

## ANALYZING THE LEXICAL MEANING IN CHAIRIL ANWAR'S POEM TITLED "AKU"

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the lexical meaning contained in Chairil Anwar's poem "Aku". Poetry, as a form of literary expression, utilizes language aesthetically to convey profound messages. This study refers to the concept of lexical meaning as the basic or dictionary meaning of a word, which serves as the foundation for interpretation before delving into connotative or symbolic meanings. Employing a descriptive-qualitative approach, the analysis focuses on key words in each line of the poem. The research findings indicate that Chairil Anwar deliberately chose strong and direct diction, such as "binatang jalang" (wild beast), "meradang menerjang" (raging, charging), and "tak perlu sedu sedan" (no need for weeping), to construct an 'Aku' persona that is individualistic, brave, unafraid of death, and possesses a strong desire to exist beyond limitations. Each lexical meaning of these words consistently supports the narrative of a soul that refuses to yield to social conventions or mortality, choosing instead a path of independence. This study concludes that a careful understanding of lexical meaning is essential for uncovering the expressive power and core message of the poem "Aku," while also enriching the appreciation for Chairil Anwar's rich diction.

**Keywords:** Lexical Meaning, "Aku" Poem, Chairil Anwar, Semantics, Diction

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna leksikal yang terkandung dalam puisi "Aku" karya Chairil Anwar. Puisi, sebagai bentuk ekspresi sastra, memanfaatkan bahasa secara estetik untuk menyampaikan pesan yang mendalam. Kajian ini mengacu pada konsep makna leksikal sebagai arti dasar atau kamus sebuah kata, yang merupakan fondasi interpretasi sebelum melangkah ke makna konotatif atau simbolis (Leech, 1981; Chaer, 2013). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif-kualitatif, analisis difokuskan pada kata-kata kunci dalam setiap larik puisi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Chairil Anwar secara sengaja memilih diksi yang kuat dan lugas, seperti "binatang jalang," "meradang menerjang," dan "tak perlu sedu sedan," untuk membangun citra 'Aku' yang individualistik, berani, tak gentar menghadapi kematian, dan memiliki hasrat kuat untuk eksis melampaui keterbatasan. Setiap makna leksikal dari kata-kata tersebut secara konsisten mendukung narasi tentang sebuah jiwa yang menolak tunduk pada konvensi sosial atau kefanaan, melainkan memilih jalur kemandirian. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemahaman yang cermat terhadap makna leksikal adalah esensial untuk mengungkap kekuatan ekspresif dan pesan inti puisi "Aku," sekaligus memperkaya apresiasi terhadap kekayaan diksi Chairil Anwar.*

**Kata Kunci:** Makna Leksikal, Puisi "Aku", Chairil Anwar, Semantik, Diksi

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A work of art that employs language as its medium is called literature. Literature expresses human thoughts, feelings, experiences, and imagination

through the use of aesthetic and imaginative language. According to Wellek and Warren in "Theory of Literature", literature is an art that uses language as the main medium, and in this case, language has an aesthetic function, not just communicative. Literary works highlight the beauty and uniqueness of

language, which, according to Rene Wellek is a tool of social institutions to form a fictional reality that serves as a reflection and interpretation of the real world. Luxemburg, Bal, and Weststeijn in "Introduction to Literary Science" explain that literature is a complex communication system, where the message conveyed depends not only on the denotative meaning of words, but also on connotations, style, and narrative or poetic structure. In his book *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Eagleton argues that literature is not a static or universal classification, but rather a form of social and cultural creation that evolves over time. Nonetheless, Eagleton acknowledges that literature is generally characterized by the use of language that is not purely functional and an emphasis on beauty.

Lexical meaning is the meaning of a word on its own, without considering the context of the sentence or its relationship with other words. It is the fundamental definition or lexicon meaning of a term. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the figures of structural linguistics, lexical meaning is part of the "signified" connected to the "signifier" in a linguistic sign. Lexical meaning is a mental concept attached to the form of sound or writing. J.R. Firth with his theory of "context of situation" argues that the meaning of a word is strongly influenced by the context in which it is used. However, lexical meaning remains the core of meaning that can be developed or modified by context. One of the different kinds of meaning that Geoffrey Leech distinguishes in his book "Semantics: The Study of Meaning" is conceptual meaning, which is extremely similar to lexical meaning. The fundamental objective and denotative meaning of a word is referred to as its conceptual meaning. According to Ullmann, understanding the meaning of words (lexical meaning) is essential to understanding deeper meanings, such as context-based meaning or figurative meaning.

The lexical meaning in Chairil Anwar's "Aku" poem is very important and requires in-depth analysis. The analysis of lexical meaning will help reveal layers of meaning that may be hidden or under-emphasized in the poem. The term "Lexical meaning" describes a word's basic or dictionary meaning, which is unaffected by the sentence or phrase in which it is used. In poetry, word choice (diction) is a deliberate

act; each word carries the weight of lexical meaning that the poet chooses to achieve the desired effect. The poem "Aku" stands out for its bold and sometimes unusual use of diction, which Chairil Anwar chose to convey his profound thoughts and self-expression. Understanding the meaning of important words in this poem helps us understand how the poet's word choices shape the message and beauty of his poetry. This research aims to unravel the lexical meanings by understanding the meanings contained in the poem "Aku" is expected to provide a deeper insight into the thoughts and feelings that Chairil Anwar wanted to convey through his work.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This journal uses a literature review to identify, summarize, and avoid duplication of previous research, as well as find new research areas (Ferrari, 2015). The purpose of research based on the Literature Review Study is to analyze previously published articles, avoid plagiarism. In this study the researchers used "Digital Library as a Learning Resource" as a research topic. Data collection and literature sources used in this study are from the Google Scholar database.

## 3. REVIEW LITERATURE

Literature is seen as an art form that uses language as the main medium of expression (Abrams, 1999). Literature can also be seen as a "social institution" that reflects and shapes cultural values, and has distinctive functional and structural properties (Wellek & Warren, 1949). In this context, the poem "Aku" can be understood as a reflection of the spirit of the times and Chairil Anwar's view of human existence. Poetry as a Literary Form is considered as one of the literary genres characterized by the compaction of language, the use of imagery, rhyme (although not always bound), and rhythm to convey emotions, ideas, and experiences. In poetry, diction (word choice) becomes crucial as each word has the power to evoke layered meanings and specific associations. Quality poetry is characterized by appropriate word choice. This section describes the research findings and discussion. Semantics is the branch of linguistics that studies meaning (Leech, 1981). It covers how meaning is represented in

language and how it is interpreted by speakers and listeners. The study of semantics covers different types of meaning, including lexical, contextual, associative, and grammatical meaning.

1. Lexical meaning is the basic meaning of a word as it appears in the dictionary, before being influenced by the context of the sentence (Leech, 1981).
2. Referential Meaning: Lexical meaning is often closely related to referential meaning, which is the relationship between a word and the real-world object, concept, or entity it represents (Ullmann, 1962). For instance, a flat piece of furniture on legs is what the word "table" basically means.
3. Denotative meaning, which is the objective meaning without emotion or personal opinion (Chaer, 2013). This is the true meaning of a word.

Although poetry is full of figurative meanings, the basic meaning of the word remains its foundation. A strong understanding of the lexical meaning of each word is the first step to uncovering more complex and layered meanings in a poem. The poet chooses words with certain basic meanings to create images, atmosphere, and convey his main message. Chairil Anwar's poetic style is known for its strong individualism, boldness, and rebellious "I" spirit. His trademark is the use of straightforward, unusual, and sometimes challenging words. Chairil Anwar is also known as a pioneer of the '45 Generation who brought renewal to Indonesian literature. Although the focus is on the basic meaning of words, understanding the historical background and life of Chairil Anwar will enrich the understanding of the poem. The poem was written in a turbulent time, which may have influenced his word choice and his strong "I" expression. Analysis should include the basic and figurative

meaning of each word, as well as its function in the overall poem. Also pay attention to important and recurring words or phrases. Verification of the basic meaning of words can be done by referring to an Indonesian dictionary.

#### 4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

##### "AKU"

Kalau sampai waktuku  
'Ku mau tak seorang 'kan merayu  
Tidak juga kau  
Tak perlu sedu sedan itu  
Aku ini binatang jalang  
Dari kumpulannya terbuang  
Biar peluru menembus kulitku  
Aku tetap meradang menerjang  
Luka dan bisa kubawa berlari  
Berlari hingga hilang pedih peri  
Dan aku akan lebih tidak peduli  
Aku mau hidup seribu tahun lagi

Chairil Anwar's poem "Aku" is a powerful manifestation of existentialism and rebellion. To understand the depth of its message, it is important to decipher the lexical meaning of the key words used by the poet. Lexical meaning, as the basic or dictionary meaning of a word, becomes the foundation of interpretation before we dive into its connotative or symbolic meaning.

Lyric 1-3: "Kalau sampai waktuku / 'Ku mau tak seorang 'kan merayu / Tidak juga kau"

- Waktu: Lexically, "waktu" refers to duration, moment, or period. In this context, "waktuku" denotatively refers to the time of death of the 'AKU'. There is no seduction or plea to live longer.
- Merayu: The lexical meaning of "merayu" is to persuade, plead with sweet or gentle words, or invite in a subtle way. In this

passage, the 'AKU' rejects any form of persuasion or pleading that might arise at the time of death, asserting her independence even at the brink of death.

- Kau: Lexically, "kau" is a singular second person pronomina. It denotes the refusal of anyone, even the closest person, to interfere or show excessive grief over her death.

Lyric 4: "Tak perlu sedu sedan itu"

- Sedu sedan: Lexically, "sedu sedan" refers to loud crying accompanied by sobs and sighs. Rejection of "sedu sedan itu" denotatively means rejection of any form of excessive grief or lamentation. It emphasizes 'Aku's desire to face death with calmness and without drama.

Lyric 5-6: "Aku ini binatang jalang / Dari kumpulannya terbang"

- Binatang: Lexically, an "binatang" is a non-human living creature, usually with low intelligence and movement. The choice of the word "binatang" suggests instinctual, primitive, and possibly wild nature.
- Jalang: "Jalang" means "wild," "untamed," or "untamed" in lexicon. When combined with "binatang," "binatang jalang" lexically means a wild animal that is not subject to rules or taming. It is a powerful metaphor to describe the 'Aku' self that is free, independent, and not bound to social norms or group rules.
- Terbuang: Lexically, "terbuang" means thrown out, cast aside, or not accepted in a group. The phrase "dari kumpulan terbang" denotatively indicates that 'Aku' feel different or deliberately separate myself from society or the general group.

Lyric 7-8: "Biar peluru menembus kulitku / Aku tetap meradang menerjang"

- Peluru: Lexically, a "Peluru" is the contents of a firearm made of metal and released with explosive force. The word denotatively refers to a physical threat, danger, or deadly attack.

- Menembus: The lexical meaning of "Menembus" is to perforate or pass through an object from one side to another. "Peluru menembus kulitku" denotatively describes physical injury or death.
- "Meradang" means "to be very angry, irritated, or furious" in lexicon.
- Menerjang: The lexical meaning of "Menerjang" is to attack suddenly and violently, or to break (a rule).

The combination "inflamed lunged" lexically indicates an aggressive, furious and undaunted response to the threat of death. 'Aku' will not give up even when faced with the most fatal danger.

Lyric 9-10: "Luka dan bisa kubawa berlari / Berlari hingga hilang pedih peri"

- Luka: Lexically, a "Luka" is an injury to the body (scratch, cut, etc.).
- Bisa: In this context, the word "Bisa" means poison, which is something that hurts or damages.
- Berlari: The lexical meaning of "Berlari" is to move quickly with the feet. The phrase "Luka dan bisa kubawa berlari" denotatively shows that physical and emotional suffering will not stop 'Aku'. It will continue to move forward, overcoming the pain.
- Pedih: The lexical meaning of "Pedih" is sharp pain, soreness.
- Peri: The word "peri" in this context might refer to a state of intense pain or agony, which is a non-standard kind of agony.. "Hilang pedih per" denotatively means that the severe pain will disappear. 'Aku' have the endurance to endure the suffering until the pain disappears.

Lyric 11: "Dan aku akan lebih tidak peduli"

- Peduli: The lexical meaning of "Peduli" is to heed, pay attention to, or pay attention to. The phrase "lebih tidak peduli" denotatively denotes an increasing indifference to things that others might consider important, especially things related to pain, public opinion, or death itself. It emphasizes the

independent and ego-centric attitude of the 'Aku'.

Lyric 12: "Aku mau hidup seribu tahun lagi"

- Hidup: The lexical meaning of "Hidup" is to breathe, to move, or not to die.
- Seribu tahun: Lexically, "Seribu tahun" is a very long duration of time, beyond the normal human lifespan. Denotatively, this phrase expresses 'Aku's desire for a very long, eternal existence, or at the very least, a timeless legacy. This is not a literal desire to physically live for a thousand years, but rather a desire for existence and influence that transcends the limits of mortality.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Chairil Anwar's poem "Aku" is a literary masterpiece rich in meaning, where lexical meaning plays a fundamental role in building its message and expressive power. The analysis of lexical meaning shows that Chairil Anwar deliberately chose strong and straightforward words to build an image of "Aku" that is individualistic, brave, resilient, and determined to exist beyond death. Each key word denotatively supports the narrative of a soul that refuses to submit to death or social conventions, but instead chooses its own path with all its consequences. From the rejection of lamentation to the desire for eternal life, the lexical meanings form the basis for further interpretation of the poem's connotative and philosophical meanings. This analysis shows that every word Chairil Anwar chooses, from "waktu" hingga "seribu tahun", denotatively and literally supports the depiction of the figure of 'Aku'.

The poem consistently uses straightforward and strong diction, such as "Binatang jalang", "meradang menerjang", and "tak perlu sedu sedan itu", which lexically emphasizes 'Aku's rejection of convention, weakness, and limitation. Understanding these lexical meanings becomes the gateway to uncovering the deeper layers of meaning, both connotative and philosophical, contained in the poems. Consequently, the examination of lexical meaning in the poem "Aku" not only improves comprehension of Chairil Anwar's work but also shows that the intentional use of words

with deep meaning is often what gives a poem its power.

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