



Exploring The Signified and Signifier in Song Lyrics through A Saussurean Semiotics Lens

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ARTICEL INFO

Keywords:

Song
Lyrics
Saussure
Semiotic

History:

Received (20 December 2022)
Revised (7 March 2023)
Accepted (19 March 2023)

ABSTRACT

Song Lyrics are supposed to have some sort of an implied meaning or another meaning that the performer tries to convey. In this study, the signifier and signified of Taylor Swift's song lyrics will be dissected and examined. For the purpose of this investigation, a qualitative methodology will be utilised, and a semiotic analysis developed by Ferdinand de Saussure will be applied to each verse of the song lyrics. In his theory, Saussure proposed that in order for something to be considered a sign, it needed to include both a marker, also known as a signifier, and a concept (Signified). For the aim of collecting data for this analysis, the song will be sectioned off into stanzas, and each each stanza will be assigned a signifier. Afterward, the provision of a signified, more especially the notion of the marker. Lastly, the researchers will then determine the love meaning of each stanza as well as each verse.

INTRODUCTION

Song Lyrics (Love and Meaning)

Being creatures, we cannot be separated from love in this existence. As a notion, love has a meaning that is difficult to trace scientifically due to its complexity (Zhao, 2022). Robert Sternberg has sought to define love within the framework of a couple's relationship. According to Sternberg (1986), love is a story that everyone writes. The narrative portrays the author's personality, hobbies, and feelings regarding a romantic connection. This narrative typically determines how individuals react and act in relationships.

Individuals who are in love or committed relationships have turbulent emotions that make them sensitive to relationship-related events. When confronted with something romantic, such as making out in bed, going to the movies and seeing a favourite film, or simply eating snacks at home, they will experience happiness, excitement, and stomach butterflies (Wollen, 2019). In contrast, while a couple is fighting (debating), they will experience anger, sadness, and even temporary numbness. According to what was stated in the preceding paragraph, love is quite complicated.

In a romantic connection, a person is likely to experience emotions such as longing, irritation, anger, sadness, and disappointment, especially when the relationship has ended (Danesi & Danesi, 2019). One will make little effort to forget their ex-spouse. Some individuals who fall in love or split up typically express their emotions through writing, posting on social media, making poems or songs, or keeping a journal. In order to indulge their imagination, they usually include suggested meanings in their works (Zhao, 2022).

Taylor Alison Swift is a singer and musician from the United States. She was born in 13 December 1989. Her music extended various genres, and her personal life experience inspired her music. Swift became a musician at 14 and signed as a song writing contract with Sony/ATV Music Publishing in 2004. She was the

youngest artist to win the Grammy Award for Album of The Year at 20. Swift got the 2011 Woman of the Year Award from Billboard. She got many achievements and recorded as the most successful digital artist in music history. Taylor Swift is a songwriter who has written many lyrics for her songs. Her songs usually express emotions related to broken hearts, falling in love, friends, family. In this research, Red song employed as the object (Xu, 2020).

Taylor Swift channelled her feelings and thoughts about her romantic experience into a song (Yustanti & Susilawati, 2020). The song is a literary composition that resembles poetry but is sung (Amir Karim, 2020). In this situation, the author expresses the song's meaning through its lyrics. Song lyrics are viewed as someone's expression through the use of language and words, so a lyric produces an interest in what the lyrics convey. Eventually, these lyrics are transformed to musical notation and melody so that the song's meaning can be transmitted to listeners with ease (Hidayat, 2014). Even though the meaning of lyrics has evolved over time, they are still composed of the author's thoughts and emotions.

Music lyrics are human-created spoken symbols. A song lyric composed by the author is intended to effectively express the intended message. According to (Sitorus, 2019), the lyrics of a song convey the emotion and thought of the composer in order to describe their thoughts, such as love, jealousy, and peace, and serve as a means of communicating magnificently. The lyric therefore conveys concepts and themes and evokes appropriate images using language that is rich in connotations, graphical strength, and sensual beauty.

Lyrics that construct perceptions and describe something that is then filled with emotions, visual power, and the sensation of beauty. By relating song lyrics to literature. Literature is defined by Iryanti (2010) as the language of people, culture, and tradition; nevertheless, literature is more than merely historical or cultural works. Because not all of the composers' words (song lyrics) can be comprehended by the audience, a study of the song lyrics' substance is necessary.

Saussure's Semiotics

Semiotics is the scientific subject that studies signs. According to Saussure, signs are everything that exists in social life. Saussure assert that signs consist of two components: the signifier and the signified. As a result of his theory of signs, Saussure is indeed well-known and extensively discussed. Even though he never published a book, his pupils compiled his lecture notes into an outline. This is a principle for expressing Saussure's theory's core ideas. Any human or animal sounds can be classified as language if they can express, declare, and convey specific concepts and meanings. In a dyadic tradition, several of Saussure's ideas consist of a pair of locations; a sign is said to have two sides.

Fundamentally, semiotics is the study of signs, sign systems, and how meaning is derived from signs. According to Sebeok (2001), the study of sign systems is called semiotics or semiology. European scientists, such as Ferdinand De Saussure, Louis Hjelmslev, Roland Barthes, and Umberto Eco, use the term "semiology," but American scientists, such as Charles Sanders Peirce, Charles Williams Morris, and Marcel Danesi, use the term "semiotic." According to Withalm (2002), semiotics is a theory regarding sign systems; another name for semiotics is semiology, which is derived from the Greek word Semeion, which meaning sign. Moreover, he defines semiotic as the study of sign in society, as well as the study of language sign. In this study, lyrics serve as an indicator (Withalm, 2002). Consequently, the sign will have two sides in this study: the aspect of the signifier and the aspect of the signified. Furthermore, semiotics also encompasses literary analysis as a form of language that depends on additional conventions and generates many meanings (Pradopo, 2009; Rutsyamsun & Sakinah, 2023).

Because there is a tendency to consider many social discourses as linguistic phenomena, semiotics can be explored as a technique of enquiry in numerous scientific disciplines. Research based on multimodal



representations is predicated on communication defined by many modes of representation, including oral and written language, pictures, and actions, as opposed to oral and written language being the only forms of representation (Jamani, 2011). In other words, many social discourses employ language as a model. If, according to the semiotic perspective, all social practises may be viewed as linguistic phenomena, then they can all be viewed as signs (Gretzel & Collier de Mendonça, 2019). This is achievable due to the widespread comprehension of the sign itself.

In human minds, a signifier is a mental image of a sound or a psychological feeling (Mattozzi, 2019). Signified is the mental comprehension or perception of significance (Dunleavy, 2020). There are many who identify signifier with the word, signifier with 'meaning,' and important with the sound of language in the form of a particular sequence of phonemes. Because the signifier and the signified are an inseparable unit, their relationship is extremely intimate. In other words, "significant" refers to the tangible aspect of language, including what is spoken, heard, and written. The signifier is that which marks, while the signified is that which is marked.

In this study, each of the developed song lyrics contains interesting implicit meanings that are worth analysing in this study. On the basis of this context, the problem might be phrased as follows: how is the meaning of love conveyed in Red's song lyrics, and what are the signifier and signified on the Lyric? This research aims to interpret or describe the meaning of love in the song Red by Taylor Swift.

METHODS

This research employed qualitative method because it analyzed song lyric semiotically. Based on the background above in this research, the writer had considered to employ qualitative descriptive research methods. According to Silverman (2005) in the qualitative research, the data for the research appear in the form of words, not numbers. In this research, writer employed song lyric as an object. There is no statistical result in this research because it simply do not appropriate with the data (Creswell, 2013). Then, the data in this research provide in form of written data (words) that obtained in the internet. The main principle of qualitative analysis techniques is to analyse the collected data into systematic, structured, and meaningful (Abubakar, 2021). The steps that employed in this research are, searching, collecting, interpreting, and finally draw the conclusions. In this method, the data were collected from the existent situation without manipulating the data.

A semiotic analysis of Taylor Swift's song lyric "Red" was performed in this study. When the authors analyses the signifiers and signifieds in Taylor Swift's Red. In this study, the semiotic approach of Saussure was used for analysis. The data will provide into table sheet, which categorized into signifier and the concept idea of it or authors' interpretation will be categorized into signified. Then, we interpret the love meaning in every data and each datum will serve by a stanza. The authors then retracted the conclusion based on the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Signifier and Signified

The signifier and the signified appear to be two distinct entities from the sign, as if the sign can distinguish between the two. However, the signifier and the signified are only two terms that can be used to emphasize that there are two distinct requirements for becoming a sign. The signifier and the signified are

always present together, and their relationship is referred to as significant (Chandler, 2007). Thus, it is clear that Saussure employs the signifier/signified dichotomy in his linguistic field.

A sign is the union of a signifier form and an idea or signified. A signifier, in other words, is a "meaningful sound." Thus, the material aspects of language are signified: what is heard and what is written or read. A mental image, thought, or concept is a sign. As a result, the signified represents the mental aspect of language. It should be noted that in a concrete sign of language. (Kress, 2005) state that signifier should possess those features (both social and cultural) or characteristics which already signal the meanings of the signified. These two elements cannot be separated because they always adjoining to establish a sign. Language signs always have two facets: the signifier or the signified.

Table 1. Data 1

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
<p>(1) Loving him is like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street, (2) Faster than the wind, passionate as sin, ending so suddenly. (3) Loving him is like trying to change your mind once you're already flying through the free fall (4) Like the colors in autumn, so bright just before they lose it all</p>	<p>In the first line of this stanza, Taylor describe that her love to his lover is kind like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street which mean it's very precious and cheerful. The phrase "new Maserati" symbolize a luxury thing whereas Maserati is an Italian expensive car. Thus, it can be interpreted as Luxurious or precious feeling to his lover. The phrase "down a dead-end street" draw that there is no road and clogged which mean that she has to stop. Thus, it means that her luxurious feeling to his lover has to stop because there's no ways to continue driving.</p> <p>The second line of this stanza is a support or additional idea of first line. This line, Taylor support the prior line by adding more description of the condition. There are three phrases. First, "faster than wind" this phrase describes that loving her lover is kind like driving a new Maserati so fast which mean She easily falling love to him. Second, "passionate as sin" describe that loving him was passionate like a sin which mean so lustful because "sin" is a symbol of lust, or some desire that eager to do. Third "ending so suddenly" describe that her feeling must be over suddenly because of something.</p> <p>The third line of this stanza explain that loving her lover is kind like change the mind when already flying through the free fall. This phrase drew that this</p>

	<p>condition is something that can't be cancelled easily. It can be interpreted that she was already into him, and it was a useless thing to change the feeling to her lover because she could not force her feeling to him.</p> <p>The last line of this stanza explained that loving him is like color in autumn, so bright just before they lose it all. It drew that color in autumn is yellow to orange which mean a warmth, and happiness. The clause "so bright just before they lose it all" mean that it's so beautiful and shinning then it's gone. This line can be interpreted that loving him is so beautiful, warm, happy but it all gone.</p>
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This stanza is the part of Verse 1 in the song. In this stanza portray that love is some emotion which show such a luxurious or precious feeling that possessed by people. It can be known because Taylor symbolized it as "new Maserati" and "so bright".

When someone has a feeling love to someone, he will feel that love is passionate, exited, and delighted. It was represented by phrase "passionate as a sin" and "like the color in autumn" In this stanza also describe that feeling love could not be forced whether someone falling love, or moving on from someone because people are not able to control their feeling freely.

Table 2. Data 2

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
<p>(1) Losing him was blue like I'd never known</p> <p>(2) Missing him was dark gray, all alone</p> <p>(3) Forgetting him was like trying to know somebody you never met</p> <p>(4) But loving him was red</p>	<p>In the first line of this stanza, Taylor portrayed that she felt blue like she'd never known when she lost him. In the west, the word "blue" usually symbolize the sorrow or sadness. Then the clause "I'd never known" means she never expected that it will happen. Thus, it can be interpreted that Taylor was feeling sorrowful when she lost him. And also, she didn't expect that she will feel sorrowful.</p> <p>In the second line of this stanza, Taylor describe that she was feeling dark grey all when she missed him. The phrase "dark grey" represented the gloomy misery, it seemed awful because it was combination of dark that represent</p>

	<p>gloomy, and grey that represent misery. Then, this phrase is a symbol of the worst condition. Thus, this line can be interpreted that Taylor was feeling gloomy and feeling lonely when she missed him. She felt at the lowest point of solitude.</p> <p>In the third line of this stanza, Taylor describe that forgetting her lover is kind like trying to know somebody you never know. In the reality, people couldn't to know someone that never met. Furthermore, word "know" in this clause has a context meaning of friendship, closeness, or intimate. Then, it's a hard thing to do, even an impossible thing to do. Thus, this line can be interpreted that, Taylor was trying hard to forget his lover, but it impossible, or never happened.</p> <p>In the last line of this stanza, Taylor declared that loving her lover was red. In this line, word "red" is a symbol of energetic, enthusiastic, passionate, and lustful. Thus, in this stanza can be interpreted that Taylor was so energetic or passionate to love his lover.</p>
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This stanza is the part of Chorus in the song. In loving someone in relationship, there are some feeling that will appear emotionally. Someone will feel sad when he got abandoned by his lover, Taylor depict it in the first line on phrase "was blue" Someone will feel gloomy solitude when he missed his lover. Taylor depicted it from the phrase "dark grey all alone". And also, it is some impossible thing to forget his lover. Taylor depict it in the third line on the clause "was like trying to know somebody you never met".

Table 3. Data 3

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
(Red, red)	In this stanza, Taylor was echoing red and sing a line "but love him was red" As the prior analysis above, red is symbol of passionate. Thus, Taylor, in this stanza describe that her love is really passionate.
(Red, red)	
But loving him was red	
(Red, red) (Red, red)	



This stanza is the part of Post Chorus in the song. In this stanza, Taylor portray that love is really passionate. It can be seen because Taylor echoed word “Red” in this stanza. As explained in the above, red is symbol of passionate.

Table 4. Data 4

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
(1) Touching him was like realizing all you ever wanted was right there in front of you	In the first line of this stanza, Taylor portray that when she touched her lover feel like realizing all you ever want was in front of you. The phrase “all you ever wanted” refer to the desire or dream that she waited for a long ago. It can be interpreted, she regarded that touching his lover is her dream or her goal which coveted for a long time.
(2) Memorizing him was as easy as knowing all the words to your old favorite song	In the second line of this stanza, Taylor portray that memorizing her lover was easy as knowing all the words to your old favorite song. The clause “knowing all the words to your old favourite song” means that it’s an easy thing to do that because that is memorized in the head. And everyone can remember it so well, even so detail because that is the favourite ones. Thus, it can be interpreted that, it so easy for Taylor to memorizing her lover, even the detail of her lover because he is her favourite person.
(3) Fighting with him was like trying to solve a crossword and realizing there's no right answer	In the third line of this stanza, Taylor portray that fighting her lover felt like trying to solve a crossword and realizing there’s no right answer. The phrase “trying to solve a crossword and realizing there's no right answer” means that it’s such a complicated thing and actually useless thing because it is unsolved. Thus, it can be interpreted that when Taylor fought with her lover, she felt so confused because it was complicated and unsolved thing to do.
(4) Regretting him was like wishing you never found out that love could be that strong	

	<p>In the last line of stanza, Taylor portrayed that regretting her lover felt like wishing you never found out that love could be that strong. it means that so hard to regretting him because she never expected what coming after regretting him. This line can be interpreted that so hard for Taylor to regret his lover because she never expected the feeling like that love could be strong. She laments her misery.</p>
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This stanza is part of Verse 2 in the song. In this stanza describe that if someone fall in love and make a relationship, then they will be facing such condition. This condition will lead you to have some feeling emotionally. Someone in relationship will feel so happy when they touch their lover, and feel like they achieve their dreaming. It portrays in the first line by clause “like realizing all you ever wanted was right there in front of you”. Someone will easy memorizing his/her lover, it as easy as remember the detail his/her favourite old song. It portrays in second line by clause “knowing all the words to your old favourite song”. Someone in love will feel confused when they are fighting for their lover. It portrays in third line by phrase “like trying to solve a crossword”. And someone also feel that love is very strong when someone trying to forget the lover.

Table 5. Data 5

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
<p>Remembering him comes in flashbacks and echoes Tell myself it's time now, gotta let go But moving on from him is impossible When I still see it all in my head In burning red</p>	<p>In this line of this stanza, Taylor explain that remembering him comes in flashback and echoes. It means that Taylor always remember her lover by flashbacking, then the memorize echoes.</p> <p>In second line of this stanza, Taylor remind that this is the time to go. It can be interpreted that Taylor suggested herself to let go from her lover since now.</p> <p>In the third line of this stanza, Taylor explain that it is impossible to moving from her lover. It can be interpreted that it is so hard to letting him away from her life because she really loves her lover. She can't force to forget him.</p> <p>In the last line of this stanza, this line is a sequel of the previous line. Taylor explain that it all hard to move on from</p>



	his lover because she still see it all in her head in the burning red. The word “it” in this line symbolize a memory that has been trough by Taylor and her lover. The phrase “in my head in burning read” represent that her passionate thought. Thus, it can be interpreted that Taylor could not move on from his lover because Taylor always imagine or remember the beautiful memory with her lover, and this memory always show in her thought.
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This stanza is the part of Bridge in the song. In this stanza, Taylor portray that is so difficult to forget her lover. Even someone is already known the perfect time to left from the relationship, he still could not do it because he always remembering his lover in flashback. Then, it’s so hard to left someone you loved, even impossible because the memory is so passionate. Thus, this stanza explain that love give so much experience that hard to be forgotten.

Table 6. Data 6

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
And that's why he's spinning 'round in my head (Red, red) Comes back to me, burning red (Red, red) (Red, red) Yeah, yeah (Red, red)	<p>In the first line of stanza, Taylor state that her lover was spinning around in her head. The word “spinning” doesn’t mean that he walked around in her head. “spinning” is represented as something that imagined. In another hand, it means something that haunted Taylor thought. Thus, this line can be interpreted that Taylor always imagined her lover accidentally, and her thought was haunted by her memory about her lover.</p> <p>In the second line of this stanza, Taylor intend to offer her lover to come back. The phrase “come back” portray that Taylor once had broken up with her lover. Thus, it can be interpreted that Taylor still needs her lover to rebuild a relationship with her. Her love to him is very passionate. It referred by phrase “burning red” and the echo of word “red”</p>

This stanza is the part of Breakdown in the song. In this stanza, Taylor portray that her thought is always thinking of his lover. She even desire to rebuild the relationship with her lover. Thus, this stanza explain that love is so strong so that someone will always think about his lover.

Table 7. Data 7

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
His love was like Driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street	In this stanza, Taylor describe that his love was like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street which mean the luxurious feeling that must be ended by some reason that inevitable.

This stanza is the part of Outro in the song. Taylor describe that his lover has a love like driving new Maserati down a dead-end street. Thus, when someone has a love, they will feel the luxurious feeling. Nevertheless, someone also has to get consequence that sometimes this feeling has to be ended.

CONCLUSION

This study is an analysis of the song "Red" by Taylor Swift. Taylor is an award-winning musician from the United States. Her music relates to love. Hence, the author believes that her song is an intriguing subject for analysis. The author then analysed the meaning of love in her song using a semiotics technique based on Saussure's semiotics theory. It can be concluded that when a person falls in love, he /she will experience a variety of sensations, such as feeling opulent, passionate, lonely, gloomy, confused, and unable to accomplish anything. Consequently, the meaning of love could be taken from this research. Love is an activity that produces feelings that result in other emotional activities, such as people feeling lonely when they miss their loved, confused when they fight with their lover, and depressed when they lose their sweetheart.

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