through metaphorical expressions intended to evoke emotional responses from listeners.

Social meaning reflects the social circumstances surrounding language use. It conveys information about the speaker's social background, relationship with the listener, or level of formality. Affective meaning, on the other hand, expresses the speaker's feelings and attitudes toward a particular topic or audience. Leech (1981, p. 15) notes that affective meaning is often communicated through the emotional tone embedded in linguistic choices. Since songs commonly function as vehicles for emotional expression, affective meaning constitutes an important aspect of lyrical interpretation.

The remaining categories include reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. Reflected meaning arises when one sense of a word influences another sense associated with it. Collocative meaning refers to the associations that words acquire through their frequent co-occurrence with other words. Meanwhile, thematic meaning concerns the arrangement and emphasis of messages within an utterance. Leech (1981, p. 19) argues that

thematic meaning is revealed through "the way in which a speaker or writer organizes the message". Collectively, these categories provide a comprehensive framework for examining how meanings operate in literary texts.

Although Leech's theory was developed several decades ago, its relevance remains evident in contemporary linguistic research. Yunira et al. (2019) argue that Leech's seven types of meaning continue to offer valuable analytical tools for understanding the complexity of linguistic meaning across different contexts. The enduring applicability of this framework suggests that semantic meaning should not be viewed merely as an abstract concept but rather as a practical instrument for interpreting authentic language use.

Within the context of this study, Leech's theory serves as the analytical lens through which the lyrics of Bruno Mars' *Talking to the Moon* are examined. The theory facilitates a systematic identification of the meanings present in the lyrics while also enabling a deeper understanding of how these meanings contribute to the emotional narrative conveyed by the songwriter.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for investigations that seek to understand and interpret social or linguistic phenomena in their natural settings. Rather than emphasizing numerical measurement, qualitative inquiry prioritizes rich descriptions and contextual interpretations of the data under examination.

The descriptive qualitative approach was selected because the objective of this study was not to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships but to identify and describe the types of meaning found in the song lyrics. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 43) explain that qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to particular phenomena. In line with this perspective, the present study sought to uncover the semantic meanings embedded within the lyrics of *Talking to the Moon*.

The data of this study consisted of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences contained in the lyrics of Bruno Mars' *Talking to the Moon*. The song was selected because of its emotional richness and its extensive use of figurative and associative expressions that potentially represent various categories of meaning proposed by Leech. The data source was the official version of the song lyrics published through authorized music platforms and album documentation to ensure authenticity and accuracy.

Data collection was conducted using the documentation technique. Documentation is frequently employed in qualitative studies involving written or recorded materials. The procedures of data collection involved several stages. First, the researcher obtained the official lyrics of *Talking to the Moon*. Second, the researcher repeatedly read the lyrics to gain a comprehensive understanding of their content. Third, linguistic units considered relevant to

Leech's categories of meaning were highlighted and coded. Finally, the identified data were organized according to the corresponding semantic categories.

The researcher functioned as the primary instrument in this study. In qualitative inquiry, researchers play an active role in selecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 43), the researcher serves as the key instrument responsible for collecting information and interpreting its significance. Consequently, careful and systematic procedures were implemented to minimize subjective bias during the analytical process.

The analysis of data followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). According to Miles et al. (2014, p. 31), qualitative data analysis involves three concurrent activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These processes do not occur sequentially but rather interact continuously throughout the research process.

The first stage, data condensation, refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, focusing, and transforming raw data into a more manageable form. Miles et al. (2014, p. 12) define data condensation as "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data". In this study, data condensation involved identifying lyrical expressions relevant to Leech's categories of meaning while excluding linguistic elements unrelated to the research objectives.

The second stage was data display. Data display enables researchers to organize information systematically so that patterns and relationships become more visible. According to Miles et al. (2014, p. 89), data displays facilitate drawing valid conclusions by presenting information in an accessible format. In the present study, the findings were displayed in tabular form containing excerpts from the lyrics, classifications of meaning, and interpretative explanations.

The final stage involved conclusion drawing and verification. During this phase, the researcher interpreted the findings and examined whether the emerging conclusions remained consistent with the available evidence. Miles et al. (2014, p. 312) emphasize that conclusions should be continually verified throughout the analytical process to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. Through this procedure, the dominant types of meaning within the song lyrics were identified, and their contributions to the overall message of the song were interpreted.

To enhance credibility, the coding results were reviewed by another linguistics researcher familiar with Leech's semantic framework, prolonged engagement with the data was undertaken through repeated readings of the lyrics and continuous comparison between the data and the theoretical framework. Specifically, the researcher conducted five systematic readings of *Talking to the Moon*, each time focusing on different aspects of Leech's semantic categories (conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic).

During these readings, coding notes were continuously compared with the theoretical framework to ensure consistency and accuracy. This iterative process allowed interpretations to be grounded in textual evidence rather than personal assumptions.

In addition, several strategies were employed to strengthen data validity:

1. Expert validation: The coding results were reviewed by another linguistics researcher familiar with Leech's semantic framework. This external evaluation confirmed the accuracy and reliability of the categorization of meanings.
2. Theoretical triangulation: The analysis was cross-checked against complementary perspectives such as stylistics and discourse analysis. This triangulation reduced potential bias and enhanced the robustness of the findings.
3. Peer debriefing: Discussions with colleagues were conducted to challenge interpretations and ensure that conclusions were not solely shaped by the researcher's perspective.
4. Audit trail: Detailed documentation of coding decisions and analytical steps was maintained, allowing transparency and replicability of the research process.

In addition, expert validation was employed: the coding results were reviewed by another linguistics researcher familiar with Leech's semantic framework, which strengthened the accuracy and reliability of the categorization of meanings. Furthermore, theoretical triangulation was applied by cross-checking the analysis against complementary perspectives such as stylistics and discourse analysis. This triangulation reduced potential bias and enhanced the robustness of the findings. the integration of Leech's semantic theory with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's analytical framework provides a rigorous methodological foundation for investigating meanings within song lyrics. By combining a comprehensive theoretical perspective with systematic qualitative procedures, this study seeks to generate findings that are both analytically sound and contextually meaningful. This process allowed the researcher to develop interpretations that were grounded in textual evidence rather than personal assumptions.

Overall, the integration of Leech's semantic theory with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's analytical framework provides a rigorous methodological foundation for investigating meanings within song lyrics. By combining a comprehensive theoretical perspective with systematic qualitative procedures, this study seeks to generate findings that are both analytically sound and contextually meaningful.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis of Bruno Mars's *Talking to the Moon* was conducted using Geoffrey Leech's

(1981) theory of meaning. Through the coding process, twelve relevant linguistic expressions were identified and classified into four categories of meaning, namely conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, affective meaning, and social meaning. The coding process enabled the researcher to systematically organize the data before proceeding to deeper interpretation.

Table 1 presents the coding results of the semantic meanings identified in the song lyrics.

Category of Meaning	Example Expression	Interpretation
Conceptual meaning	<i>"Talking to the moon"</i>	Literal act of speaking to the moon.
Conceptual meaning	<i>"At night when the stars light up my room"</i>	Denotes the physical setting of nighttime and stars.
Conceptual meaning	<i>"I sit by myself"</i>	Direct description of solitude.
Connotative meaning	<i>"Talking to the moon"</i>	Connotes longing, distance, and unattainable communication.
Connotative meaning	<i>"Trying to get to you"</i>	Suggests emotional reach beyond physical boundaries.
Connotative meaning	<i>"Feels like I'm famous"</i>	Implies visibility yet emptiness, connoting loneliness despite imagined attention.
Connotative meaning	<i>"They don't understand"</i>	Connotes alienation and emotional disconnection.
Affective meaning	<i>"I'm talking to the moon"</i>	Expresses vulnerability and yearning.
Affective meaning	<i>"I hope you're on the other side"</i>	Reveals hope mixed with sadness.

Affective meaning	<i>"Talking to me too?"</i>	Shows desire for reciprocity and emotional connection.
Social meaning	<i>"They don't understand"</i>	Reflects social isolation and lack of shared experience.
Social meaning	<i>"Talking to the moon"</i>	Symbolizes communication breakdown in human relationships, replaced by a cosmic listener.

Based on the coding results presented above, four categories of meaning were identified in the lyrics. Among these categories, connotative meaning appeared most frequently.

Table 2. Coding of Semantic Meanings in Talking to the Moon

No.	Data Code	Lyric Excerpt	Type of Meaning	Interpretation
1	CM-01	<i>"somewhere far away"</i>	Conceptual Meaning	Indicates the literal distance between the speaker and the person being missed.
2	AM-01	<i>"I want you back"</i>	Affective Meaning	Expresses feelings of loss and a desire to reunite with someone important.
3	SM-01	<i>"My neighbors think I'm crazy"</i>	Social Meaning	Reflects society's judgment toward the speaker's unusual behavior.
4	CNM-01	<i>"Talking to the moon"</i>	Connotative Meaning	The moon symbolizes hope and an imaginary bridge of communication.
5	CNM-02	<i>"Tryna get to you"</i>	Connotative Meaning	Represents an emotional effort to reconnect rather than physical movement.
6	CNM-03	<i>"In hopes you're on the other side"</i>	Connotative Meaning	Suggests separation and emotional distance.
7	AM-02	<i>"Or am I a fool"</i>	Affective Meaning	Reveals self-doubt and emotional vulnerability.

8	SM-02	"They say I've gone mad"	Social Meaning	Illustrates how society perceives the speaker's actions.
9	CNM-04	"Someone's talking back"	Connotative Meaning	Symbolizes the speaker's hope that his feelings are reciprocated.
10	AM-03	"Do you ever hear me calling?"	Affective Meaning	Demonstrates longing and the need for emotional response.
11	CNM-05	"Every night I'm talking to the moon"	Connotative Meaning	Represents persistent loneliness accompanied by hope.
12	CM-02	"I sit by myself"	Conceptual Meaning	Describes the speaker's condition of being alone.

The distribution of meaning types presented in Table 2 illustrates the multidimensional nature of Bruno Mars's *Talking to the Moon*. Out of the twelve coded expressions, connotative meaning appears most frequently, confirming that the song relies heavily on symbolism and figurative language to convey emotional depth. The recurring image of the moon functions as a metaphorical interlocutor, transforming private longing into a universal theme of distance and hope. Meanwhile, affective meaning reveals the speaker's vulnerability through expressions of loss, self-doubt, and yearning for reciprocity. Conceptual meaning, though less frequent, provides the literal framework of solitude and separation that grounds the narrative. Finally, social meaning highlights the tension between personal emotion and societal judgment, showing how unconventional expressions of grief are often misunderstood. Together, these categories demonstrate how the interplay of literal, symbolic, emotional, and social dimensions enriches the song's narrative and contributes to its enduring resonance with listeners.

Table 3. Summarizes the distribution of each type of meaning found in the data.

Type of Meaning	Frequency	Percentage
Conceptual Meaning	2	16.7%
Connotative Meaning	5	41.7%
Affective Meaning	3	25%
Social Meaning	2	16.7%
Reflected Meaning	0	0%
Collocative Meaning	0	0%
Thematic Meaning	0	0%
Total	12	100%

The findings indicate that connotative meaning dominated the lyrics, accounting for 41.7% of the total data. This suggests that the songwriter relied heavily on symbolic language to communicate emotional experiences.

Table 4. Distribution of Meaning Types

Type of Meaning	Number of Instances	Representative Examples	Interpretive Note
Conceptual meaning	2	<i>"somewhere far away", "I sit by myself"</i>	Provides a literal framework that supports the emotional narrative.
Connotative meaning	5	<i>"Talking to the moon", "Tryna get to you", "Feels like I'm famous"</i>	Dominant; emphasizes symbolism and metaphor to convey longing.
Affective meaning	3	<i>"I want you back", "I hope you're on the other side"</i>	Expressing direct emotions: sadness, hope, and vulnerability.
Social meaning	2	<i>"My neighbors think I'm crazy", "They don't understand"</i>	Demonstrates social perception of emotional expressions that are considered inappropriate.

The distribution of meaning types in Table 4 highlights the predominance of connotative meaning, which appears five times and serves as the central device through which Bruno Mars conveys longing and emotional distance. This dominance underscores the songwriter's reliance on metaphor and symbolism rather than literal description, allowing listeners to connect the imagery with their own experiences of separation. Meanwhile, affective meaning, with three instances, reveals the speaker's vulnerability and emotional openness, reinforcing the sincerity of the narrative. Conceptual meaning and social meaning occur less frequently, but they provide essential grounding: conceptual meaning establishes the literal framework of solitude, while social meaning reflects the tension between private suffering and public perception. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the interplay of symbolic, emotional, literal, and social dimensions enriches the song's narrative, making *Talking to the Moon* resonate as both a personal confession and a universal portrayal of human longing.

Discussion

Conceptual Meaning

Conceptual meaning was identified in two expressions. These expressions functioned to establish the basic context of the narrative by describing the speaker's circumstances in a relatively direct manner.

The phrase indicating that the loved one was located "far away" reflects a literal understanding of separation. Similarly, the expression describing the speaker sitting alone portrays a straightforward situation of solitude. Although conceptual meanings appeared less frequently, they provided the framework necessary for listeners to understand the emotional journey depicted in the song.

The identification of conceptual meaning in only two expressions reflects the tendency of song lyrics to minimize literal description. This finding is consistent with Aryani and Marlina (2021), who observed that conceptual meaning often plays a secondary role in contemporary English songs, serving primarily to establish narrative context. In *Talking to the Moon*, the literal references to solitude and distance provide a framework within which more figurative meanings can emerge. Thus, conceptual meaning functions as a structural anchor rather than a driver of emotional resonance.

Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning emerged as the dominant category in this study. This finding is hardly surprising considering that songs often rely on symbolism and imagery to intensify emotional impact.

The recurring image of communicating with the moon cannot be interpreted literally. Instead, it functions as a symbolic expression of longing. The moon becomes a silent witness to the speaker's emotional struggle and an imagined medium through which communication remains possible.

Other expressions associated with reaching someone or referring to "the other side" also invite interpretations beyond their surface meanings. They represent emotional distance and the human desire to reconnect despite separation. Through these symbolic choices, Bruno Mars transforms a personal experience into something more universal.

The dominance of connotative meaning aligns with previous research emphasizing the centrality of symbolism in musical texts. Aryani and Marlina (2021) similarly found that connotative meaning was the most frequent category in their analysis of English song lyrics. However, the present study extends this observation by demonstrating how connotative expressions in *Talking to the Moon* contribute to the construction of an emotional narrative. The moon, as a symbolic interlocutor, transforms private longing into a universal metaphor for distance and unattainable connection. This supports Leech's (1981) claim that meaning is multidimensional, while also highlighting the role of metaphor in bridging personal and collective emotional experiences.

Affective Meaning

Affective meaning was found in three instances within the lyrics. These expressions reveal the

speaker's emotional state, particularly feelings of sadness, uncertainty, and hope.

The desire to have someone back illustrates an inability to let go of a significant relationship. Meanwhile, questioning whether one is foolish suggests internal conflict. The speaker seems aware that others may view his behavior as irrational, yet he cannot suppress his longing.

Another expression takes the form of a question directed toward the absent person. Rather than demanding an answer, the question reflects a deep yearning to be acknowledged. This emotional openness contributes to the sincerity that many listeners associate with the song.

The affective meanings identified in the lyrics reveal the speaker's vulnerability and emotional conflict. This resonates with Putri (2020), who argued that affective meaning in ballads often conveys sincerity and emotional openness. In Bruno Mars' lyrics, affective meaning is not merely descriptive of sadness but functions as a disclosure of inner turmoil, inviting empathy from listeners. The interplay between affective and connotative meanings demonstrates how emotional states are intensified through metaphorical language, reinforcing the song's appeal as a vehicle for shared emotional experience.

Social Meaning

The presence of social meaning indicates that the song is not solely concerned with individual emotions. It also highlights how those emotions are interpreted within a social environment.

The speaker repeatedly refers to the opinions of others regarding his behavior. From society's perspective, speaking to the moon appears unreasonable. However, these judgments fail to recognize the emotional pain experienced by the speaker.

This tension between private suffering and public perception enriches the narrative of the song. It suggests that emotional experiences are often misunderstood, particularly when they are expressed in unconventional ways.

The presence of social meaning underscores the tension between private suffering and public perception. References to societal judgment—such as the suggestion that speaking to the moon is irrational—illustrate how emotional expression is mediated by social norms. This finding echoes sociolinguistic studies (e.g., Rahmawati, 2019), which emphasize that unconventional expressions of grief or longing are often stigmatized. In this context, the song provides a medium through which socially marginalized emotions can be legitimized, thereby expanding the communicative function of lyrics beyond personal disclosure.

Dominant Meaning and Its Significance

The coding results clearly demonstrate that connotative meaning was the dominant type of meaning found in the lyrics. The prevalence of symbolic expressions indicates that the songwriter preferred indirect representation when communicating emotional experiences.

Rather than explicitly describing grief and loneliness, the lyrics invite listeners to interpret these feelings through metaphorical images. Such an approach allows the song to resonate with diverse audiences because listeners may connect the symbolic expressions with their own experiences of separation, loss, or unfulfilled longing.

In this regard, the dominance of connotative meaning does not merely reflect a stylistic preference. It also reveals how symbolic language can function as an effective tool for expressing complex emotions that are often difficult to articulate directly.

Overall, the findings suggest that *Talking to the Moon* is characterized by a close relationship between meaning and emotion. Through the interplay of conceptual, affective, social, and especially connotative meanings, the song portrays the persistence of hope in the midst of loneliness. The semantic choices employed by Bruno Mars ultimately contribute to the song's enduring emotional appeal.

This finding supports Aryani and Marlina (2021), who also found that connotative meaning dominated contemporary English song lyrics. However, unlike their study, the present research demonstrates how connotative expressions contribute to the development of emotional narratives. The findings of this study provide several important implications. From a theoretical perspective, the results support Leech's (1981) argument that meaning is multidimensional and cannot be understood solely through literal interpretation. The predominance of connotative meaning found in the lyrics demonstrates that symbolic expressions play a crucial role in representing complex emotional experiences within artistic texts. This finding also reinforces previous semantic studies suggesting that song lyrics constitute a rich source of linguistic data for exploring the relationship between language, meaning, and emotion. From a practical standpoint, the study highlights the potential use of songs as authentic teaching materials in English language classrooms, particularly in courses related to semantics, literary appreciation, and discourse analysis. Through song-based activities, students may develop not only their linguistic competence but also their interpretative and critical thinking skills. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the coding and categorization processes were conducted repeatedly by revisiting the data several times and continuously comparing the interpretations with Leech's theoretical framework. This iterative process was intended to maintain consistency and minimize potential bias in the interpretation of the data. Overall, the present study suggests that the semantic analysis of popular songs can contribute meaningfully to both linguistic scholarship and language pedagogy by offering insights into how individuals use language to negotiate emotions, construct meanings, and communicate experiences that are often difficult to express directly.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the types of meaning found in Bruno Mars's *Talking to the Moon* based on Geoffrey Leech's theory of meaning. The findings revealed that not all seven categories of meaning proposed by Leech were represented in the song lyrics. Of the

twelve coded data, four types of meaning were identified, namely conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, affective meaning, and social meaning. Among these categories, connotative meaning emerged as the most dominant type. This indicates that the songwriter tended to rely on symbolic and indirect expressions to communicate emotional experiences. Rather than expressing loneliness, longing, and hope in a straightforward manner, the lyrics employed imagery and figurative language that allowed listeners to construct their own interpretations. In this sense, the song demonstrates that meaning in artistic texts is often layered and cannot always be understood through literal definitions alone.

Another interesting finding concerns the relationship between emotion and language. The affective meanings identified throughout the lyrics suggest that songs can function as spaces where individuals negotiate feelings that are difficult to articulate in everyday interactions. At the same time, the presence of social meaning reflects how personal experiences are often shaped by the perceptions of others. The speaker in the song appears to struggle not only with separation from a loved one but also with the judgments imposed by the surrounding community. These findings reinforce the idea that semantic analysis extends beyond identifying dictionary meanings; it also offers insights into how people construct realities, express vulnerability, and seek connection through language.

Although this study has provided a clearer understanding of semantic meanings in *Talking to the Moon*, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the analysis focused on a single song performed by one artist. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to all song lyrics or to Bruno Mars' entire body of work. Different genres, themes, and cultural backgrounds may produce different patterns of meaning. Second, the interpretation of meaning in qualitative research inevitably involves the researcher's perspective. Even though the coding process was conducted repeatedly and guided by Leech's theoretical framework, alternative interpretations may still emerge when examined by other researchers. Finally, the study relied exclusively on semantic analysis and did not explore other linguistic dimensions such as pragmatics, discourse analysis, or stylistics, which might offer a more comprehensive understanding of the lyrics.

Considering these limitations, future researchers are encouraged to investigate larger datasets involving multiple songs, albums, or artists from different musical genres. Comparative studies may also provide valuable insights into how meanings are constructed across cultural and linguistic contexts. In addition, integrating semantic analysis with other approaches, such as pragmatics or cognitive linguistics, may reveal dimensions of meaning that remain unexplored in the present study. Despite its limitations, this study is expected to contribute to the growing body of semantic research by demonstrating that popular songs can serve as meaningful linguistic resources. Beyond their entertainment value, songs offer rich opportunities to examine how language is used to express emotions, maintain hope, and make sense of human experiences that are often complex and deeply personal.

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