
THE USE OF REFERENCE THROUGH "ABOUTNESS" USING GREGORY CARLSON'S CONCEPT IN SONG LYRICS OF CELINE DION ALBUM: FALLING INTO YOU

By

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Abstract: *This study looks at how Gregory Carlson's concept of "aboutness" is used in the lyrics of Celine Dion's album Falling Into You. The study employs qualitative analysis to examine how linguistic tropes, such as demonstratives, metaphors, and symbolic imagery, convey themes of love, grief, and resiliency and arouse strong emotions. Aboutness enhances the album's thematic depth by tying abstract emotions to potent mental imagery, as demonstrated in songs like "It's All Coming Back to Me Now" and "Because You Loved Me." The significance of language systems for improving musical narrative and emotional expression is shown by this study.*

INTRODUCTION

Morris, Carnap, and Peirce founded the field of pragmatics as a branch of linguistics in the 1930s. According to them, pragmatics studies the relationship between signs and their users and interpreters, semantics studies the relationship between signs and what they represent, and syntax studies the formal relationships between signs and other signs (Morris, 1938). In this program, pragmatics is the study of context-dependent elements of meaning that are methodically ignored when creating logical form or content.

Nurhayati & Yuwartatik (2016: 67) state that pragmatics as a subfield of linguistics that learns the ways in which context contributes to meaning. Through this study people can learn the relation between language and context (Levinson, 1983: 9). Leech (1993: 8) states that pragmatics is dealing with the situations including time, place, purpose, and addressee. In addition, Yule (1996: 4), pragmatics is a study about people's goals and kinds of actions that they are performing in conversation.

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that pragmatics is a study about language and its context related to the situation around the conversation. As stated by Jazaeri et al. (2018): 184) pragmatics is a study of language usage in social life. It helps people to understand the goals and meanings of speech uttered by the speakers.

Language, which enables people to express intricate ideas, emotions, and experiences, is one of the most distinctive features of human communication. The ability of human language to refer to things, concepts, or events that are not physically present is noteworthy, in contrast to animal communication systems that are usually restricted to current contextual input. This characteristic—referred to as "aboutness"—is the focal point of Gregory Carlson's study of linguistic reference. Carlson defines "aboutness" as the capacity of language to evoke mental pictures of things or subjects, even ones that are not limited by time or location. By

enabling speakers to connect abstract concepts to hypothetical or real-world situations, this skill demonstrates the flexibility and profundity of human communication.

The correspondence theory of meaning, which states that the meaning of language comes from its relationship to actual events, gives more credence to the idea of reference. Yet among philosophers and linguists, this idea has generated much discussion. Chomsky (1981) questions the importance of "aboutness" in understanding linguistic structure, while Wittgenstein (1953) and other critics argue that "aboutness" is only a derived term rather than a basic feature of language. Despite these criticisms, Carlson's approach shows how reference, when used judiciously and practically, allows communication to go beyond simple identification and produce a level of meaning that the reader or listener finds interesting.

This study examines the use of Carlson's concepts of reference and "aboutness" in the context of artistic expression, with a particular focus on song lyrics. Music, as a universal language, offers a rich environment to investigate how linguistic references elicit feelings, create connections, and communicate complex stories. Celine Dion's critically acclaimed album, *Falling Into You* (1996), is a perfect example, as it explores themes of love, loss, and resilience, and includes timeless songs, such as "Because You Loved Me" and "It's All Coming Back to Me Now", that have captured the attention of listeners worldwide. The album's touching lyrics and powerful delivery demonstrate how linguistic structures in music can connect personal experiences with universal themes.

The relationship between linguistics, music, and emotional resonance makes this research urgent. Gaining an understanding of how "aboutness" functions in song lyrics might help one better understand the larger function of language in artistic communication. Given that music crosses linguistic and cultural barriers, examining its linguistic components provides a fuller understanding of how references serve as instruments for meaning-making, storytelling, and emotional expression.

The qualitative technique used in this study is based on Carlson's theoretical framework, with supplementary data drawn from Strawson's critique of presumption and Kripke's causality theory of reference. Through a close reading of *Falling Into You*, this study investigates how allusions generate meaning, conjure imagery, and provide a link between the listener's interpretation and the artist's aim. Both the study of semantics and our understanding of music as a communication medium are advanced by this analysis.

The present study bridges the gap between artistic practice and linguistic theory by examining the complex relationship between language and emotion in Celine Dion's lyrics. The results are meant to demonstrate how song lyrics may be used as potent tools to convey the intricacies of the human condition, thereby establishing music as a profound and all-encompassing medium for communication.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design to investigate the concepts of reference and aboutness in song lyrics from Celine Dion's album *Falling Into You*. The intricate linguistic patterns and profound emotional content of song lyrics are best explored using qualitative approaches, which provide a comprehensive examination of the ways in which reference fosters the growth of meaning and emotional resonance. The study focused on the album text in order to determine the linguistic mechanisms that support its thematic and

narrative elements.

The 16 songs that are part of Falling Into You's standard edition are the only ones covered by this study. Without going into the album's production or instrumental elements, the study focuses on examining the words of each song, treating them as textual artifacts. By concentrating on how language serves as a medium for artistic and emotional expression, this particular concentration guarantees that the study stays rooted in its linguistic goals.

This study's focus was the official album's lyrics, which were sourced from trustworthy sources to guarantee their accuracy. The method is founded on the reference and semantics theoretical framework, particularly Gregory Carlson's, which highlights the significance of "aboutness" in determining the connection between linguistic assertions and their contextual meaning.

Wittgenstein is widely regarded as expressing a very different understanding of the meaning of natural language, especially in the 20th century, which best sees "aboutness" as a derivative or epiphenomenon (Wittgenstein, 1953). Its centrality has also been questioned by Chomsky (1981, 1992, 1995), Hornstein (1984), Ludlow (2003), and others. However, the term "about(ness)" itself is a general concept that is too broad and ambiguous to really address the basic aspects of natural language. Additional theoretical insights from Wittgenstein, Chomsky, and Kripke's books offer a strong theoretical foundation for understanding reference in the songs.

Since all of this research is done at desks, there is no fieldwork involved. The album's lyrics are gathered as part of the data collection procedure and arranged for in-depth textual analysis. To find linguistic expressions of reference, such as demonstrative and indexical terms, proper names, and definite descriptions, each song is carefully scrutinized. To bolster and contextualize the results, secondary materials are also incorporated, such as academic papers on linguistic theory and semantics.

The ability of verbal phrases to refer to things, feelings, or events that are not immediately present in the physical or temporal context is how this study operationalizes the concept of aboutness. Metaphors, demonstratives, and proper nouns are examples of supporting elements that are examined to ascertain how they contribute to the lyrics' emotional resonance and meaning construction. In order to find patterns and recurrent themes, the data analysis procedure starts with a close study of the lyrics using an inductive approach. To determine each reference's meaning, emotional resonance, and narrative value, it is examined in its context. Interpreting the relationships between language patterns and the main themes of love, grief, and emotional fortitude is the task of this analysis.

Using this approach, this research seeks to clarify how allusions affect listeners' understanding and affective response to music. As this research only uses publicly available data, there are not many ethical issues. To maintain academic integrity, all sources must be properly acknowledged. This study does have certain limitations, especially since it only looked at album content. While this analysis offers in-depth information about the language component of lyrics, it ignores musical arrangements and the diversity of listener interpretations.

By using this analytical approach, the study aims to advance our knowledge of how language functions in creative contexts by emphasizing the complex interactions that exist between musical narrative building, emotional resonance, and linguistic references.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analyzing aboutness in Celine Dion's album *Falling Into You* lyrics shows how language allusions are used to express a range of complicated feelings, love themes, and vulnerability. Based on Gregory Carlson's theory of reference, the study emphasizes how aboutness connects abstract concepts with tangible emotions, giving the songs a strong emotional resonance.

Result

The examination of aboutness in each of the album's 16 songs is compiled in Table 1, which also offers instances of linguistic allusions and their thematic interpretations:

Tabel 1. Summarizes the analysis of “aboutness” in Celine Dion’s Album *Falling Into You*

Song Title	Examples of Aboutness	Interpretation of Aboutness
It's All Coming Back to Me Now	“There were nights when the wind was so cold”	Uses environmental metaphors to evoke heartbreak and the emotional impact of memories.
Because You Loved Me	“You were my strength when I was weak”	Demonstrative reference to a supportive figure, expressing gratitude and transformation.
Falling Into You	“Falling like a leaf, falling like a star”	Metaphors of falling symbolize vulnerability and surrender to love.
Make You Happy	“I wanna be the one to make you happy”	First-person address connects personal commitment to relational joy and selflessness.
Seduces Me	“Every sigh in the night, every tear you cry seduces me”	Sensory references heighten emotional intimacy and admiration.
All By Myself	“Don't wanna be all by myself anymore”	Repetition emphasizes the universal need for connection and escape from loneliness.
Declaration of Love	“You are my knight in armor, the hero of my heart”	Symbolic imagery elevates the partner's role as a protector and source of inspiration.
A Natural Woman	“You make me feel like a natural woman”	Expresses emotional transformation through love, emphasizing self-discovery.

Dreamin' of You	Lyin' in my bed, thoughts in my head, visions of you"	References to memory and dreams highlight the lingering emotional presence of a former love.
I Love You	"I long to feel your touch"	A direct expression of desire and the emotional weight of unspoken love"
If That's What It Takes	"I will stand like a rock, I will bend till I break"	Metaphors of endurance symbolize unwavering commitment to love.
I Don't Know	"Life without you, I don't know"	Highlights emotional dependency through direct and declarative language.
River Deep, Mountain High	"I love you, baby, like a flower loves the spring"	Nature metaphors emphasize the depth and timelessness of love.
Your Light	"I will be your light, whenever you need a friend"	Symbolizes guidance, emotional support, and unconditional love in times of hardship.
Call the Man	"Call the man who deals in love beyond repair"	Figurative language represents seeking solace and emotional healing in moments of despair.
Fly	"Fly where only angels sing, fly away, the time is right"	Imagery of flight symbolizes release, peace, and transcendence in the face of loss"

Discussion

According to research, aboutness is a key component in creating the emotional and thematic depth of the album. The lyrics express universal human feelings and experiences through various figurative language, which touches the hearts of the listeners. By using environmental analogies such as "nights when the wind is cold" in "It's All Coming Back to Me Now", the song conveys the depth of loss and longing. Carlson's theory that aboutness creates mental images of abstract emotions is supported by strong references.

Demonstrative references such as "You are my strength" are used in "Because You Loved Me" to highlight the transformational power of love. This linguistic decision provides an instantaneous and clear connection to its referent, which is consistent with Kripke's notion of direct reference. Similarly, "Falling Into You" illustrates how aboutness helps express closeness and vulnerability by using metaphors such as "falling like a leaf" to describe emotional surrender. In "Your Light", the phrase "I will be your light" represents direction and encouragement, reflecting the song's concept of unwavering love. The visual emphasizes how togetherness in this situation results in a reassuring and positive story, thus enhancing the emotional impact of the music.

"Call the Man" used figurative language to represent the pursuit of solace and healing, whilst "Fly" uses the metaphor of flight to address themes of transcendence and emancipation. The statement "fly to where only angels can sing" encapsulates the powerful emotional release connected to loss and is an example of how aboutness goes beyond literal meaning to delve into profoundly symbolic and spiritual subjects.

The album's songs all demonstrate how language allusions may arouse feelings, create relationships, and transmit meaning. This lends credence to the notion that aboutness is a useful mechanism that improves the expressive potential of language in creative expressions rather than just being a theoretical construct. This study bridges theoretical linguistics with the universal human experiences of love, sorrow, and healing by exploring the ways in which aboutness and emotional themes interact to highlight the significant significance of linguistic allusions in music.

CONCLUSION

Using Gregory Carlson's theoretical framework, this study has examined how Celine Dion uses reference through *aboutness* in the lyrics of the album *Falling Into You*. The results show that the main language mechanism that deepens the emotional and thematic depth of the album is aboutness. The lyrics go beyond simple descriptive language by using metaphors, demonstrative expressions, proper nouns, and figurative language to evoke strong emotions and vivid mental images.

Each of the album's sixteen songs expresses themes of love, grief, resiliency, and emotional vulnerability in a unique way through aboutness. For instance, "It's All Coming Back to Me Now" and "Falling Into You" employ metaphors to emotionally conjure nostalgia and resignation, while "Because You Loved Me" highlights gratitude and transformation through love using demonstrative language. This study also demonstrates the versatility of aboutness as a medium of artistic expression by examining how songs such as "Fly" and "Call the Man" use symbolic imagery to explore spiritual and emotional transcendence.

The lyrics of *Falling Into You* show how language may establish emotional resonance and a common meaning with listeners by tying abstract feelings to specific linguistic allusions. This supports Carlson's claim that aboutness allows communication to transcend the current environment and creates stronger bonds between the audience and the speaker (or performer). Furthermore, by emphasizing how references are context-dependent and essential to forming meaning in creative works, the results validate the applicability of Strawson and Kripke's ideas.

In order to further understand aboutness's function in fostering emotional and cognitive engagement, future studies could examine how it functions in other artistic disciplines, such as poetry or the visual arts.

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