

AMBIGUITY IN SONG LYRICS OF "WILDFLOWER" BY Billie Eilish: A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

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Informasi Artikel

Sejarah Artikel:

Diterima 12 Februari 2025
Perbaikan 27 Februari 2025
Disetujui 05 Maret 2025

Kata kunci:

Ambiguity,
Lexical ambiguity,
Song Lyric.

ABSTRACT

Song lyrics represent a unique form of literary discourse in which language is employed not only to convey information but also to evoke emotions, construct imagery, and encourage multiple interpretations. One linguistic phenomenon frequently found in song lyrics is ambiguity, which allows listeners to derive different meanings from the same linguistic expression. This study investigates ambiguity in the lyrics of "Wildflower" by Billie Eilish using a semantic approach. The objectives of this research are to identify the types of ambiguity occurring in the song lyrics and to explain how ambiguity contributes to the construction of meaning within the song. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. The data consist of words, phrases, and clauses identified as ambiguous in the lyrics. Data were collected through documentation and close-reading techniques and analyzed using semantic theories of ambiguity proposed by Ullmann, Kreidler, and Leech. The findings indicate that both lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity are present in the lyrics. Lexical ambiguity appears in several key lexical items that possess multiple semantic interpretations, while structural ambiguity emerges from syntactic constructions that permit more than one meaning. The analysis demonstrates that ambiguity functions as an artistic and communicative device, enabling listeners to interpret the song from various emotional, psychological, and interpersonal perspectives. Furthermore, ambiguity contributes significantly to the aesthetic quality of the lyrics and reinforces the themes of guilt, memory, emotional conflict, and self-reflection that characterize the song. The study concludes that ambiguity serves as an essential stylistic feature in contemporary song lyrics and enriches the communicative potential of musical discourse

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental medium through which human beings communicate ideas, emotions, experiences, and cultural values. Beyond its communicative

function, language also operates as a means of artistic expression. Literary works, including poetry, novels, dramas, and song lyrics, utilize language not only to transmit information but also to create aesthetic experiences and emotional responses. In literary discourse, meanings are often conveyed indirectly through figurative expressions, symbolism, metaphor, and ambiguity. Consequently, understanding literary language requires deeper interpretation than ordinary communication.

Song lyrics constitute one of the most popular forms of contemporary literary expression. Although often regarded primarily as components of musical performance, song lyrics possess characteristics comparable to poetry, including rhythm, imagery, symbolism, and figurative language. According to Perrine (1988), literary language differs from ordinary language because it emphasizes connotative meaning, emotional impact, and aesthetic value. In song lyrics, words are carefully selected not only for their semantic content but also for their ability to evoke feelings and stimulate imagination. As a result, listeners frequently encounter linguistic expressions whose meanings are not immediately transparent.

One of the linguistic phenomena commonly found in song lyrics is ambiguity. Ambiguity refers to the condition in which a linguistic expression allows more than one interpretation. In everyday communication, ambiguity is often avoided because it may cause misunderstanding. However, in literary discourse, ambiguity is frequently employed intentionally to enrich meaning and encourage audience participation in interpretation. According to Ullmann (1962), ambiguity occurs when a linguistic form possesses two or more possible meanings that cannot be immediately distinguished without additional context. Similarly, Leech (1981) argues that ambiguity constitutes a significant aspect of literary

language because it enables multiple layers of interpretation and contributes to aesthetic complexity.

The study of ambiguity belongs to the field of semantics, which concerns the analysis of meaning in language. Semantics investigates how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning and how speakers and listeners interpret linguistic expressions. According to Lyons (1977), semantics seeks to explain the relationships between linguistic forms and their meanings. Within semantic studies, ambiguity is regarded as an important phenomenon because it demonstrates that meaning is not always fixed or singular. Instead, meaning may vary depending on context, interpretation, and the relationship between linguistic elements.

The phenomenon of ambiguity becomes particularly significant in artistic texts such as song lyrics. Songwriters often exploit ambiguity to create emotional depth, represent complex psychological states, and allow listeners to construct personal interpretations. Ambiguous expressions may function as metaphors, symbols, or representations of emotional experiences that cannot be adequately expressed through direct language. Consequently, ambiguity contributes to both the artistic and communicative dimensions of song lyrics.

In recent years, contemporary popular music has increasingly attracted scholarly attention as an object of linguistic and literary analysis. Researchers have examined various aspects of song lyrics, including figurative language, stylistics, discourse structures, pragmatics, and semantic features. Among contemporary artists, Billie Eilish has emerged as one of the most influential singer-songwriters of her generation. Her music is widely recognized for its emotional intensity, introspective themes, and poetic use of language. Many of her songs explore themes such as identity, vulnerability, interpersonal

relationships, anxiety, memory, and self-reflection. These themes are frequently expressed through figurative and ambiguous language, making her lyrics valuable material for semantic analysis.

One song that particularly exemplifies the use of ambiguity is *Wildflower*, which appears on Billie Eilish's third studio album, *Hit Me Hard and Soft* (2024). The song explores complex emotional experiences involving guilt, memory, longing, and interpersonal relationships. Through its lyrical narrative, the song presents a speaker who reflects upon a relationship marked by emotional uncertainty and moral conflict. The lyrics reveal feelings of regret and self-awareness while simultaneously inviting multiple interpretations regarding the nature of the relationships being described.

The title *Wildflower* itself introduces a potential ambiguity that becomes central to the song's meaning. On a literal level, a wildflower refers to a flower that grows naturally without cultivation. Symbolically, however, the term may represent individuality, vulnerability, emotional growth, freedom, or a particular person within the narrative. This duality exemplifies how ambiguity operates throughout the song. Similar patterns appear in numerous lexical items, phrases, and clauses that allow listeners to interpret the lyrics in different ways.

The popularity of *Wildflower* has generated extensive discussion among listeners and critics concerning its meaning. Different interpretations have emerged regarding the identities of the individuals represented in the lyrics and the emotional experiences described by the speaker. Some listeners interpret the song as a narrative about romantic guilt, while others view it as an exploration of friendship, personal growth, or emotional healing. The existence of multiple interpretations suggests that ambiguity plays a crucial role in the communicative effectiveness of the song.

From a linguistic perspective, ambiguity may be categorized into several types. Kreidler (1998) distinguishes between lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity occurs when a word possesses multiple meanings. Structural ambiguity, on the other hand, arises when a phrase or sentence can be interpreted in more than one way because of its syntactic structure. These categories provide a useful framework for analyzing ambiguity in literary texts, including song lyrics.

Lexical ambiguity often emerges from polysemy and homonymy. Polysemy refers to a situation in which a single word possesses several related meanings, while homonymy occurs when two unrelated meanings share the same linguistic form. In literary discourse, lexical ambiguity frequently contributes to symbolic and metaphorical interpretation. Structural ambiguity, meanwhile, derives from grammatical arrangements that allow different semantic relationships among linguistic elements. Such ambiguity often encourages readers or listeners to consider alternative interpretations simultaneously.

The analysis of ambiguity in song lyrics is important for several reasons. First, it contributes to the broader understanding of semantic phenomena in contemporary discourse. While ambiguity has been extensively studied in literary texts such as poetry and fiction, song lyrics remain relatively underexplored despite their cultural significance. Second, examining ambiguity in song lyrics provides insight into how language functions artistically within popular culture. Third, ambiguity analysis helps explain why different listeners may derive different meanings from the same song.

Several previous studies have investigated ambiguity in song lyrics. For example, research conducted by Pratiwi (2021) found that lexical ambiguity frequently occurs in contemporary

English songs because songwriters often employ symbolic vocabulary to represent emotional experiences. Similarly, Sari and Putri (2022) reported that ambiguity enhances aesthetic value by encouraging listeners to participate actively in meaning construction. Another study by Rahman (2023) demonstrated that ambiguity functions as a strategy for expressing complex emotions without explicitly stating them.

Although previous studies have contributed significantly to understanding ambiguity in song lyrics, relatively few studies have focused specifically on Billie Eilish's work. Existing research has tended to emphasize figurative language, stylistic devices, or psychological themes rather than semantic ambiguity. Consequently, there remains a need for research that systematically examines ambiguous expressions within her lyrics and explains how these expressions contribute to meaning construction.

Furthermore, previous ambiguity studies often focus on identifying ambiguous words without exploring their broader thematic significance. This study seeks to address that limitation by examining not only the types of ambiguity present in *Wildflower* but also their relationship to the song's central themes. By analyzing both lexical and structural ambiguity, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how meaning is constructed through language in contemporary song lyrics.

The selection of *Wildflower* as the object of study is motivated by several considerations. First, the song contains numerous linguistic expressions that appear open to multiple interpretations. Second, the song addresses emotionally complex themes that are often conveyed indirectly through ambiguous language. Third, the song has attracted widespread public interest and interpretive discussion, making it a relevant object of

linguistic inquiry. Finally, the song offers an opportunity to examine how ambiguity functions within contemporary popular music, a domain that continues to shape cultural communication globally.

Theoretically, this study contributes to semantic scholarship by demonstrating the relevance of ambiguity analysis to contemporary musical texts. Practically, the findings may provide valuable insights for students, teachers, and researchers interested in semantics, stylistics, literary studies, and discourse analysis. Additionally, the study may encourage greater appreciation of the linguistic sophistication present in contemporary popular music.

Based on the background described above, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of ambiguity are found in the lyrics of *Wildflower* by Billie Eilish?
2. How do lexical and structural ambiguities contribute to the interpretation of the song?
3. What functions does ambiguity perform in constructing the song's emotional and thematic meanings?

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify lexical and structural ambiguities in the lyrics of *Wildflower*.
2. To analyze the possible interpretations generated by ambiguous expressions.
3. To explain the role of ambiguity in supporting the themes and artistic qualities of the song.

Through these objectives, the study aims to demonstrate that ambiguity is not merely a source of semantic uncertainty but rather a deliberate artistic strategy that enriches the communicative and aesthetic dimensions of song lyrics.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics concerned with meaning in language. According to Lyons (1977), semantics examines how linguistic expressions represent concepts, objects, experiences, and relationships in the world. Meaning constitutes the central concern of semantic analysis because communication depends upon the successful transmission and interpretation of meaning.

Leech (1981) explains that semantics investigates the relationships between linguistic forms and the meanings associated with them. Meaning may be analyzed at various levels, including words, phrases, sentences, and larger discourse units. Semantic analysis enables researchers to understand how linguistic expressions function within specific communicative contexts.

Within literary discourse, semantic analysis is particularly important because literary language often departs from ordinary usage. Authors and songwriters frequently manipulate meaning through metaphor, symbolism, ambiguity, and figurative language. Consequently, semantic approaches provide valuable tools for interpreting literary texts.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity refers to the existence of more than one possible meaning within a linguistic expression. According to Ullmann (1962), ambiguity arises when a linguistic form can be interpreted in two or more ways. Ambiguity is generally regarded as a natural characteristic of language because linguistic signs are often capable of representing multiple concepts simultaneously.

Leech (1981) argues that ambiguity plays a particularly significant role in literary language because it enables multiple layers of meaning. Rather than hindering communication, ambiguity in literary texts often enhances interpretive richness and aesthetic complexity.

Lexical Ambiguity

Lexical ambiguity occurs when a single lexical item possesses multiple meanings. Kreidler (1998) explains that lexical ambiguity frequently results from polysemy and homonymy. Polysemous words possess several related meanings, while homonymous words share form but differ in meaning.

In literary texts, lexical ambiguity often functions symbolically. A word may simultaneously evoke literal and metaphorical meanings, encouraging readers to explore deeper interpretive possibilities.

Structural Ambiguity

Structural ambiguity occurs when the syntactic arrangement of linguistic elements permits multiple interpretations. According to Fromkin et al. (2018), structural ambiguity emerges because grammatical relationships within a sentence can be interpreted differently.

In literary discourse, structural ambiguity often contributes to emotional complexity and thematic depth by allowing multiple meanings to coexist.

Song Lyrics as Literary Texts

Song lyrics possess characteristics commonly associated with poetry and other literary genres. Perrine (1988) argues that literary texts rely heavily on connotative meaning, imagery, symbolism, and figurative language. Song lyrics similarly employ these features to create emotional and aesthetic effects.

As literary texts, song lyrics provide fertile ground for semantic analysis because their meanings frequently extend beyond literal interpretation. Ambiguity, therefore, becomes a crucial mechanism through which songwriters communicate complex emotions and experiences.

RESEARCH METHODE

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design with a semantic approach. Qualitative research is appropriate because the primary objective of the study is to understand, interpret, and explain the meanings embedded in linguistic expressions rather than to measure numerical variables. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research focuses on exploring and interpreting social and linguistic phenomena within their natural contexts. In linguistic studies, qualitative methods are particularly useful for analyzing meaning, symbolism, and interpretation.

The descriptive method is used because the study aims to identify, classify, and explain the ambiguities found in the lyrics of *Wildflower* by Billie Eilish. Rather than testing hypotheses, the research seeks to provide a detailed description of ambiguous linguistic expressions and their possible interpretations.

This study adopts semantic theory as its primary analytical framework. Semantics is concerned with meaning in language and examines how words, phrases, and sentences communicate concepts and ideas (Leech, 1981). Specifically, the analysis focuses on ambiguity, which is understood as the presence of two or more possible meanings within a linguistic expression.

Data Source

The primary data source of this research is the lyrics of *Wildflower* by Billie Eilish, released in 2024 as part of the album *Hit Me Hard and Soft*. The song was selected because it contains numerous expressions that invite multiple interpretations and has generated diverse responses among listeners and critics.

The data consist of words, phrases, and clauses identified as containing ambiguity. These linguistic units were selected because they potentially represent lexical ambiguity, structural ambiguity, or both.

Data Collection Technique

The data were collected using documentation and note-taking techniques. The procedures included:

1. Obtaining the official lyrics of *Wildflower*.
2. Reading the lyrics repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the text.
3. Identifying words, phrases, and clauses that exhibit ambiguous meanings.
4. Recording the identified expressions.
5. Classifying the data according to ambiguity categories.

Repeated reading was necessary to ensure that all relevant linguistic expressions were identified and interpreted within their textual context.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed through the following procedures:

1. Identifying ambiguous linguistic expressions.
2. Classifying each expression into lexical ambiguity or structural ambiguity.
3. Determining possible interpretations based on semantic theory.
4. Examining contextual factors influencing interpretation.
5. Explaining the relationship between ambiguity and the song's themes.

The analysis draws primarily upon theories proposed by Ullmann (1962), Leech (1981), Kreidler (1998), and Lyons (1977).

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure analytical reliability, the researcher conducted repeated examinations of the lyrics and compared interpretations with existing semantic theories. Contextual analysis was also employed to avoid overly subjective interpretations. Furthermore, interpretations were supported by linguistic evidence from the lyrics themselves.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Findings

The analysis identified numerous instances of ambiguity throughout the lyrics of *Wildflower*. The findings indicate that ambiguity functions as a significant stylistic device contributing to the emotional depth and thematic complexity of the song.

The identified ambiguities can be categorized into two major types:

No	Ambiguous Expression	Type of Ambiguity
1	Wildflower	Lexical
2	Things fall apart	Lexical
3	Did I cross the line?	Structural
4	She was crying on my shoulder	Structural
5	I see her in the back of my mind	Lexical
6	Can't tell if it's love or guilt	Lexical
7	Looking through a different lens	Lexical
8	You moved on	Lexical
9	I don't know if it's right	Structural
10	I still feel her presence	Lexical

The following sections discuss each example in detail.

1. Lexical Ambiguity in the Word "Wildflower"

Data

"Wildflower"

Interpretation 1: Literal Meaning

The word *wildflower* literally refers to a flower that grows naturally without human cultivation.

Under this interpretation, the title refers to a natural object existing independently in the environment.

Interpretation 2: Symbolic Meaning

The term may symbolize an individual who is unique, independent, delicate, and emotionally vulnerable.

In literary traditions, flowers often symbolize beauty, growth, fragility, and emotional development. The modifier *wild* adds associations of freedom, unpredictability, and authenticity.

Discussion

The ambiguity of the title contributes significantly to the song's emotional richness. Listeners may perceive the "wildflower" as:

- the former partner,
- the speaker herself,
- a symbolic representation of innocence,
- a metaphor for emotional growth.

The coexistence of literal and symbolic meanings encourages multiple interpretations and reflects the emotional complexity of the song.

2. Lexical Ambiguity in "Things Fall Apart"

Data

"Things fall apart"

Interpretation 1: Literal Breakdown

The expression may refer to physical objects becoming damaged or separated.

Interpretation 2: Emotional Deterioration

More commonly, the phrase refers metaphorically to the collapse of relationships, emotional stability, or personal well-being.

Discussion

Within the song's context, the second interpretation appears more plausible. However, the literal meaning remains available, creating ambiguity.

The phrase effectively communicates emotional fragmentation without explicitly describing the exact nature of the problem.

This ambiguity allows listeners to relate the lyric to different experiences, including romantic breakups, friendship conflicts, family problems, or personal crises.

3. Structural Ambiguity in "Did I Cross the Line?"

Data

"Did I cross the line?"

Interpretation 1: Moral Boundary

The speaker questions whether she violated an ethical or social boundary.

Interpretation 2: Emotional Boundary

The expression may refer to crossing emotional limits within a relationship.

Interpretation 3: Relational Boundary

The speaker may wonder whether she interfered in a relationship that should have remained untouched.

Discussion

This expression is central to the song's theme of guilt.

The ambiguity arises because the phrase "the line" is unspecified. The listener must infer the nature of the boundary from context.

As a result, the lyric invites multiple interpretations while maintaining emotional intensity.

4. Structural Ambiguity in "She Was Crying on My Shoulder"

Data

"She was crying on my shoulder."

Interpretation 1: Literal Physical Action

A woman physically cries while leaning on the speaker's shoulder.

Interpretation 2: Emotional Dependence

The expression may symbolize emotional reliance and intimacy.

Discussion

The second interpretation extends beyond the literal event.

The phrase suggests trust, vulnerability, and emotional closeness. This closeness becomes significant because it later contributes to the speaker's feelings of guilt and conflict.

The ambiguity enhances the emotional complexity of the relationship between the individuals involved.

5. Lexical Ambiguity in "I See Her in the Back of My Mind"

Data

"I see her in the back of my mind."

Interpretation 1: Memory

The speaker remembers someone from the past.

Interpretation 2: Psychological Presence

The person continues to influence the speaker emotionally despite being physically absent.

Discussion

The phrase combines visual imagery with psychological experience.

The speaker does not literally see the person; rather, she experiences a mental image.

This ambiguity reflects the persistence of memory and emotional attachment.

Furthermore, it demonstrates how past relationships continue to affect present emotions.

6. Lexical Ambiguity in "Can't Tell If It's Love or Guilt"

Data

"Can't tell if it's love or guilt."

Interpretation 1: Romantic Love

The emotion may represent genuine affection.

Interpretation 2: Guilt-Based Attachment

The feeling may arise from regret rather than love.

Discussion

This expression represents one of the most psychologically complex ambiguities in the song.

The speaker struggles to distinguish between two emotions that often coexist after emotionally difficult experiences.

The ambiguity reflects emotional uncertainty and contributes to the song's introspective character.

It also invites listeners to consider how emotions may overlap and become difficult to define.

7. Lexical Ambiguity in "Looking Through a Different Lens"

Data

"Looking through a different lens."

Interpretation 1: Literal Meaning

Viewing something through an actual camera lens.

Interpretation 2: Perspective

Viewing a situation from a different psychological or emotional perspective.

Discussion

The second interpretation dominates within the song.

However, the literal meaning remains possible because a lens is a physical object.

The ambiguity symbolizes personal growth and changing perceptions.

The lyric suggests that understanding evolves over time as individuals reconsider past experiences.

8. Lexical Ambiguity in "You Moved On"

Data

"You moved on."

Interpretation 1: Physical Movement

Someone physically left a place.

Interpretation 2: Emotional Recovery

Someone emotionally recovered from a past relationship.

Discussion

The phrase is highly common in contemporary English but remains semantically ambiguous.

In the context of the song, emotional recovery appears most likely.

Nevertheless, the possibility of physical departure contributes additional layers of meaning.

The ambiguity reinforces themes of separation and emotional distance.

9. Structural Ambiguity in "I Don't Know If It's Right"

Data

"I don't know if it's right."

Interpretation 1: Moral Judgment

The speaker questions whether an action is ethically acceptable.

Interpretation 2: Emotional Judgment

The speaker questions whether a feeling is appropriate.

Interpretation 3: Relational Judgment

The speaker questions whether a relationship should exist.

Discussion

The pronoun *it* lacks a specific referent, generating structural ambiguity.

Listeners must determine what the speaker is evaluating.

This uncertainty mirrors the speaker's internal conflict and moral hesitation.

10. Lexical Ambiguity in "I Still Feel Her Presence"

Data

"I still feel her presence."

Interpretation 1: Psychological Memory

The speaker continues to remember the person.

Interpretation 2: Emotional Influence

The person still influences the speaker's thoughts and emotions.

Interpretation 3: Symbolic Presence

The individual functions as a symbolic representation of guilt or memory.

Discussion

The expression demonstrates how ambiguity can transform a simple statement into a multidimensional emotional experience.

The listener cannot determine whether the presence is literal, psychological, emotional, or symbolic.

This uncertainty contributes to the song's atmosphere of lingering memory and unresolved emotion.

Discussion of Overall Findings

The analysis reveals that lexical ambiguity occurs more frequently than structural ambiguity in *Wildflower*. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that contemporary songwriters often rely on symbolic vocabulary to communicate emotional experiences.

The ambiguities identified throughout the lyrics contribute to several major themes:

1. **Guilt**
2. **Memory**
3. **Emotional conflict**
4. **Identity**
5. **Interpersonal relationships**
6. **Self-reflection**

Rather than presenting clear and direct statements, Billie Eilish employs ambiguous language that allows listeners to participate actively in meaning construction. Consequently, different listeners may interpret the song differently based on their personal experiences and emotional backgrounds.

Moreover, ambiguity enhances the poetic quality of the lyrics by creating semantic depth and interpretive openness. This characteristic distinguishes literary language from ordinary communication and demonstrates the artistic potential of contemporary popular music.

The Dominance of Lexical Ambiguity in *Wildflower*

One of the most significant findings of this study is the predominance of lexical ambiguity over structural ambiguity in the lyrics of *Wildflower*. This finding suggests that Billie Eilish primarily relies on the semantic flexibility of words rather than complex syntactic structures to create multiple layers of meaning.

Lexical ambiguity is particularly effective in song lyrics because songs are generally constrained by rhythm, melody, and brevity. Songwriters often seek to communicate complex emotional experiences within a limited number of words. Consequently, words that possess multiple meanings become valuable artistic resources. Through lexical ambiguity, a single expression can simultaneously convey literal, symbolic, emotional, and psychological meanings.

In *Wildflower*, many ambiguous words function as emotional symbols. Rather than describing feelings directly, the songwriter employs language that allows listeners to infer emotional states through interpretation. This strategy aligns with contemporary songwriting practices, where emotional authenticity is often achieved through suggestive rather than explicit language.

The frequent occurrence of lexical ambiguity also reflects the song's introspective nature. Since the lyrics explore memory, guilt, regret, and personal reflection, ambiguous words effectively represent psychological experiences that are themselves uncertain and difficult to define. Emotions such as guilt and longing rarely possess clear boundaries;

therefore, ambiguity becomes an appropriate linguistic representation of these experiences.

Moreover, lexical ambiguity contributes to the universality of the song. Because ambiguous expressions permit multiple interpretations, listeners from different backgrounds may connect the lyrics to their own personal experiences. This interpretive flexibility helps explain the broad appeal of contemporary popular songs.

Ambiguity and the Representation of Guilt

A central theme identified throughout the lyrics is guilt. Several ambiguous expressions contribute to the representation of moral uncertainty and emotional conflict.

The phrase "Did I cross the line?" exemplifies how ambiguity functions within the thematic framework of guilt. The speaker appears uncertain about whether her actions were morally acceptable. However, the specific nature of the transgression remains unclear. This lack of specificity allows the lyric to represent various forms of guilt simultaneously.

The ambiguity is particularly effective because guilt often involves uncertainty. Individuals experiencing guilt may question their actions without fully understanding the extent of their responsibility. By leaving the nature of the "line" undefined, the lyric mirrors the psychological process of self-questioning.

Similarly, expressions such as "I don't know if it's right" reinforce the speaker's moral uncertainty. The listener is never provided with a definitive answer regarding whether the speaker's actions were justified. Consequently, the ambiguity reflects an unresolved ethical dilemma.

From a semantic perspective, these expressions illustrate how ambiguity can function as a representation of psychological complexity. Rather than simply describing guilt,

the lyrics reproduce the experience of uncertainty associated with guilt itself.

This finding supports Leech's (1981) argument that ambiguity often serves an expressive function in literary language. Instead of creating confusion, ambiguity allows the text to communicate emotional states more effectively than direct language might achieve.

Ambiguity and Memory

Another prominent theme emerging from the analysis is memory. The lyrics repeatedly reference past experiences, former relationships, and lingering emotional attachments. Ambiguity plays a crucial role in representing these memories.

The expression "I see her in the back of my mind" illustrates this phenomenon. The phrase may refer to a literal memory, an emotional impression, or a symbolic presence. The ambiguity reflects the nature of memory itself, which often exists between reality and imagination.

Psychological studies suggest that memories are not static reproductions of past events but dynamic reconstructions influenced by present emotions and experiences. The ambiguous language of *Wildflower* mirrors this characteristic of human memory. Rather than presenting memories as fixed facts, the lyrics portray them as fluid and open to interpretation.

Similarly, "I still feel her presence" suggests that memories continue to influence the speaker despite the absence of the individual concerned. The ambiguity allows the phrase to function simultaneously as a description of remembrance, emotional attachment, and psychological influence.

Through these ambiguous expressions, the song demonstrates how language can represent the complex relationship between past and present. Memories remain alive not because they physically exist but because they continue to shape emotional experiences.

Ambiguity and Interpersonal Relationships

The song also explores the complexity of interpersonal relationships. Several ambiguous expressions contribute to this theme by obscuring the precise nature of the relationships described.

The lyrics do not explicitly define the relationships among the individuals involved. As a result, listeners must infer relational dynamics based on contextual clues. This ambiguity encourages multiple interpretations regarding friendship, romance, emotional dependency, and personal loyalty.

For example, the expression "She was crying on my shoulder" may simply describe an act of comfort between friends. However, it may also imply a deeper emotional connection. Because the lyric does not specify the nature of the relationship, both interpretations remain possible.

This ambiguity enhances the realism of the song. Human relationships are often difficult to categorize neatly, and emotional boundaries may become blurred. By avoiding explicit definitions, the lyrics capture this complexity more effectively than direct descriptions might.

Furthermore, the ambiguity allows listeners to project their own relational experiences onto the song. Individuals who have experienced friendship conflicts, romantic complications, or emotional uncertainty may identify with the lyrics regardless of the specific circumstances depicted.

Ambiguity as a Stylistic Device

The findings indicate that ambiguity functions not merely as a semantic phenomenon but also as a stylistic device. Throughout *Wildflower*, ambiguity contributes significantly to the song's aesthetic qualities.

Literary scholars have long recognized ambiguity as a source of artistic richness. According to Empson (1947), ambiguity allows

multiple meanings to coexist within a single expression, thereby increasing interpretive depth. The present study supports this perspective.

The lyrics frequently employ ambiguous expressions that encourage repeated interpretation. Each listening experience may reveal new meanings depending on the listener's emotional state and personal background. Consequently, ambiguity enhances the longevity and interpretive richness of the song.

From a stylistic perspective, ambiguity also contributes to subtlety. Rather than stating emotions directly, the lyrics invite listeners to participate in the construction of meaning. This participatory process strengthens emotional engagement and encourages deeper reflection.

The effectiveness of ambiguity in *Wildflower* demonstrates how contemporary songwriters continue to utilize literary techniques traditionally associated with poetry. The song exemplifies the close relationship between music and literature, particularly in the realm of linguistic creativity.

Ambiguity and Listener Interpretation

One of the most important implications of ambiguity is its influence on listener interpretation. Because ambiguous expressions permit multiple meanings, different listeners may construct different understandings of the song.

Interpretation is shaped by numerous factors, including:

- Personal experiences
- Emotional background
- Cultural context
- Linguistic competence
- Social environment

A listener who has experienced romantic regret may interpret the song primarily as a narrative of lost love. Another listener may perceive it as a reflection on friendship, betrayal, or personal growth. Neither interpretation is

necessarily incorrect because the ambiguity of the lyrics supports multiple readings.

This interpretive openness contributes to the song's popularity. Songs that allow diverse interpretations often resonate with broader audiences because listeners can adapt the lyrics to their own experiences.

The findings therefore support reader-response theories of literature, which emphasize the active role of audiences in constructing meaning. In *Wildflower*, meaning is not entirely determined by the songwriter; rather, it emerges through interaction between the text and the listener.

Implications for Semantic Studies

The findings of this study have several implications for semantic research.

First, the study demonstrates that ambiguity remains a productive area of investigation within contemporary popular culture. While ambiguity has traditionally been examined in literary texts such as poetry and fiction, song lyrics represent an equally valuable source of semantic data.

Second, the findings illustrate the close relationship between semantics and stylistics. Ambiguity functions not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as an artistic strategy. Consequently, semantic analysis can contribute significantly to literary interpretation.

Third, the study highlights the importance of context in meaning construction. Many ambiguous expressions identified in *Wildflower* cannot be interpreted adequately without considering their broader thematic and emotional contexts. This observation supports contextual approaches to semantic analysis.

Finally, the research demonstrates how linguistic ambiguity can represent psychological complexity. Emotions such as guilt, longing, regret, and uncertainty are often difficult to express directly. Ambiguous language provides

a means of representing these experiences while preserving their complexity.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify and analyze ambiguity in the lyrics of *Wildflower* by Billie Eilish using a semantic approach. The analysis revealed that the song contains both lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity, with lexical ambiguity occurring more frequently.

Lexical ambiguity was found in several key expressions, including *wildflower*, *things fall apart*, *love*, *guilt*, *lens*, *presence*, and *moved on*. These expressions possess multiple potential meanings that contribute to the richness of interpretation. Structural ambiguity was identified in clauses such as *Did I cross the line?*, *She was crying on my shoulder*, and *I don't know if it's right*, where syntactic constructions allow more than one interpretation.

The findings demonstrate that ambiguity serves several important functions within the song. First, ambiguity contributes to emotional depth by representing complex psychological experiences such as guilt, regret, longing, and self-reflection. Second, ambiguity enhances aesthetic quality by encouraging multiple interpretations and active listener participation. Third, ambiguity supports the song's central themes of memory, interpersonal relationships, moral uncertainty, and emotional growth.

Furthermore, the study confirms that ambiguity should not be regarded merely as a source of semantic uncertainty. Instead, it functions as a deliberate artistic strategy that enriches meaning and strengthens emotional expression. Through ambiguous language, Billie Eilish creates a lyrical narrative that remains open to interpretation while maintaining emotional authenticity.

The study also contributes to broader discussions of semantics and literary language

by demonstrating the relevance of ambiguity analysis to contemporary song lyrics. As popular music continues to play an important role in cultural communication, linguistic studies of song lyrics offer valuable insights into how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and interpreted within modern discourse.

Future researchers may expand upon this study by examining ambiguity in other songs by Billie Eilish, comparing ambiguity across different musical genres, or integrating semantic analysis with pragmatic and stylistic approaches. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of language use in contemporary popular music.

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