

SEMANTICAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEXTUAL MEANING IN ALL TOO WELL (10 MINUTE VERSION) SONG LYRICS

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the contextual meaning in the song lyrics of "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" by Taylor Swift using a qualitative descriptive method. The focus of this study is on uncovering how contextual elements influence the semantic interpretation of the lyrics, based on John Lyons' theory of six types of context: person, place, time, mood, formality, and subject matter. The problem underlying this research is that song lyrics often contain implicit meanings that require contextual understanding for deeper interpretation. Data were collected through a library research approach, in which the song lyrics served as the primary written source. The researcher acted as the main instrument and followed several steps: reducing the data by identifying relevant lines, displaying the data by organizing contextual findings into a table, and drawing conclusions based on recurring themes and emotional nuances. The results showed that mood is the most dominant context throughout the lyrics, reflecting emotional shifts from nostalgia to heartbreak and resentment. Other contexts such as person and time also appeared frequently, supporting the narrative structure of the song. Not all lyric lines were analyzed individually, as some carried repeated or similar meanings; instead, interpretation focused on key stanzas where contextual meaning was most evident. In conclusion, the study reveals that contextual meaning plays a significant role in shaping the listener's understanding of the song's emotional message. The use of John Lyons' framework effectively highlighted the layered semantics embedded in Taylor Swift's songwriting.

Keywords: Contextual Meaning, song lyrics, All Too Well (10 Minutes Version)

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INTRODUCTION

Language is important in our lives because it helps us communicate with each other, it allows us to share ideas and connect with others, whether we are speaking with friends or interacting with our surroundings. Language enables speakers to express their thoughts clearly, making it easier for listeners to understand. Without language, people with people cannot interact with each other in daily life or learn something and human activities cannot take place without language. English is an international language that has been widely used in education, literature, science, and entertainment. students found it still felt misunderstood of the types of contextual meaning expressed in song lyrics. Contextual meaning is one of the important topics studied in semantics courses for English Education Department students at Mathla'ul Anwar Banten University. Based on preliminary observations of students who have completed the semantics course, it was found that around 80% of them did not pay attention to how contextual meaning is reflected in song lyrics. This indicates a gap between theoretical understanding and practical application, especially in analyzing how context shapes meaning in authentic materials such as songs. Many students still found it difficult to recognize the types

of contextual meaning in song lyrics. Even though they could understand the general meaning of the lyrics, identifying whether a line belongs to the context of person, place, time, mood, formality, or subject matter was not always easy. Since lyrics often use emotional and poetic expressions, students need more support to help them connect the lyrics with the right type of context and understand the meaning more clearly. Preliminary observations of fourth-semester students in English Education students at Mathla'ul Anwar University revealed that around 70% of them still find it hard to understand the meaning behind English song lyrics when it depends on the context. Even though they can understand the main message of the song, they often have trouble knowing what kind of context is being used in each line. They are not yet used to thinking about how the situation, emotions, or background can affect the meaning of words. Since songs often use emotional and creative language, it can be confusing for students to tell what the lyrics really mean. This shows why it's important to help students learn more about contextual meaning, especially by using song lyrics as a way to practice. The analysis examined how word choices and situational context contributed to the deeper interpretation of the song also aims to provide a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the song's message through the lens of contextual meaning reflects to the songwriter's intended message and emotional depth.

METHOD

The study adopted qualitative descriptive analysis, a methodological approach that emphasizes textual interpretation over quantitative measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 45-60). This design is particularly suited to linguistic research, as it allows for a detail analysis of how words and phrases acquire complex meanings within specific contexts. Qualitative methods are chosen for their capacity to uncover implicit emotional and symbolic dimensions of language, which numerical data might obscure (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, pp. 1-30). In qualitative research, the researcher plays a key role as the primary instrument throughout the entire process, it means the researcher is directly involved in every step started from planned the research, collected and analyzed the data, to interpreted the results and written the final finding. Data analysis is the process in which researchers systematically organize and examine data to enhance their understanding and effectively communicate their findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In qualitative research, this process requires significant time and effort, as researcher often deal with extensive amounts of textual data, such as song lyrics, transcripts, notes, or documents. The process of analyzing qualitative data involves categorizing, interpreting, and drawing meaningful conclusions. In this research, the researcher applies the data analysis techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consist of three main steps there are Data Reduction, Data Display and Conclusion Drawing.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The first step focused on identifying the types of contextual meaning found in the song lyrics of "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" song lyrics by Taylor Swift. The researcher analyzed each line using the theory of contextual meaning proposed by John Lyons. Each line in the song was carefully mark based on the specific clues (contextual markers) found in the lyrics, the analysis shows that the lyrics are full of meaningful expressions and emotional depth. Below is a clearer explanation of each type of context,

1. Verse 1

The lyrics start by telling a memory between two people who once shared something special. "I walked through the door with you, the air was cold" describes not only a

physical setting (Place) but also an emotional atmosphere that feels distant or even slightly uncomfortable (Mood). Still, the next line, "But something 'bout it felt like home somehow," brings in a contrast that even though the surroundings are cold, the presence of the other person makes her feel emotionally safe (Mood, Subject Matter). When she says, "And I left my scarf there at your sister's house," it shows how she was once welcomed into his personal life (Person, Place, Subject Matter). The scarf staying in his drawer, "even now," shows how the memory and a piece of her remains in his world (Time, Mood, Person). This part sets the tone for the whole song: something that once felt like love is now only a memory, but that memory is still alive. The cold air reflects how their relationship might have already had emotional distance, while the scarf becomes a powerful symbol representing intimacy, presence, and later, absence.

2. Verse 2

This part continues the nostalgic look at the relationship. "Your sweet disposition and my wide-eyed gaze" shows the emotional state between them one person seems calm and kind, while the other is full of admiration (Person, Mood). Singing in the car and getting lost upstate refers to shared time together in a moving space (Place, Mood). The line "Autumn leaves falling down like pieces into place" is about the season they were in (Time), but it also shows how, at that moment, everything felt right and natural (Mood). Finally, "And I can picture it after all these days" shows how long the memory has lasted and how important it still is to her (Time, Subject Matter). It paints the perfect image of young love full of little moments that seem small at the time but become large and emotional in hindsight. The memory is not just about what happened, but about how it made her feel.

3. Pre-Chorus 1

The line "I know it's long gone and that magic's not here no more" reflects on how the relationship is over and the emotional spark has disappeared (Time, Mood). "I might be okay, but I'm not fine at all" shows how the speaker is still struggling it's the kind of sadness you can't always explain to others (Mood). 1 This part is important because it admits that time has passed, but healing hasn't fully happened. There's an emotional truth in how heartbreak lingers even when the relationship ends.

4. Chorus 1

"There we are again on that little town street" reminds her of a specific memory the place and the time it happened (Place, Time, Person). "You almost ran the red 'cause you were looking over at me" tells us how intense and distracting the emotion was at that time (Person, Mood). "Wind in my hair, I was there, I remember it all too well" is her way of saying how clearly she still remembers the moment and how alive it felt to her (Subject Matter, Mood, Time). This chorus builds the theme that memories, especially of love, can come back so strongly. These aren't just things she remembers they are feelings she re-lives

5. Verse 3 "

Photo album on the counter, your cheeks were turning red" reflects a personal, quiet moment filled with emotion (Mood, Subject Matter). Lines about his childhood and mother "You used to be a little kid with glasses..." and "Your mother's telling stories..." reveal intimate details of his background (Person, Subject Matter). When he says "your future was me," it shows deep emotional involvement (Mood, Subject Matter). The moment "you were tossing me the car keys, 'Fuck the patriarchy'" is a complicated one. It looks like empowerment, but there's a sense of him making light of serious things,

maybe using big statements for show (Formality, Mood, Subject Matter). "We were always skipping town" shows the instability of their relationship always moving, always temporary (Place, Mood). As the verse goes on, things turn dark. "Dead and gone and buried," "check the pulse," and "lifeless frame" describe a relationship that emotionally died long before it physically ended (Mood, Time, Subject Matter). This stanza is a turning point in the song, showing the emotional shift from love to confusion to pain. It shows how hard it is when someone seems emotionally available but is actually not.

6. Pre-Chorus 2

"There was nothing else I could do / And I forget about you long enough to forget why I needed to" shows the effort she's making to move on trying to forget not just the person, but also the emotional hold they had (Mood, Time). It's not about forgetting memories, but about healing from emotional dependency. This line captures the process of slowly letting go.

7. Chorus 2

"Dancing 'round the kitchen in the refrigerator light" shows a quiet, private moment in a specific space it's deeply emotional and feels like a memory from a simpler time (Place, Mood, Subject Matter). "You kept me like a secret, but I kept you like an oath" shows how uneven their love was. She valued the relationship deeply, while he wanted to hide it (Person, Mood, Formality). This section connects to the short film directly, where we see them dancing in the kitchen. It shows that love can be real even when it's only seen by two people but that secrecy can still leave scars.

8. Bridge

"You call me up again just to break me like a promise" is a metaphor for emotional manipulation a promise is something sacred, so breaking it hurts deeply (Mood, Formality, Subject Matter). "So casually cruel in the name of being honest" means that he used the excuse of truth to hurt her another form of emotional harm (Mood, Formality). "I'm a crumpled up piece of paper lying here" shows that she feels used, discarded, and hurt beyond repair (Mood, Subject Matter). This part is powerful because it shows how emotional damage isn't always from shouting it can come from someone pretending to be honest, but who really just wants control.

9. Verse 4

"They say all's well that ends well, but I'm in a new Hell" uses irony to show how heartbreak still hurts long after it ends (Mood, Subject Matter). When he says "if we had been closer in age..." it shows how he shifts blame instead of taking responsibility (Formality, Person). "The idea you had of me, who was she?" shows that he never really saw her for who she truly was (Mood, Subject Matter). "Weeping in a party bathroom" and "some actress asking me what happened" show public vulnerability a breakdown in a very exposed setting (Place, Person, Mood). The moment when her dad is charmed by him shows that he had a deep influence on people in her life (Person, Subject Matter). This part talks about the feeling of being misunderstood and left behind in public of being broken while trying to act okay.

10. Verse 5

"Time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it" shows how trauma has made time feel slow and painful (Time, Mood). She wants to find her old self again, which means the relationship changed her in ways she's not happy with (Mood, Subject Matter). The reference to "plaid shirt days" brings in small, daily memories that meant a lot (Time, Mood, Subject Matter). "Now you mail back my things and I walk home alone" shows physical and emotional separation she is left with only her own company (Place, Mood). These lines describe the slow process of rebuilding yourself after love has left. It shows how breakups don't just take away the person — they can take away who you were.

11. Verse 6

"I'll get older, but your lovers stay my age" is a powerful statement about emotional immaturity and imbalance in how men and women are treated in relationships (Formality, Mood, Person). "Brooklyn broke my skin and bones" shows physical and emotional hurt tied to a place (Place, Mood). "I still remember the first fall of snow" is about a specific memory that still feels alive snow is peaceful, but also cold and isolating (Time, Subject Matter). She starts to look at the bigger picture here about age, patterns, and how the pain stays even after everything ends.

12. Outro

"Just between us, did the love affair maim you all too well?" is a question, but also a hope that she wasn't the only one left hurting (Person, Mood, Subject Matter). The repetition of "just between us" makes it feel like a quiet, personal conversation not for the public, just between the two of them. This is how the story ends with a question instead of an answer. It doesn't need closure, because the pain itself is proof that it mattered.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding above, the most frequently used type of context in All Too Well (10 Minute Version) is Mood, which appears in 36 lines. This shows that the song focuses a lot on expressing the singer's emotions. Throughout the lyrics, Taylor Swift uses feelings like love, sadness, anger, and regret to tell the story of the relationship. These emotional expressions help listeners connect more deeply with the experiences described in the song. The second most common context is Person, found in 16 lines. This context highlights how the lyrics describe people in the relationship especially the speaker herself, her partner, and even his family members. These personal details make the story feel more real and relatable. Next, the context of Subject Matter appears in 13 lines, which refers to the main ideas in the song such as heartbreak, memories, and personal growth. These ideas are what the song is really about, beyond just describing events.

Another important context is Time, also found in 13 lines. Many of the lyrics mention the past, seasons, or how much time has passed, which shows that the story is told from a reflective point of view looking back on what happened. Place appears in 8 lines, and it helps show where the events took place, like a kitchen or a town street. These settings give the memories more detail and make them easier to imagine. Finally, Formality is the least frequent, with only 2 lines.

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