



## Discourse Analysis on Semantic on *Wake Me Up When September Ends* Song Lyric by Green Day

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DOI: 10.37729/scripta.v13i1.7132

**Abstract.** Discourse analysis serves as a vital tool for examining how language constructs meaning within cultural and social contexts. Semantic is part of discourse analysis. In the realm of music, song lyrics are particularly rich in semantic content, allowing for deep exploration of themes, emotions, and societal issues. This article aims to conduct a discourse analysis of the song's lyrics, focusing on both lexical and contextual meanings. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, utilizing documentation techniques to collect data from the song's lyrics. The analysis of the lyrics from "Wake Me Up When September Ends" by Green Day has uncovered 15 contextual and lexical meanings that enhance the emotional resonance of the song. These meanings reflect both personal experiences and broader societal themes related to grief and loss. Ultimately, this analysis not only sheds light on artistic expression but also emphasizes the importance of delving beyond surface meanings in song lyrics to uncover richer emotional narratives. The implications of this study extend to broader applications in understanding and interpreting lyrical content across various musical genres.

**Keywords:** Discourse, Semantic, Analysis, Green Day, Lyric

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since language is the fundamental tool of communication, humans and language cannot be separated. Individuals utilize language to convey their feelings as well as to exchange ideas and communicate in society. Individuals can increase their knowledge by using language. People can also write, speak, or analyze a sentence, song, or movie also by language. The study of language as a means of human communication is known as linguistics. Language science has many subfields; morphology and semantics [1]. These include morphology which studies word creation, phonetics which studies speech sound, phonology which studies speech sound patterns, syntax which studies phrase and sentence development, and semantics which studies language meaning. In addition, there is psycholinguistics (the study of the mental processes involved in language production and comprehension) and sociolinguistics (the study of language in social factors, i.e., socioeconomic class, educational level, age, sex, etc.).

Recent advancements in linguistics have also highlighted the importance of pragmatics, which studies how context influences the interpretation of meaning in communication [2]. Pragmatics examines how speakers use language in social interactions and how listeners derive meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. This field has gained significant attention due to its relevance in understanding conversational implicature and speech [3], [4]. Furthermore, the integration of technology in linguistic research has led to the emergence of computational linguistics, which combines linguistic theory with computer science to analyze and model human language processing. This interdisciplinary approach has facilitated advancements in natural language processing (NLP) applications, such as machine translation and sentiment analysis, thereby expanding the scope of linguistic inquiry [5].

Semantics studies what meaning is, how it is produced, what types there are, what it is related to, what its components are, whether it changes and why it changes [6]. It is pointed out that there are 29 types of meaning in the sub-discipline of semantics. However, this study only focuses on two types of meaning, namely contextual or situational meaning and lexical meaning. Lexical meaning and contextual meaning are used as the objects of this study because contextual meaning not only explains the actual meaning contained in the dictionary, but also describes the meaning of the word from the context [7]. In addition, it depends on the context of the speaker, the understanding between the speaker and the interlocutor, and the identity of the interlocutor [8].

Discourse analysis serves as a vital tool for examining how language constructs meaning within cultural and social contexts. In the realm of music, song lyrics are particularly rich in semantic content, allowing for deep exploration of themes, emotions, and societal issues [9]. Discourse analysis examines how texts relate to situational and cultural contexts, how they are created as social practices, what they reveal about events, what people think, believe, etc., and how they express ideologies (power struggle, etc.) [10].

Released in 2004 as part of their acclaimed album *American Idiot*, Green Day's "Wake Me Up When September Ends" has transcended its status as a mere song to become an anthem of grief and resilience [11]. Written by lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong, the song is deeply personal, reflecting on Armstrong's experience of losing his father when he was ten years old. The poignant lyrics encapsulate the emotional turmoil that grief brings, while also resonating with broader themes of society's collective grief. The purpose of this article is to conduct a discourse analysis, focusing on the semantics of a text and examining how language constructs meaning and evokes emotional responses.

Recent studies in discourse analysis highlight the importance of examining song lyrics to understand how they reflect and shape cultural narratives. For instance, research has shown that lyrics often serve as a medium for expressing complex emotions and social issues [12]. Furthermore, the use of figurative language in music can facilitate deeper emotional connections with listeners by transforming abstract concepts into relatable experiences [13].

This article will utilize a semantic approach to analyze the lyrics of "Wake Me Up When September Ends". It is a deeply emotional song by the American rock band Green Day, has captivated audiences since its release in 2004. Written by lead vocalist Billie Joe Armstrong, the song reflects his personal experiences with loss, particularly the death of his father [14]. The poignant lyrics, combined with a haunting melody, create a narrative that resonates with listeners on multiple levels, addressing universal themes of grief, memory, and the passage of time. This song serves as a rich text for discourse analysis, particularly in examining the semantic meanings embedded within its lyrics.

This study focuses only on a semantics case. The study of how meaning is expressed and organized in language is known as semantics [15]. When applied to literary works like songs, poems, and prose, the study of semantics is fascinating [16]. These days, language and music that are expressed through song have a relationship to one another, and everyone is capable of creating and appreciating both language and music. People can hear the tune through music and express anything, and they can also discuss everything in the lyrics. [17] Lyric is a literary work in which a person expresses himself using words and language about anything he has heard, seen, or experienced lyrics are written words and sentences that convey messages. They might be utilized to evoke a specific mood and mental image in the listeners as well as convey a variety of messages. Talking about the song; the lyrics are inseparable from it. A song is a method for communication and understanding the goal of meaning in it. Song lyric is words that make up a song usually consisting of verses and choruses. song lyric is the part that is very important of the song because there are a lot of meaning in song lyric [18]. Song lyrics are written by the composers to convey their emotions. They often employ figurative language to enhance the meaning of the lyrics more beautiful and significant.

In light of these considerations, this article aims to conduct a detailed discourse analysis of the semantic meanings within "Wake Me Up When September Ends." By examining both the lexical and contextual meanings of key phrases, we can gain insight into the emotional complexities of the song and its broader implications for understanding grief and memory. The title reflects the focus on semantic analysis, emphasizing the importance of language in conveying profound emotional experiences. Ultimately, this exploration seeks to illuminate how Green Day's lyrics resonate with audiences, fostering a deeper understanding of the interplay between music, memory, and emotion.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Lexical Meaning**

Lexical meaning is the real meaning, the meaning that makes sense to us as observers, or the meaning that is provided. A language has several lexical systems, each of which is based on a paradigmatic and systematic approach to semantic meaning and structure [19]. According to [1] meaning that possesses lexicon, lexeme, and word features is known as lexical meaning. In addition, it serves as a reference, indicating which is the outcome of sensory observation, or our perception of the reality of existence. The lowest unit of meaning in a linguistic system is called lexical meaning. Meaning in lexical terms is held without alteration by the lexeme in any given situation. That interpretation is what's real. something can be seen by using human reason. One common definition of lexical meaning is "the study of terms' meanings In different According to [20], the significance comprises meaning in terms of words and grammar,

reference, and meaning relationships, connotation, and denotation Morphemes polysemy, lexical homophones, and sentences, meaning, and ambiguity. The lexeme "dog," for instance, has a lexical meaning. that is a little, four-legged, hairy animal, and a back. Additionally, the lexeme "bridge" has a meaning. It is a structure designed to allow people to confronting. The coded meaning is based on what People are generally aware of this without being impacted in any given situation.

Lexical meaning in discourse analysis focuses on the literal and denotative meanings of words within a text [21]. The song "Wake Me Up When September Ends" by Green Day is rich with lexical meaning that conveys deep emotional resonance. Lexical meaning refers to the conventional definitions of words as found in dictionaries, providing a foundational understanding of the song's language [22]. For instance, the word "wake" denotes the act of rousing from sleep, while "September" signifies the ninth month of the year. In this context, "wake" symbolizes a longing to escape from the painful memories associated with September, particularly the anniversary of Billie Joe Armstrong's father's death. The term "innocent" evokes notions of purity and childhood, which are juxtaposed against the harsh realities of loss that permeate the lyrics. This interplay of lexical meanings creates a poignant backdrop for the song's exploration of grief and remembrance, as highlighted in recent studies examining idiomatic expressions and their meanings in Green Day's lyrics [23].

Beyond lexical meaning, contextual meaning plays a crucial role in interpreting "Wake Me Up When September Ends." Contextual meaning refers to how words acquire significance based on their surrounding circumstances and usage within a specific narrative. In this song, the context is deeply personal for Armstrong; it reflects his experiences with loss and mourning. The repeated phrase "Wake me up when September ends" serves as a metaphor for wanting to avoid confronting painful memories. The song has also been interpreted as a broader commentary on collective grief, particularly in relation to national tragedies like the September 11 attacks. This duality of meaning—personal and collective—enriches the listener's understanding of the song, demonstrating how language can evoke profound emotional responses while also reflecting societal experiences of loss and healing.

## Contextual Meaning

According contextual Meaning is the connotation of a word or set of words [24]. Moreover, contextual definition is a definition in the context in a more expansive manner with a wider justification. Here, the background information helps to encourage the clarity of meaning. Similarly According to [25], lexical items take on variable meanings when instantiated in different contexts (tokens), and thus meaning representation must consider context-sensitive distribution. For instance, in the word "head," though The meaning can be clarified by the context as "Grandma has a lot of white hair on her head." and "The Students who excel are given prizes by the headmaster. In the first sentence, the word "head" refers to the the hairy top portion of the body. However, the second sentence's use of the word "head" refers to a school's principal. One can categorize contextual meaning into interpretations of the temporal situation that clarify meaning according to location, time, and circumstance the background against which the message is explained where something occurs physically, and words context that clarifies the language's usage. Additionally that the situation's context contextual meanings

Contextual meaning can be divided into meanings of the context of time which explains meaning based on time context, based on place context which explain the meaning is based where the palce something happen, and language context which explain the language use [26]. Besides that the context of the situation also greatly influences the meaning, like scared situation or enjoy situation and other. So, it can be concluded that the same word or the same sentence when used in different situations or contexts will have different meanings. Contextual meaning is connected to song lyrics because singers occasionally employ terms in which the meanings are different from their dictionary definitions [2].

## 2. METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative method because the writer would analyze and interpret the research object of Sia's song. The focus of the analysis is on the form of words, phrases, and sentences, especially their lexical and contextual meaning. Bogdan and Biklen cited in [27] state that there are several techniques for collecting data in qualitative research. One of them is document , which contains texts (words) recorded without the intervention of researchers. Therefore, in this research researchers used documentation as a data collection technique . Technique of collecting data is: (1) collecting sources of the data of Green Day's Song from internet, (2) selecting the lyrics which contains semantic, (3) arranging the lyrics systematically according to the lines of the study (4) providing a code for each data found, for example, " L1/S2" meaning that data found in line 1 – stanza 2 (5) interpreting lexical and contextual meaning.

### 3. FINDINGS

The analysis of *“Wake Me Up When September Ends”* by Green Day identifies fifteen lexical and contextual meanings that represent profound emotional and psychological dimensions related to grief, remembrance, and resilience. Each lexical item and phrase in the lyrics not only conveys its denotative or dictionary-based meaning but also acquires broader and more complex interpretations when examined within its contextual framework. These meanings reflect Billie Joe Armstrong’s personal experience of loss while simultaneously illustrating the universal human condition of mourning and emotional recovery. To understand the finding more clearly, the writer presents the process of analysis in the table as the following:

Table 1. Lexical and Contextual Meaning of the Lyrics

No	Word/Phrase	Stanza & Line	Lexical Meaning	Contextual meaning
1	Summer	Stanza 1, line 1	The warmest season of the year	Represent a time of innocent and happiness before the onset of loss
2	The innocent	Stanza 1, Line 2	Free from guilt or moral wrong	Symbolizes childhood purity that is fleeting and contrasts with the pain of loss.
3	Wake me up	Chorus, Line 1	To rouse from sleep	A plea to escape the emotional pain associated with September, particularly the anniversary of loss.
4	September	Chorus, Line 1	The ninth month of the year	Marks the month of Armstrong's father's death, representing a time of mourning and reflection.
5	Come to pass	Stanza 1, Line 4	To happen or occur	Refers to the death of Armstrong's father, highlighting the inevitability of loss.
6	Seven years	Stanza 1, Line 5	A period of seven years	Indicates the time elapsed since his father's death, emphasizing how quickly time passes after loss.
7	Here comes the rain	Chorus, Line 3	Water droplets falling from clouds	Symbolizes sadness and emotional turmoil associated with memories of loss.
8	Drenched in my pain	Chorus, Line 4	Soaked or thoroughly wet	Metaphor for being overwhelmed by grief and sorrow; signifies deep emotional suffering.
9	Memory	Chorus, Line 5	The mental capacity to retain information	Represents lingering feelings of loss and nostalgia; emphasizes how memories shape identity.
10	Never forget	Chorus, Line 6	To always remember	Highlights the lasting impact of grief and the importance of honoring lost loved ones.
11	Twenty years	Stanza 3, Line 5	A period of twenty years	Reflects on the long-lasting effects of grief over time; signifies maturity in dealing with loss.
12	Ring out the bells	Stanza 2, Line 4	To cause bells to sound	Suggests a return to school or significant events marking transitions; evokes nostalgia for childhood.
13	Falling from the stars	Stanza 2, Line 3	Descending from celestial bodies	Implies a sense of beauty intertwined with sadness; symbolizes lost dreams or hopes.
14	As my memory rests	Stanza 3, Line 4	While my mind is at ease	Indicates a moment of reflection on past experiences; suggests a temporary reprieve from grief.
15	Like my father’s come to pass	Stanza 3, Line 2	Similar to how my father has died	Directly references Armstrong's father's death; emphasizes personal loss and its impact on his life.

(Source: "Wake Me Up When September Ends" song lyric, 2004)

### 4. DISCUSSION

The analysis of *“Wake Me Up When September Ends”* by Green Day identifies fifteen lexical and contextual meanings that represent profound emotional and psychological dimensions related to grief, remembrance, and resilience. Each lexical item and phrase in the lyrics not only conveys its denotative or dictionary-based meaning but also acquires broader and more complex interpretations when examined within its contextual framework. These meanings reflect Billie Joe Armstrong’s personal experience of loss while simultaneously illustrating the universal human condition of mourning and emotional recovery.

The lexical meanings found in the lyrics form the foundation for interpreting the overall message of the song. Words such as *“wake,” “September,” “innocent,”* and *“memory”* carry literal meanings

connected to time, emotion, and consciousness. However, within the context of the song, these words transcend their lexical boundaries and function symbolically to depict human vulnerability and emotional struggle. For instance, the term “wake”—which literally means “to rise from sleep”—contextually signifies an awakening to pain and awareness of sorrow. The repeated line “Wake me up when September ends” can therefore be interpreted as an expression of the singer’s desire to avoid reliving traumatic memories associated with the death of his father.

Similarly, “September”, which denotes the ninth month of the year, acquires a deeper symbolic meaning as a temporal marker of loss and remembrance. It represents not only the month of Armstrong’s father’s passing but also a cyclical period of emotional reflection. [3] This transformation of meaning supports Invalid source specified. , who explains that contextual interpretation enables words to develop emotional and experiential value beyond their lexical sense.

The imagery of “rain” and “pain” in the lyrics further strengthens the song’s emotional depth. Literally referring to natural phenomena and physical sensation, both words function metaphorically to symbolize sorrow, cleansing, and renewal. According to [6], lexical and contextual meanings often evolve to represent psychological states, a phenomenon evident in the song’s depiction of grief as both burden and healing. This duality underscores the human tendency to associate natural imagery with emotional catharsis.

Other expressions, such as “ring out the bells” and “falling from the stars,” reveal transitions from childhood innocence to adulthood awareness. The former evokes nostalgia and the passage of time, while the latter reflects fading dreams and disillusionment. Such figurative constructions align with [10], who describe discourse as a multilayered system where meaning is shaped through personal experience and collective interpretation. [8] The presence of metaphorical expressions also supports who argue that figurative language in song lyrics enhances emotional resonance and deepens listeners’ empathy.

From a discourse perspective, the song functions as a *discursive event*, in which language operates simultaneously as an act of self-expression and a reflection of social reality. The recurring temporal references—“seven years,” “twenty years”—and the personification of nature create a cyclical narrative of loss and remembrance. This continuity in the language of grief exemplifies how semantic meaning can shift across contexts, a phenomenon identified by [28] as *contextual semantic shift*—where emotional association and time transform lexical interpretation.

Beyond personal expression, the song also carries broader social implications. While primarily inspired by Armstrong’s private mourning, “Wake Me Up When September Ends” has been collectively reinterpreted as a symbol of public grief, particularly following global tragedies such as the September 11 attacks and natural disasters that evoke national mourning. This shared interpretation which asserts that contextual meaning is socially constructed and negotiated between the author, the audience, and the cultural moment in which a text is received. Thus, the song’s discourse transcends individual experience to reflect collective emotional realities.

The interrelation between lexical and contextual meaning reveals that language operates on multiple semantic levels. Lexical meaning provides a stable linguistic foundation, while contextual meaning introduces flexibility shaped by experience, intent, and interpretation. For example, the word “memory” literally denotes cognitive recall, yet contextually it symbolizes enduring emotional attachment and the persistence of grief. Similarly, “innocent” signifies purity on a lexical level but, within the song, functions as a representation of lost childhood and the transformation of innocence through suffering. This dynamic interaction reflects the principles of discourse semantics proposed by [8], where meaning arises through the interaction of linguistic form and situational context.

From an educational standpoint, analyzing lexical and contextual meanings in song lyrics offers valuable implications for language learning. [6] argue, song lyrics serve as authentic linguistic materials that foster critical thinking, emotional engagement, and cultural appreciation. By interpreting the layered meanings in Armstrong’s lyrics, learners can develop a deeper understanding of semantic relations and contextual analysis while enhancing their communicative competence.

Culturally, “Wake Me Up When September Ends” demonstrates how music can act as a medium for preserving emotional memory across generations. The song’s enduring relevance highlights [3] describes as the *contextual adaptability* of language—its ability to evoke shared emotional experiences across diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Through its rich combination of lexical precision and contextual depth, the song exemplifies how linguistic expression can capture the universal aspects of grief, resilience, and remembrance.

Moreover, the analysis reveals how recurring lexical motifs create a sense of temporal suspension and cyclical mourning. For example, the phrase “seven years” functions beyond a mere number—it evokes the enduring nature of loss and the slow passage of time in healing. This aligns with findings that lexical choices in song lyrics often serve as markers of emotional continuity, enabling listeners to map personal

grief onto a broader temporal framework. The interplay of ephemerality and permanence in these motifs underlines how the song transforms individual grief into a collective time-lapse of remembrance.

In addition, contextual meaning emerges through the layering of imagery that connects personal memory with universal emotional landscapes. Phrases like “ring out the bells” and “falling from the stars” not only evoke nostalgia and disillusionment, but also signify a shift from innocence to awareness. Studies show that figurative language in song lyrics can act as a bridge between private experience and shared cultural narratives of loss and renewal. Through these metaphors, the song invites listeners to interpret their own emotional responses within the symbolic architecture of the lyrics.

Finally, the educational implication of this layered semantic and contextual richness cannot be understated. By engaging with songs such as “*Wake Me Up When September Ends*” through a dual lens of lexical and contextual analysis, learners develop not only vocabulary and semantic awareness, but also critical literacies in emotion and culture. Analyses of song lyrics as authentic materials thus enhance both language proficiency and emotional literacy in EFL contexts. In this way, grief-infused artistic texts serve as powerful tools for fostering deeper engagement and reflective learning.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In summary, Green Day's "Wake Me Up When September Ends" is a profound exploration of grief and the passage of time, which is effectively illustrated through a discourse analysis that emphasizes the lexical and contextual meanings in the lyrics. The lexical meanings of key terms such as "wake," "September," and "innocent" provide a fundamental understanding of the song's emotional landscape and reveal Armstrong's desire to move on from the painful memory of his father's death. Each word carries significant meaning and forms an overarching narrative that encapsulates the complexity of loss and the desire for healing. For example, the word "wake" not only indicates waking from sleep, but also symbolizes the desire to avoid confrontation with grief, while "September" symbolizes a reminder of a personal tragedy.

Contextually, the song functions on multiple levels, reflecting Armstrong's personal experiences while addressing broader social themes of collective grief. The repeated phrase “wake me up when September ends” symbolizes the struggle to cope with loss and allows the listener to connect their own experiences to the narrative presented. This duality enriches the listener's understanding of the song and demonstrates how language can evoke deep emotional responses while reflecting social experiences of grief. Recent research has highlighted the importance of examining lyrics through discourse analysis to discover how they express complex emotions and social issues [25]. Ultimately, this investigation sheds light on how Green Day's lyrics resonate with audiences and promotes a deeper understanding of the interplay between music, memory, and emotion.

The findings of this paper have implications for understanding and analyzing song lyrics in general. This paper shows that it is important to look beyond the literal meaning of words and consider how the meaning of words changes in the context of certain sentences, songs, and even musical genres.

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