

Emotional Construction of Toxic Relationships Discourse through Billie Eilish's Selected Songs (Yule's Perspective)

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Abstract: This study analyzes the denotative and connotative meanings in selected songs by Billie Eilish, namely *Hostage*, *When The Party's Over*, and *Happier Than Ever*. The objective of this research is to identify how meanings are constructed in song lyrics and to explore the deeper emotional and psychological messages conveyed through language. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method and applies the theory of meaning proposed by George Yule (1985) to distinguish between denotative and connotative meanings. The data were collected from the song lyrics and analyzed by identifying key expressions that contain both literal and implied meanings. The findings reveal that while denotative meanings provide the basic, literal interpretation of words, the connotative meanings dominate the lyrics and carry deeper emotional significance. In *Hostage*, the connotations reflect obsession, control, and emotional dominance. In *When The Party's Over*, the lyrics express emotional vulnerability, sacrifice, and loneliness. Meanwhile, *Happier Than Ever* presents themes of realization, emotional detachment, and liberation from toxic relationships. Overall, the study shows that Billie Eilish uses connotative language extensively to portray complex emotional experiences, particularly those related to toxic relationships and personal struggles. This research highlights the importance of understanding connotative meaning in interpreting song lyrics as literary texts.

Keywords: Denotative meaning, connotative meaning, song lyrics, semantics, Billie Eilish

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a system of communication but also a medium through which meaning is constructed, interpreted, and negotiated. In literary texts, this complexity becomes more apparent because language is often used in expressive, symbolic, and layered ways. Words may carry both denotative (literal) and connotative (emotional or cultural) meanings simultaneously, allowing a single expression to convey multiple interpretations. As Geoffrey Leech (1981, p. 9) states, meaning in language is not always straightforward; ambiguity, vagueness, and multiple interpretations are inherent, especially in literary discourse. Therefore, understanding semantic features such as synonymy, antonymy, and ambiguity is essential for interpreting literary texts, where meanings are often intentionally extended beyond their literal sense.

From a semantic perspective, denotative meaning refers to the basic or conceptual meaning of a word, which is objective and commonly found in dictionaries (Leech, 1981, p. 12). In contrast, connotative meaning involves additional emotional, cultural, and social associations attached to a word. George Yule (1985, p. 92) illustrates this distinction through the example of the word *needle*, which denotatively refers to a thin, sharp steel instrument but connotatively may evoke associations such as pain. Similarly, Gorys Keraf (1996, p. 25) explains that connotative meaning carries emotional values that may be positive or negative depending on social experience. This indicates that language does not only function to convey literal meaning but also to express emotions, cultural values, and personal perspectives, making it particularly significant in literary forms such as song lyrics.

The importance of meaning in literature has long been recognized. The Roman poet Horace

introduced the concept of *dulce et utile*, meaning that literature should both entertain and educate. This idea is supported by René Wellek and Austin Warren (1990, p. 47), who argue that literature provides pleasure through its aesthetic form while also delivering insight through its content. Likewise, Edgar Allan Poe suggests that literature entertains while subtly conveying deeper meanings. In this context, song lyrics can be considered a form of literary expression that combines artistic language with emotional and social messages.

One contemporary artist whose work reflects this complexity is Billie Eilish. Many of her songs address themes of toxic relationships, emotional struggle, and personal identity, which remain highly relevant across different age groups. Her music resonates deeply with listeners because it captures emotions that are often difficult to express directly. Through figurative and symbolic language, her lyrics function not only as musical compositions but also as literary texts that reveal deeper psychological and social realities. Therefore, this study applies George Yule (1985) theory of meaning to analyze the denotative and connotative meanings in selected songs—*Hostage*, *When The Party's Over*, and *Happier Than Ever*—in order to uncover how language represents complex emotional experiences and the dynamics of toxic relationships.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Previous Studies

The researcher reviewed several previous studies related to denotative and connotative meanings in song lyrics. Siti Zulaichah (2008), in her thesis *Connotative and Denotative Meanings on the Lyrics of Tina Arena's Songs*, found that Tina Arena's songs predominantly contain positive connotative meanings, reflecting themes such as life struggles in achieving happiness, endless love, and loyalty. Similarly, Khairunnisa Lubis et al. (2021), in their study of the song "Himalaya" by Maliq & D'Essentials, discovered that the lyrics are rich in wishful expressions, portraying the songwriter's desire for future companionship, while the connotative meanings reveal resilience in facing various life situations. Furthermore, Alifsyia Salam et al. (2024) analyzed the song "Sandals" by Khai Dreams and found that its connotative meanings expand the denotative perspective by illustrating a man's unexpected emotional journey in love, including struggles, rivalry, imperfection, and sincerity toward his partner.

Overall, these studies demonstrate that song lyrics often convey deeper emotional and symbolic meanings beyond their literal interpretations, though they differ in focus, objects, and analytical approaches. The first study emphasizes positive connotations such as love and loyalty, the second highlights hope and future aspirations, and the third explores the complexity of imperfect romantic experiences. In contrast, the present research examines songs by Billie Eilish—*Happier Than Ever*, *When The Party's Over*, and *Hostage*—which reveal connotative meanings related to power abuse and toxic relationships. By applying George Yule's theory of meaning, this study aims to provide a deeper and more critical analysis, particularly in understanding the social and psychological dimensions embedded in the lyrics.

B. Semantics

Kreidler (1998:03) stated that semantics is the systematic study of meaning and the study of how languages organize and express meaning is known as linguistic semantics. It means that for us to restrict ourselves to the expression of meanings in a single language, meaning in linguistic semantics is highly necessary (Getu et al., 2025; Latif et al., 2024; Yaumi et al., 2024). The systematic study of meaning is a focus of three academic fields: psychology, philosophy, and linguistics. It indicates that a psychologist is concerned with how particular people learn, remember, or forget knowledge. Language philosophy is concerned with a specific fact that we are aware of or accept as true about other possible facts (Ye et al., 2025; Lemasters, R., & Hurshman, 2025; Dalyan et al., 2022). The final comprehensive study of meaning concerns linguistics to comprehend how language functions.

The study of meaning is referred to by the technical term "semantics," according to Pateda

(2010, p. 2). Semantics, which is a component of language structure, deals with meaning as linguistic objects of study. Thus, semantic understanding might be defined as the area of linguistics that investigates the connection between linguistic signs and their meanings, or the area of linguistics that investigates meaning.

As a result, in semantics, the meaning of a word must be clearly understood, for instance, if we are unsure of what a word or phrase in a sentence means. As an illustration, consider what the concerned language's equivalents are. Ridwan Nurlaela cited Huford and Halsey in 1983: 3. Therefore, learning semantics was vital and required.

C. Denotative

Denotation refers to the literal or primary meaning of a word, which typically relates to real-world references and is the type of definition usually found in a dictionary. According to Yule (1985, p. 92), denotative or conceptual meaning includes the fundamental and essential aspects of meaning that are expressed through the literal use of language. For example, the word needle may have core elements like "thin," "sharp," "steel," and "instrument," which make up its referential meaning. However, the word can also carry connotative meaning, such as evoking the idea of "pain." This suggests that connotation plays a significant role in how language is understood and used in communication (Irawan, 2025; Andini et al., 2022; Yuniatun et al., 2025).

Barthes (1972) defined that denotation as the first level of sign in which the meaning is emphasized through a relation between signifier and sign to its own realistic original definition. In the other hand, Sui & Fan (2015) state that the meaning of denotation “on the primary levels of signification and consist in what we think of as the literal, fixed, dictionary meaning of word, ideally one that can be universally agreed upon”.

D. Connotative

According to Yule (1985:92), denotative or conceptual meaning refers to the fundamental and essential aspects of meaning that are expressed through the literal use of language. For example, the word needle may have core elements like "thin," "sharp," "steel," and "instrument," which make up its referential meaning. However, beyond this literal sense, words can also carry connotative meaning that evokes additional associations, such as the idea of "pain."

In line with Yule’s statement, Wardhaugh (1977, p. 159) explains that connotative meaning uses words to add further complications to any theorizing about meaning, particularly their uses in metaphoric and poetic language. Any understanding of connotation, metaphor and poetic language must be based on an understanding of what may be called the "normal use of language." Connotation is more complicated than denotation, the other important thing whenever we are talking about connotations is that the involvement of affective and emotive in our mind (Faisal et al., 2025; Wicaksono et al., 2021). Connotation meaning can also happened in a sentence; usually we can know the real meaning of the sentence by looking at the context (Suheri et al., 2025; Junaid & Andini, 2025). For instance, the sentence "She finally let go" may literally refer to someone releasing an object, but in a given context, it could suggest that someone has emotionally moved on or accepted a painful reality.

Table 1. Negative, Neutral, and Positive Connotative Meanings of Words

Negative Connotative	Neutral	Positive
Shanty/shack		Cottage
Dirty underwear		Soiled linen
Cancer	Carcinoma	Lingering illness

Legal murder	Euthanasia	Mercy killing
Kick the bucket	Die	Pass away
Mad/crazy	Pshychotic	Mentally unbalanced/disturbed
Skinny	Slim/slender	Svelte

Connotative meaning influences the emotional and social value of words beyond their literal definitions. Although several terms may refer to the same concept, each expression carries different associations that can create negative, neutral, or positive impressions depending on the context. This indicates that language users often select particular words not only to convey information, but also to express attitudes, emotions, politeness, or ideological perspectives in communication.

III. METHODS

A. Research Method

The study material in this research is the text of lyrics, and the objective is to determine the meaning. As the acquired analyzed data are provided with words and other verbal expressions, this study can be characterized as qualitative research. The object of qualitative research was something that developed exactly as it was as a result of a finished, dynamic thought construction and was thus impenetrable to researcher manipulation (Sugiono, 2013, p. 15-16).

B. Source of Data

The primary data is the transcripts of Billie Eilish's song lyrics, and the secondary data are the previous studies that were conducted by some researchers.

The first song is Hostage, a hauntingly intimate track included in Billie Eilish's debut EP Don't Smile at Me (2017). This song captures the suffocating side of love and desire, where affection begins to blur into control. Through its slow and minimalist production, the track reveals the darker undertones of romance that can slip into obsession. The lyrics illustrate a longing for complete possession of someone, highlighting the unhealthy roots of a toxic relationship.

The second song is When the Party's Over, released in 2018 and later featured in her debut album When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go? (2019). This emotionally powerful track explores the pain and emptiness of being in an unhealthy relationship. It delves into feelings of emotional detachment, loneliness, and quiet heartbreak that often follow the breakdown of intimacy. The song marks a shift from possessiveness to the sorrowful awareness of emotional damage caused by toxic love.

The last song is Happier Than Ever, released as the title track of Billie Eilish's second studio album Happier Than Ever (2021). Exploring the theme of toxic relationships, this song presents a striking emotional journey from quiet sorrow to explosive anger. The soft beginning transforms into a raw, cathartic outburst that symbolizes release and empowerment. It reflects the final stage of breaking free, where suppressed pain erupts into liberation and strength.

C. Instrument of the Research

The main instrument of this research is to collect the data by note-taking. Miles (2014) defined

note-taking as the process of writing detailed, concise notes or thoughts of researchers relating to the data collected. These written data used as a reference for further data analysis and a deeper understanding of patterns and findings in qualitative research. Using this type of instrument, the researcher noted important information relevant to the song to find lexical meaning.

D. Procedures for Collecting the Data

The procedures used in collecting data that the researcher applied are as follows: a) Listening to the selected songs of Billie Eilish frequently, b) Identify the words in every lyric, c) Note down every word that contains denotative and connotative, d) Analyzed the meaning of each word using the Oxford dictionary for denotative meaning and the connotative meaning was found by looking at the overall interpretation of the songs on detikcom and then applying George Yule's theory to explain the implied meaning.

E. Technique of Analyzing the Data

After the data was collected, the researcher analyzed the data using a theory by Yule. George Yule's theory of meaning focused on the way the meanings of words are constructed in language. This technique focused on the denotative and connotative elements contained in the selected songs from Billie Eilish.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

1. Hostage-Billie Eilish

1. I wanna be alone

Alone with you, does that make sense? I wanna steal your soul
 And hide you in my treasure chest
 I don't know what to do
 To do with your kiss on my neck I don't know what feels true
 But this feels right so stay a sec Yeah, you feel right so stay a sec
 And let me crawl inside your veins
 I'll build a wall, give you a ball and chain It's not like me to be so mean
 You're all I wanted
 Just let me hold you like a hostage
 Gold on your fingertips Fingertips against my cheek Gold leaf across your
 lips Kiss me until I can't speak
 Gold chain beneath your shirt
 The shirt that you let me wear home Gold's fake and real love hurts
 And nothing hurts when I'm alone When you're with me and we're alone
 And let me crawl inside your veins
 I'll build a wall, give you a ball and chain
 It's not like me to be so mean You're all I wanted
 Just let me hold you Hold you like a hostage Like a hostage

Data 1

“I wanna steal your soul” (S3, V1, L3)

Denotatively, steal means to take something without permission, often in a secretive or illegal manner. However, connotatively, in the context of this lyric, steal suggests an intense desire to possess someone completely, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. It reflects a controlling and obsessive nature, where love becomes a form of dominance.

Data 2

“And hide you in my *treasure* chest” (S3, V1, L4)

Denotatively, a treasure chest is a wooden box used to store valuable items, like gold, jewelry, or precious objects. While in connotative meaning, in the context of this lyrics, treasure chest carries symbolic meaning. It implies the desire to possess and keep someone hidden away, treating them like a precious object. Although the word "treasure" may seem positive, in this lyric it implies obsession and control, making the connotative meaning negatively charged within the context of a toxic relationship.

Data 3

“And let me *crawl* inside your veins” (S3, V3, L10)

Denotatively, it refers to moving slowly and low to the ground, often in a submissive or animal-like manner. Connotatively, however, it suggests obsessive longing and emotional dependency. In this context, crawl implies a desperate desire to invade someone’s inner being, crossing emotional and physical boundaries.

Data 4

“I’ll build a wall, give you *ball and chain*” (S3, V3, L11)

Denotatively, a wall is a physical structure that separates or encloses an area. However, connotatively, the word wall symbolizes emotional distance, isolation, and control. It implies that the speaker wants to create a barrier that prevents the other person from leaving or connecting with the outside world. While ball and chain in denotative meaning is a metal restraint used historically on prisoners to prevent escape, consisting of a heavy metal ball attached to the ankle by a chain. Connotatively, in this context, it reflects the speaker’s desire to restrain or possess their partner, portraying love as something that traps rather than frees. It symbolizes emotional imprisonment, making the relationship feel oppressive rather than affectionate.

Data 5

“Just let me hold you like a *hostage*” (S3, V3, L14)

In denotative meaning, hostage is someone who is taken as a prisoner by an enemy in order to force the other people involved to do what the enemy wants. While in connotative meaning, hostage symbolizes an obsessive need for control and possession in a relationship. The speaker likens affection to captivity, expressing a desire to hold someone so tightly that it becomes suffocating.

2. When The Party is Over-Billie Eilish

Don't you know I'm no good for you? I've learned to lose you, can't afford
to Tore my shirt to stop you bleedin'

But nothin' ever stops you leavin'

Quiet when I'm comin' home and I'm on my own I could lie, say I like it
like that, like it like that

I could lie, say I like it like that, like it like that

Don't you know too much already? I'll only hurt you if you let me

Call me friend but keep me closer (call me back) And I'll call you when
the party's over

Quiet when I'm comin' home and I'm on my own And I could lie, say I
like it like that, like it like that Yeah, I could lie, say I like it like that, like
it like that

But nothin' is better sometimes Once we've both said our goodbyes Let's
just let it go

Let me let you go

Quiet when I'm comin' home and I'm on my own I could lie, say I like it
like that, like it like that

I could lie, say I like it like that, like it like that

Data 6

"I've learned to lose you, can't **afford** to" (S2, V1, L2)

Based on the dictionary, "afford" means to have enough resources (usually money) to do or obtain something. In these lyrics, connotatively it refers to emotional cost. The word carries a negative connotation, reflecting emotional vulnerability, dependence, and inner conflict.

Data 7

"**Tore** my shirt to stop you **bleedin**" (S2, V1, L3)

"Tore" is the past tense of "tear," which literally means to rip or pull apart by force. In connotative meaning, "tore" implies an act of desperation and sacrifice suggesting that speaker is willing to damage something of their own to help someone else. While shirt is an article of clothing worn on the upper body. In this context, it symbolizes something deeply personal and intimate to the speaker. Tearing it to help someone else suggests a sacrifice of something important and close to herself. It is mentioned in the dictionary that bleeding/bleedin' is a process of losing blood from the body. Bleedin' in this lyrics implies emotional wounds, personal struggles, or inner problems faced by the person the speaker cares about.

Data 8

"**Quiet** when I'm comin' home and I'm on my own" (S2, V2, L5)

Denotatively "quiet" means the absence of noise or sound. In this context, it carries a negative connotation, suggesting loneliness and emotional emptiness. The quietness emphasizes the speaker's isolation and lack of comfort when returning home alone.

Data 9

"Call me friend but keep me **closer**" (S2, V3, L10)

In denotative meaning, "closer" is the comparative form of "close," meaning at a short distance. While in connotative meaning, it has a negative connotation, suggesting emotional control or manipulation. It may hint a toxic closeness, not genuine intimacy but the boundaries are blurred.

Data 10

"And I'll call you when the **party's** over" (S2, V3, L11)

According to the dictionary, "party" is a social gathering for celebration, fun, or entertainment. While connotatively, In this context, "party" symbolizes a temporary distraction, emotional escape, or superficial happiness. Suggesting that the speaker withholds emotional contact until after the "fun" or masking of pain ends, implying emotional avoidance.

3. Happier Than Ever-Billie Eilish

When I'm away from you I'm happier than ever
 Wish I could explain it better I wish it wasn't true
 Give me a day or two
 To think of something clever To write myself a letter
 To tell me what to do, mm-mm
 Do you read my interviews?
 Or do you skip My avenue (My avenue)
 When you (when you) said you were passing through Was I even on your way?
 I knew when I asked you to (when I asked you to) Be cool about what I was telling you
 You'd do the opposite of what you said you'd do (what you said you'd do)
 And I'd end up more afraid
 Don't say it isn't fair
 You clearly weren't aware that you made me miserable So if you really wanna know
 When I'm away from you (when I'm away from you) I'm happier than ever (happier than ever)
 Wish I could explain it better (wish I could explain it better) I wish it wasn't true (wish it wasn't true), mm-hm
 You call me again, drunk in your Benz Driving home under the influence
 You scared me to death, but I'm wasting my breath 'Cause you only listen to your fucking friends
 I don't relate to you
 I don't relate to you, no
 'Cause I'd never treat me this shitty You made me hate this city
 And I don't talk shit about you on the internet Never told anyone anything bad
 'Cause that shit's embarrassing, you were my everything And all that you did was make me fucking sad
 So don't waste the time I don't have And don't try to make me feel bad
 I could talk about every time that you showed up on time Cause I'd never treat me this shitty
 Never paid any mind to my mother or friends So I shut 'em all out for you 'cause I was a kid
 You ruined everything good
 Always said you were misunderstood Made all my moments your own
 Just fucking leave me alone, whoa, yeah

Data 11

"To think of something clever" (S1, V2, L2)

In the lyric "give me a day or two to think of something clever," the word "clever" denotatively refers to being mentally quick, witty, or intellectually sharp in formulating a response. However, its connotative meaning extends beyond intellectual ability. It subtly reflects emotional discomfort, inner conflict, and social pressure. This illustrates an ironic self-awareness and hints at emotional suppression, making the connotation negative, as it stems from insecurity, fear of judgment, and emotional restraint.

Data 12

“do you read my *interviews?*” (S1, V3, L9)

The word “interviews” literally means media conversations where the speaker shares her thoughts. However, its connotative meaning suggests emotional distance and neglect. The speaker implies that the person doesn’t really listen to her, even when she opens up publicly. This gives the word a negative connotation, showing her frustration and feeling of being ignored.

Data 13

“Or do you skip my *avenue?*” (S1, V3, L10)

Here, the phrase “my avenue” literally means a street, but connotatively it represents the speaker’s personal or emotional space. The question implies that the person deliberately avoids her, not just her location, but who she is. This gives the phrase a negative connotation, expressing feelings of being ignored or unimportant.

B. Discussion

The findings of this study move beyond merely confirming the dominance of connotative meaning in song lyrics and instead reveal how connotation operates as an affective-discursive mechanism in constructing toxic relational dynamics. While previous research, such as Zulaichah (2008), has emphasized the presence of emotionally rich connotations in song lyrics—often reflecting positive values such as love, loyalty, and perseverance—this study identifies a significant shift in the emotional orientation and function of connotation. In Billie Eilish’s *Hostage*, connotative expressions do not simply intensify emotional meaning; rather, they actively construct a discourse of obsession, control, and emotional domination.

Expressions such as “*steal your soul*” and “*hold you like a hostage*” illustrate that connotation functions not only as an extension of literal meaning but as a linguistic strategy that transforms affection into possessiveness and intimacy into control. This suggests that connotative meaning, in this context, operates as a site where emotional attachment is reconfigured into a form of symbolic captivity. Unlike earlier studies that position connotation as a vehicle for expressing idealized or aspirational emotions, this study demonstrates that connotation can also encode psychologically complex and potentially destructive relational experiences.

Furthermore, the findings indicate a broader shift in contemporary song discourse, where emotional expression is no longer predominantly romanticized but instead reflects ambivalence, vulnerability, and power imbalance. In this sense, connotative meaning contributes to the construction of what can be understood as an affective economy of toxicity, in which language not only represents but also reproduces patterns of emotional dependence and control. This highlights a critical expansion of semantic analysis: connotation should not be viewed solely as an additional layer of meaning, but as an active force in shaping emotional subjectivity and relational power structures.

Thus, while this study aligns with previous research in recognizing the significance of connotative meaning, it departs from earlier findings by demonstrating that the function of connotation is not inherently positive or aesthetic. Instead, it can serve as a discursive tool that reveals and normalizes toxic emotional patterns, particularly within contemporary cultural texts such as song lyrics. This positions connotative meaning as central not only to semantic interpretation but also to the critical understanding of how language constructs emotional realities in modern discourse.

The findings of this study support previous research, such as Zulaichah (2008), which highlights the importance of connotative meaning in enriching song lyrics beyond their literal sense. However, what emerges in Billie Eilish’s *Hostage* is a noticeably different emotional tone. While earlier studies often emphasize positive connotations like love, loyalty, and hope, this song presents a more unsettling emotional landscape. The connotative meanings found here tend to lean toward darker feelings—obsession, control, and emotional dominance—suggesting that the experience of

love being portrayed is far from ideal.

In *Hostage*, the language seems to reflect a deeply personal and vulnerable emotional state. The speaker appears to long for closeness and connection, yet this desire slowly shifts into something more possessive and overwhelming. Phrases like “*steal your soul*” and “*hold you like a hostage*” do not simply function as poetic expressions; they reveal how intense emotions can blur the line between affection and control. There is a sense that love, in this context, is experienced as something consuming—something that is not only desired, but also feared.

This tension points to a more complex emotional reality. The connotative meanings in the lyrics suggest an inner struggle, where the need to hold on to someone is driven by insecurity and the fear of being left behind. As a result, the language used becomes a way of expressing emotions that are difficult to articulate directly. Rather than presenting love as harmonious, the song exposes its more fragile and unstable side.

Compared to previous studies, this shift is quite significant. If earlier research shows how connotation can strengthen positive emotional messages, this study demonstrates that it can also reveal uncomfortable and even painful experiences. In Billie Eilish’s lyrics, connotative meaning becomes a space where personal emotions are expressed in a raw and honest way. It allows listeners to feel the weight of a relationship that is not only intense, but also emotionally imbalanced.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that connotation in contemporary song lyrics does more than add depth to meaning. It becomes a way of capturing lived emotional experiences—especially those shaped by toxic relationships. Through this lens, *Hostage* can be seen not just as a song, but as a reflection of how complicated and contradictory human emotions can be when love turns into something that confines rather than frees.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the selected songs by Billie Eilish, it can be concluded that both denotative and connotative meanings play important roles in constructing meaning within song lyrics. Denotative meanings serve as the literal foundation of the words, while connotative meanings provide deeper emotional, psychological, and social interpretations. The findings indicate that connotative meaning is more dominant in all three songs, as it allows the expression of complex feelings that cannot be conveyed through literal language alone.

In *Hostage*, the connotative meanings reflect obsession, control, and possessiveness, portraying love as a form of emotional captivity. In *When The Party’s Over*, the lyrics reveal emotional vulnerability, sacrifice, and loneliness, indicating an imbalanced and painful relationship. Meanwhile, *Happier Than Ever* represents emotional awareness and liberation, as the speaker realizes the toxicity of the relationship and chooses self-detachment. By applying George Yule (1985) theory of meaning, this study demonstrates that song lyrics can be analyzed as literary texts that reflect real-life emotional experiences. Therefore, understanding denotative and connotative meanings is essential in uncovering the deeper messages embedded in song lyrics, particularly those related to toxic relationships and personal identity.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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