



## **CONNOTATIVE AND DENOTATIVE MEANING IN FRED NEIL'S "EVERYBODY'S TALKIN" SONG**

**Paisal Ramdani<sup>1</sup>, R. Myrna Nur Sakinah<sup>2</sup>**

English Department

Faculty of Adab and Humanity

State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

email: [paisalramdani1312@gmail.com](mailto:paisalramdani1312@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [myrnaasakinah@gmail.com](mailto:myrnaasakinah@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

This study analyzes the myths in the lyrics of "Everybody's Talkin'" by Fred Neil. The researcher uses a qualitative descriptive method because the research results and the content of this study are in the form of words that must be explained. In reviewing the data, this study uses Roland Barthes' theory where the discussion focuses on denotation, connotation, and myth contained in the lyrics of the song Everyday's Talking by Fred Neil. This study provides new results regarding denotation and myths that develop about abstract life through the use of denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings formed from the relationship between the two meanings that question human life. One of the myths found in this research is the word sun, which in this study has a myth about the giver of light, warmth or the giver of life and happiness. The human problem in this case is the emptiness of feelings without happiness. The emptiness that is experienced in this lyric is about someone who has a desire to travel to find happiness because happiness is not found in the midst of the hustle and bustle of social life. Until the meaning of sun extends to abstract form of happiness.

**Key words:** Connotative, Denotative, Everybody's Talkin', Myth, Semiology

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Literature is one of the means by which humans can be creative in expressing feelings. Basically, these expressions of human feelings become a crucial element that keeps the essence of literature preserved. With the dynamic movement of literature makes literature itself difficult to describe in detail. Moreover, literature has certain characteristics that also develop following the development of time from time to time. Wellek (Wellek & Warren, 1949) argues that literature is a human creation that has a creative element as well as art. Literary

<sup>1</sup> English Department of Faculty of Adab and Humanity of State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati

<sup>2</sup> English Department of Faculty of Adab and Humanity of State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati



work in other words is an art creation, where in this case, the main medium used in expressing ideas as material for pouring the creation is through words. So, in this context, the medium in question has included writing activities and puns or verbal. The words contained in literary works have their own uniqueness that makes them different from the words that humans use in their daily activities. This gives literature more inclination in artistic and aesthetic terms.

By paying attention to the theory mentioned above, where literature has a special place in its uniqueness and beauty as a creative art, the definition of literature is increasingly developing and expanding to accompany and keep up with the times. Referring to what Culler has (Culler, 2013) which gives one of the many definitions of literature according to him, he sees literature as an imaginative study that is in the realm of fiction. By and large, imaginative writing techniques occur with the help of the author's own imagination. This is because in the process, writing literary works is not only always pouring out what a person experiences in the real world or what has been encountered in everyday life. However, there is an element of creativity and imaginative power that adds a new color to literature. Therefore, it can be concluded that literary works are not only a replica form of life, but in them there is an author's ideology or certain feelings that are subjective and imaginative. It is intended to have no effect or stimulate certain responses from its readers.

Literature is generally divided into three parts. The three parts are poetry, prose, and drama. According to Hardjana, (in Sakinah & Aufa, 2019) The writer of literature, or especially the poets gives a noticeable manifestation in every poem he writes. Especially in the writing of works in this section, there are experiences of poets who are also poured into literary works. The experience in question is a creative experience where in the process, this poetic experience incarnates as a creative appreciation in the creation of literary works. That way, the basis that is the essence of a poetry is a deep appreciation of the poets themselves. Apart from that, according to Sayuti (Sayuti, 2019), literature can position itself as a "great home" in which manifestation is located, a medium of empathy for the "whole of life-citizenry" while embracing the assortment of experiences that originally came from a variety of existential actions.

Literary works in relation to them, especially in the focus of poetry, are almost never separated from the rejections made by various communities that can be said to have considerable power in terms of influence that has the argument that every literary work has no more value than just a mere work of fiction which has no more value in it. This comment subsequently received rejection. According to Endaswara (Endraswara, 2011), literature still has a valuable role in it, one of which is the power in literature itself in its ability to influence humans. Karatem also said the same, in some case, literature can be able to use to control the society, as a representation of proletarian message for the government (Karatem et al., 2013).

Thus, literature still has its own role and value that cannot be looked down upon. It has been mentioned that literary works were formed by their creators including poets who did pour ideologies, feelings, and poetic experiences into their literary works which made the beginning of the cause of language in literature have a grammar system that can be said to stand alone. One of them is intended to get

responses and impressions from readers and connoisseurs. One of them is the form of poetry which can be said to be an imaginative form of writing because there is a lot of imaginative power that is also contained in literature, especially in the form of poetry.

Poetry in literature has many forms or types. One of the lyric poems became an important part of music. Because nowadays, music without the addition of lyrics has elements that are less alluring or less enjoyable for some people. According to Abram (Abrams, 1999), A lyric is a fairly short poem in which the lyrics consist of words composed by a writer. The author in his lyric work pours the state of mind or the process of perception, as well as the addition of the feelings he creates in the imaginative world or indeed truly his whole into the poem he made. Initially, the author in general begins his authorship through solitude and reflection as well as contemplation and impregnation of his feelings and imaginative world.

In addition, perception is a response by providing interpretation which is carried out by providing abstractions, images, and interpretations of things that are captured and recorded by the five senses and consciousness. Besides, the thought process is the process of finding meaning and trying to make rational decisions based on logic and reason. Feelings are responses obtained from experiences, including physical and emotional perceptions of the surrounding environment. So, the lyrics based on the above are similar to poems in some ways, such as poems and song lyrics depending on the underlying language of their use. Language has similarities with semiotics. Semiotics has scope of a sign as the object under study. Signs will never be understood without knowing how the sign system works. This is the same as Teeuw (in Rusmana, 2014) which states that One way to understand human beings is to look carefully at how humans make and use signs. Also, when analyzing literature, literature is always full of symbols, and symbols in poetry are sometimes difficult to understand. Therefore, in most cases, Semiotics examines literary works based on signs that present something else, not the real thing (Naililhaq, 2020).

After communicating theories about literature, in this study, researchers will focus on analyzing Fred Neil's lyrics entitled "Everybody's Talking". The lyrics tell about the search for identity, it can also be interpreted as the beauty experienced when experiencing darkness in all untold anxiety, it can also be said to be an effort made by a person as a realization of the desire to travel to a place that has better conditions, is suitable, or as expected for oneself, or can be said to be a criticism of social conditions. Literature is undoubtedly a mythological system: meaning, which is a discourse; there are signs of discourse and written form; some have signs, which are literary concepts; meaning, which is a literary discourse. Barthes set out to address this problem by writing *Zero Degrees*, which, however, is merely a myth of literary language. There I as a writer define writing as a mythical marker of a dictionary; that is, as an already inspired form of meaning, by accepting the new meaning of the literary concept (Barthes, 1967).

This research will use semiotics or a semiological approach through the theory of Roland Barthes. Semiotics or semiology is a scientific discipline that examines signs. This science views that everything or events that occur in the social environment of society are a collection of signs. Roland Barthes famously used the

term semiology by passing on the ideas of Ferdinand De Saussure. Barthes's definition of semiology is known as order signification which includes several terms in semiology, namely, denotation, connotation and myth. Everybody's Talkin' is a work born out of response to real-life events, in this case also many signs that are still not fully known in this lyric. This study has one formulation of the problem: What is the denotative and connotative meaning in the lyrics of Fred Neil Everybody's Talkin'? then connected How is a myth formed in the lyrics of Fred Neil's Everybody's Talkin'?

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The type of research used in this study examined the lyrics of Fred Neil's song entitled Everybody's Talkin' poems using qualitative research. This qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words. According to Bogdan & Biklen (in Moleong, 2007), descriptive qualitative is a research procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of speech or writing and behavioral behavior of the observing people. This qualitative descriptive is expected to provide clear data through descriptions, words, clauses or others. Then according to the theory in this study will be systematically explained how the results are clear in the form of a description text. The source of the data in this study is the lyrics of Fred Neil's song titled Everybody's Talkin'. Then this research uses the method of literary criticism, namely by using an objective approach and structuralism. In addition, the researcher used the main theory of semiology Roland Barthes with a focus on denotations, connotations and myths in this study.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

"Everybody's talkin'" is a song recorded and written by Fred Neil in 1996, but it was published two years later after it was completed in writing. Frederick Ralph Morlock Jr. or better known as Fred Neil, born on March 16, 1936, he is famous as an American folk singer who always entertains the public. The song he wrote called Everybody's Talkin' was a song that once had its 6th position on The Billboard Hot 100 when the version was sung by another singer and songwriter named Harry Nilsson and won a Grammy Award after the song became an accompaniment feature on a film. The large number of listeners, making this song raises a lot of rhetorical questions about the meaning of each word and sentence in each listener's ear. Call it themes that carry things that happen in everyday reality such as peace of life, search for identity and freedom. Indirectly, this song discusses the reality of social life in the midst of a society where humans have their own roles as individuals. As for Nilsson, he argues that man has a lust in himself to travel in search of peace according to himself.

Fred Neil's work, which is themed around social events that occur in reality, has its own role as a response to facts that occur in real life. This makes a literary work return to its essence. In the song Everybody's Talkin', in this song is full of meaning accompanied by the signs in the song.

Denotation is the meaning of the word that mainly refers to the original word, "dictionary definition" for example "cat" indicates the type of animal,

"building" indicates the type of building. Denotation itself according to Barthes is a first-level designation. That is, the meaning of the word permanent does not include all subjective judgments. It describes the literal or clear meaning of the sign. Thus, the denotation of the text refers to what each person sees without associating it with his culture, ideology or society. Barthes states that the denoted meaning contains analogical features and is the main connotational meaning in the process of marking (Barthes, 1967). So, indirectly the meaning of denotation in a language is divided into two stages, namely the dictionary meaning of the first and the second, culturally or other things. Denotation is something that can be interpreted literally, real, clearly, and generally. In linguistic studies, denotative meanings can be obtained in dictionaries and visual representations that are accepted and interpreted equally in each culture. Connotation refers to socio-cultural and personal associations related to ideology, emotion, class, age, gender and ethnicity. As does a lyric piece that quotes and has meaning. Connotation meaning a term that explain a sign meaning where it works coventionally when the sign meets the users feeling as well as their culture (Fisk, 2010, in Bouzida, 2014).

In the data attached below, researchers will show and explain the denotative, connotative, and mythological meaning in the song Everybody's Talking.

Everybody's talkin' at me  
I don't hear a word they're sayin'  
Only the echoes of my mind  
(Neil, Fred. "Everybody's Talkin'" stanza 1)

In the data above is the first stanza in the lyrics of the song Everybody's Talkin'. Literally or the meaning in the dictionary is explained in the beginning of the word Everybody's this indicates that the author positions himself as someone who is omniscient in terms of storytelling, or as a person who acts as the first giver of the point of view who is explaining the other person who refers to as an object. The object in the above data refers to the word human. Talkin' itself according to the dictionary means that it is one of the ways humans communicate in general, humans themselves have two types of ways in communication, namely verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Then in the next array the author uses the words I and Hear as a form of affirmation that this song does use the technique of storytelling through a first-person point of view which is none other than the person who is telling the story in the song. The word echoes refers to a type of resounding sound that becomes a partition because it is the focal point that gives distraction to my character in the song. In the connotative meaning, the verse has a new meaning because it is in a literary structure. The connotative meaning explains how the constantly thoughtful content of one's own thoughts can distract a person's attention into being indifferent to others. Connotatively, the meaning of the word echoes turns out to be even deeper, the word echoes there no longer has a dictionary meaning that refers to the meaning that explains it as one of the types of repetitive sounds, but the word echoes there has more meaning to the content of the mind that is one's desire, wishful thinking, and presupposition. The word 'echoes' in the above data seems to change culture or meaning by convention in society or at least

signifies the class between the word echo and resonance. The word echo is considered to be more than a resonant because the echo is under the word echo.

The myth in the above data also has several interpretations, which is to show its approval of this belief by incorporating a 'constantly haunting mind' i.e. an excess of thoughts that can make a person disregard communication contact with other humans due to other human beings' negative comments towards him. Another interpretation of this stanza is about the constantly thought-out impulse of desire to avoid social activity. The songwriter asks a lot of questions about what kind of thinking the characters are actually thinking about in this song. In other words, he wants to say that social activity can give anxiety to some people who give the myth that social activity can bring excessive thoughts because negative comments from other humans in general are always avoided by most people. As we know, relationships with fellow human beings are actually very necessary, but in it there will always be things that can make some people uncomfortable to the point of not caring about it anymore over time. This can intersect with one's principles of life as opposed to the infinite social demands of the 'good man'. This is what the author more or less wants to convey where every human being still has something that becomes anxiety, be it big or small. In the next array the author changes the direction of the conversation from the previous theme.

People stoppin', starin'  
I can't see the faces  
Only the shadows of their eyes  
(Neil, Fred, "Everybody's Talkin'": stanza 2)

In the data above, the denotative meaning of the word starin' is a change in the shape of the word eye view which means a condition when the eye is focused on observing a certain object is still a meaning that refers to the dictionary, then the author gives a statement in the form of a negative word again using the words can't, faces, and shadow. The three words there again refer to statements about life. The connotative meaning of the above data illustrates that when people begin to become indifferent to the characters in the song, they can no longer care about the other person or really become unrecognizable of these people, but rather seem like a mere shadow where they exist but do not exist simultaneously. The lyricist gives the impression of the situation at that time by using the phrase shadows of their eyes connotatively meaning a condition where the character is in a hidden and unconcerned place, a kind of form of exclusion in society towards the character in the lyrics where when seeing a pair of their eyes to communicate alone is not capable. The meaning of the myth in the data above is like the story of a human being who has an introverted personality. The story in the sentence describes the condition in which man at any time gets exclusion in society, and another condition where man can also choose to shy away from social activities and simply choose to be too late with himself to forget that he is a social being.

I'm goin' where the sun keeps shinin'  
(Neil, Freid. "Everybodys Talkin'": couplet 1, stanza 3)

The above data is the first line of the third stanza, the above data denotatively still refers to the dictionary meaning. Like the sun is the sun as the center of the solar system that has the highest temperature among other planets in the solar system. The word *Shinin'* also still refers to the dictionary meaning. But after the words are arranged in sentence form, they also recast the new meaning connotatively. The above data has the meaning of the statement from the lyricist, that the character in the lyrics leaves his original place, looking for where the source of warmth can warm his body when people start to distance himself from excommunicating himself, and when he who is no longer able to seek warmth from these people, with an answer that no matter how aloof a human being still needs happiness and comfort for himself even though it is not only sourced from an environment that only limited to one single thing that cannot be replaced. There are many aspects in life that can be the source of human happiness because the location of human happiness lies in the heart that each of them has. It can be a source of human life and happiness that is connotatively upheld sky-high in order to live a life that is appropriate and meets expectations. The meaning of myth in this array is a form of movement between despair and human struggle that will still move in search of something that can satisfy desire as a need, both physical and mental needs. What the lyricist wants to convey is that humans have to choose two choices and sacrifice something to achieve something else. On the one hand, the character in the lyrics is desperate to seek happiness in the sphere of society or the environment he is currently living in. On the other hand, she chooses to keep moving to find the source of her happiness from something else. This lyric has a meaning and mythical element that is so profound that it is so abstract to be interpreted because of its content that is closely related to a truly objective reality, but this song is still able to describe it.

Through the pourin' rain  
(Neil, Fred. "Everybody's Talkin'": couplet 2, stanza 3)

The above data is an advanced explanation for the previous array. Denotatively, *pourin'* means a condition in which a liquid object is dropped into a lower place. Meanwhile, *rain* refers to a natural phenomenon when cloudy clouds lower seawater that previously evaporated and was accommodated there. After entering the stage of connotative meaning, the word *pourin'* side by side with the word *rain* turns into a challenge that will become an obstacle for the character in the lyrics on his way to the source of life or the source of happiness he seeks. This means that every step of the realization of the choice will always have challenges raining down, hindering a person's move to fight for what he yearns for. Because actually the process of realizing and achieving a choice is an action that certainly has its own risks and consequences. The myth in the data above the word *rain* is a form of danger or obstacle, which in other words, in the course of the figure referred to above, the figure expresses his readiness to be hit many times by millions of raindrops falling from the clouds.

Goin' where the weather suits my clothes

(Neil, Fred. "Everybody's Talkin'": couplet 3, stanza 3)

In the third line denotatively the word weather is an early form as a natural phenomenon in which there is a formulation of the physical condition of the air momentarily at a location and a time. Then there is the word suits which means a condition and a feeling of comfort and fit. While clothing is a tool intended as a covering for the human body which is generally made from textiles. Connotatively to the above data, the weather symbolizes the surrounding conditions as well as the environmental conditions of the people to which the character in the lyrics are aimed at which means having the source of happiness he seeks. While Clothes is something that is inherent and inseparable from humans, one of them is a person's disposition, behavior, and characterization. The myth that is formed is about the weather that matches the type of clothing which means that not all circumstances in the surrounding community can provide comfort. This depends on the type of clothing being worn, in other words, whether or not a person's characterization is good according to the views of society. If the inherent characterization of a person is in accordance with social demands, then comfort in socializing will naturally be intertwined. On the other hand, if a person's characterization is viewed poorly and does not meet social demands, then a human being who has individualist life principles will feel less comfortable because of negative comments and stereotypes that are too annoying for him.

Backin' off of the northeast wind  
Sailin' on a summer breeze  
Skippin' over the ocean like a stone  
(Neil, Fred. "Everybodys Talking": couplet 4,5,&6, stanza 3)

This lyric is a further explanation of the lyrics in the previous array. Denotatively, all diction in it has the same meaning as the cardinal direction. However, if all the equivalents of the word are connected, it will have a different meaning. The connotative interpretation shows that the northeast as a strong wind during winter is avoided by the character, as a further explanation that the character will no longer go down the cold path and turn to looking for a source of life that can warm his body as a form of happiness in the social sphere he seeks which is nothing but the summer wind as a path that is seen as a path of life that can be taken comfortably, It is only necessary to dwell quietly in silence like a stone that has a natural shape and is quite difficult to change or reshape. A myth has been formed that has developed in society even today that cold temperatures are synonymous with something sad and gloomy, while warmth symbolizes comfort.

And I won't let you leave my love behind  
No, I won't let you leave my love behind  
I won't let you leave my love behind  
(Neil, Fred. "Everybody's Talkin'": couplet 22, 23, & 24 , stanza 6)

Before the sixth stanza, there are two stanzas containing the repetition of the third stanza and the first stanza which also has the exact same content as the repeated stanza. Only the sixth stanza has a different content, which stanza is also the closing stanza of the lyrics. Denotatively, there is a word you that is still not clear about whose designation it is for, the word leave means to leave something derelict. While love means a kind of feeling. On the other hand, connotatively, the word you can be intended for the nature of the world or the environment that the character in the lyrics wants to go to as a source of happiness that is used as an object. While the word love has a denotation meaning that is not much different but seems more abstract than the term love for fellow humans in general.

In the data above, the lyricist gives a conclusion using the word love, something that exists but is difficult to explain even though it has millions of equally abstract meanings. This forms a myth where the feelings possessed by the characters in the lyrics are completely abstract. On the one hand she didn't want to socialize sharing her feelings for those around her, instead she chose to give her love for something abstract. However, all these interpretations will change if the word you are referring to in the lyrics still refers to the sun which is analogous to the opposite sex who has romantic tendencies with the character.

So, if so, the interpretation of this lyric turns into a song lyric that has a theme of kasmaran or falling in love with someone who makes a blind human being to see another human being as an object of love completely distracted by the light of the sun.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The conclusions in this study give the view that the use of language in the structure of literary works can be something so unique. Language is growing and does not die when it is in the structure of literary works, because literary works are unique in nature by generating various meanings. As in this study, researchers found one word that was used as a symbol by the author, namely echoes. Echoes in the lyrics of Everybody's Talkin' have different meanings from each person describing that echoes are one of the forms of anxiety symbols or also favorite words used by some poets in writing their poems. But in this study echoes have a very broad meaning, echoes in this work can be ugliness or a form of happiness, it can also be a journey or other form. The meaning of echoes in this work gives a very deep picture of the life of mankind, one of its forms is to make us indifferent to all the desires in life. The meaning of echoes in this study seems to be the answer to the starting point where humans are faced with a variety of confusing choices, because humans do not know what will happen in the future. In this study, researchers concluded that the function of signs in language has an important role in the form of human creativity.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*.
- Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of Semiology Roland Barthes Translated from the French by*.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. Boston, MA: Chestnut Hill Enterprises (5th ed.). Pearson A & B.
- Bouzida, F. (2014). The Semiology Analysis in Media Studies Roland Barthes Approach. *SOCIOINT14-International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities, September*, 1001–1007. [https://www.ocerints.org/Socioint14\\_e-publication/papers/293.pdf](https://www.ocerints.org/Socioint14_e-publication/papers/293.pdf)
- Culler, J. (2013). Literary Theory. In *Literary Theory*.
- Endraswara, S. (2011). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra Bandingan*.
- Fiske, J. (2010). Introduction to Communication Studies, Third Edition. *Introduction to Communication Studies, Third Edition*, 1–195. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203837382/Introduction-Communication-Studies-John-Fiske>
- Hardjana, A. (1981). Kritik Sastra: Sebuah Pengantar. In *Pustaka Gramedia Utama 1981*.
- Karatem, Y., Pamerdi, ), Wiloso, G., & Lahade, J. R. (2013). Analisis Semiotik Lirik Lagu “Gosip Jalanan” Dari Grup Musik Slank. *Cakrawala Jurnal Penelitian Sosial*, 2(1). <https://ejournal.uksw.edu/cakrawala/article/view/40>
- Moleong, L. (2007). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif edisi revisi*. <http://library.stikptik.ac.id/detail?id=7251&lokasi=lokal>
- Naililhaq, F. N. (2020). Semiotika Peirce Dalam Sajak Putih Dan Sia-Sia Karya Chairil Anwar. *Pena Literasi*, 3(2), 70–78. <https://doi.org/10.24853/PL.3.2.70-78>
- Rusmana, D. (2014). Filsafat Semiotika. *CV. Pustaka Setia*.
- Sakinah, R. M. N., & Aufa, M. G. (2019). A semiotic analysis myth of life in lyric’s Blowin’ in The Wind by Bob Dylan’s. *Jurnal TEXTURA*, 6(2), 114–128. <http://journal.piksi.ac.id/index.php/TEXTURA/article/view/114>
- Sayuti, A. S. (2019). *Contemporary Issues In Islam And English Literature*.
- Teeuw, A. H. (2017). *Sastra dan Ilmu Sastra* (6th ed.). Dunia Pustaka Jaya: 2017.
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1949). *Rene Wellek, Austin Warren - Theory of Literature-Jonathan Cape (1949, 1954).pdf*.

