

## FRAMING MEANINGS: A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE SONG TITLE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON LISTENERS' INTERPRETATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Semantics plays an important role in human communication in real life situations. The present study demonstrates a semantic analysis, and its influence on the listeners' interpretations, of a famous song by Atif Aslam, a famous Pakistani playback singer. Listening music exerts much more influence than merely amusement. Infact poetry aggrandized with fascinating and rhythmic music transports a person from his/her existing physical conditions to an ecstatic environment by producing sublime emotions. The title of the songs also plays sufficient role in determining the influence upon the listening experience. Hence the titles of the songs have enchanting effects as compared to listening and enjoying the complete songs in order to create exalted effects during the listening a particular song. These titles have engrossing influence upon the audiences as these are grounded with the cultural entertainment values and social trends of a specific society, particularly the Urdu speech community around the globe, not only in Pakistan and India, in a given real life situation. The current study concludes that the title of a song is semantically a literal encapsulation of romantic attachment thus creating everlasting affection with the cultural heritage of the Urdu speaking community particularly in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Human Communication, Semantic Analysis, Speech Community, Sublime Emotions Romantic attachment, Cultural Heritage

### INTRODUCTION

In the artistic medium, music creatively organizes sounds to illustrate emotions and ideas, fulfilling entertainment, expression, and cultural expression roles, and connecting individuals' emotions. According to Hargreaves, 2012: "Listening to music involves much more than mere amusement. Such a form of communication becomes complex and holds within human experiences and the social realities of the moment.". This has been evident in the variety of styles and forms it comes in across different cultures and genres, thus providing proof of the importance that is accorded to it as a multifaceted means of expression. Its ability to

convey emotions has placed music as something unique and more powerful for human interaction, further solidifying music's integral role in society (Bishop, 2015).

Song titles therefore become the major determining factors in the reception of a listening experience. This is where the initial contact of the audience occurs with the music, that which affects the listener's expectation and interpretation even before the music is played. This is known as the concept of linguistic framing - somewhat like the way that headlines of newspapers or the title of a book could frame the reader's impression. A well-

crafted title could summarize dominant themes, concepts, or emotions and steer the listener's understanding as it gives birth to a structure in which that song is perceived. The construction offered by a song title can significantly enrich the general experience of listening because it sets specific expectations of what the narrative and emotive course of the composition is going to be like (Larsen, 2016).

This trend is most evident in Urdu traditions because most song titles hold deep meanings, have an abundance of imagery, and express complex emotions. That is why this background fosters modern artists such as Atif Aslam to be very popular, not only in Pakistan but even globally. The language or cultural barrier that otherwise sets people apart across the world has not impacted the acceptance of Aslam by the masses worldwide because the general speaking ability of music is crossing borders (Ishaq, 2018). His songs traverse the spectrum of emotions; love, longing, introspection, and many have titles that are metaphors of themselves and comprise emotional pointers to guide the listener through the thematic content of the music. Engaging specific emotions or thoughts even before the melodic context itself starts, titles help push forward a listener's tie with a song.

A specific example would be to explore Aslam's song title "Tera Hone Laga Hoon." The title will reflect a case study of how a song title influences listeners and their listening experience. Topics of love and the heart will be evoked and the listener will likely see a musical expression about emotion related to love, in addition to all other related emotions. Song titles can have a huge impact on the emotional response of the listener and their experience of the music, according to research (Schellenberg & Perrett, 2009). The title sets a particular kind of emotional tone by asking listeners to go deeper to engage with the music. Moreover, studies have explored how aspects of language contribute to a listener's interpretive journey by using the relationship between language and music (Cross, 2015).

This study is significant as it can throw light upon how such complex relationships are sustained between language and emotion as well as musical expression. Based on the semantic structure of

"Tera Hone Laga Hoon," this paper presents research that will seek to probe into how parts of the language, including metaphor, depth of emotion, and ambiguity, in effect modify the listeners' expectations to thus modulate the experience of a song. Such analysis provides a deep insight through which the importance of the song titles in defining meanings and influencing the interpretative experience of listeners in Atif Aslam's compositions gets clearly defined. Ultimately, this exploration underlines that the song titles are more than just introductory elements because they are pivotal components to the listener's journey along with enhancing our understanding of the complex interplay of music and language (Larsen, 2016; Cross, 2015).

#### **Research Questions:**

- How do the semantic structure of Atif Aslam's song title "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" influence listeners' interpretation?

#### **Research Objectives:**

- To analyze the semantic structure of Atif Aslam's song title "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" and its influence on listeners' interpretation.

#### **Literature Review**

##### **Semantic Content of Song Titles and Their Significance in the Interpretation of a Song**

Music is always a vehicle of expression of culture, emotions, and society, with titles playing an important role in constructing listener interpretation. Not only do titles define a song, but also a mood and even a theme and may bring to mind different understanding from the public about lyrical and musical content. Research in semantic song titles shows how this can easily express the intention of the artist and, meaningfully reach an audience in many different ways (Leech, 1981; Moore, 2012).

##### **Theoretical Framework: Leech's Seven Types of Meaning**

Leech's (1981) framework of seven types of meaning—denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, reflected, stylistic, and thematic has been the bedrock of linguistic studies examining the semantic richness in song titles. The framework presents a structured approach to how the song titles function as both literal and layered meaning

conveyors. For example, through categories suggested by Leech in the title of a Burna Boy song: Owoyale employed categories of connotative and affective dimensions with its repetition and cultural idiomaticity. This deconstructed the phrase from deepening heartbreak among global communities transcending cultural barriers (Owoyale, 2024). Titles, therefore, become a critical entry point to the interpretation of song meaning; they frame listeners' expectations and draw attention to the socio-emotional themes within the music (Babatunde, 1999; Ogunnaike & Akin-Ojo, 2017).

### **The Role of Listeners in Ascribing Meaning**

Moore (2012) in *Song Means* suggests a listener-centered approach to music analysis; song meaning is generally ascribed by listeners and not inscribed by the artist. Moore's concept bears a relation to Leech's (1981) "affective meaning," by which the listener's idiosyncratic individual emotional and social context should guide their interpretation. "Frames" is how, for Moore, titles impact how the listener engages in a song, especially as they apply personal experiences and social background to their readings. Moore's concept of "belonging" in his book demonstrates that song titles make people think about themselves or the style of music in terms of their respective identity and culture. That is highly evident, for example in those pop genres that depend greatly on the meaning of lines of titles and verses for bringing a group or common pride (Avdeeff, 2012; Middleton, 2000). Titles in classical music generally have less significance and only rarely carry thematic value, while popular music titles are said to have tremendous thematic import as a starting point to the emotional and socio-political dimensions of a song, according to Frith in 1998. The title of songs like Burna Boy's "Last Last" or Atif Aslam's "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" explain the depth of affectivity in choice of language while promoting a set of expectational and culturally informed meaning for listening to the song (Owoyale, 2024; Moore, 2012; Yule, 2006).

### **Cultural and Linguistic Nuances in Song Titles**

The use of blended languages and local dialects in song titles provides an avenue for artists to anchor

their music toward specific cultural narratives. The Nigerian hip-hop artist uses the application of local dialects and English to create a form of linguistic fusion that resonates with both local and global audiences. This method underlines even broader social, cultural, and even political narratives, which artists seek to evoke. Ogunnaike and Akin-Ojo (2017) clarify how Nigerian hip-hop adopts this multilingual model in order to discuss problems facing society and reinforce cultural identity. Song titles such as "Last Last" use local idioms which convey meanings accessible to those familiar with Nigerian Pidgin English, but which are still relatable for broader audiences due to universal themes of love and resilience. Artists such as Burna Boy, who introduced elements of cultural reference into the titles, create belonging and identity for listeners in addition to those who hold or share in these values. South Asian music will often use phrases in Urdu and Hindi for song titles to have poetic resonance. Tera Hone Laga Hoon by Atif Aslam evokes love and commitment through a deep understanding of love and surrender. Linguistic choices create an immediate sense of connection among listeners who share the same cultural background while pointing to the power of semantic choices in constructing the listener's interpretive lens (Frith, 1983; Tagg, 2000).

### **Semantic Structure Impact on Interpretation**

The semantic structure of a title often impacts the way a listener hears a song. Titles generally capture the central themes and impact listener expectations about lyrical and musical content. This is very much in line with Leech's (1981) concept of thematic meaning: where the structure of language is focused on a central theme or point. Titles of hip-hop songs, for instance, often use slang or metaphors to praise resilience, social justice, or identity. In this regard, Burna Boy's "Last Last" provides a title of finality and resignation to a reality not necessarily wanted, which could be personal as well as collective in nature. This theme thus defines how the interpretation evolves, hence providing a feeling that the song sustains from the outset to the conclusion (Ogunnaike & Akin-Ojo, 2017; Olaniyan, 2004). According to Middleton (1999) and Krims (2000), in popular music genres,

it is the semantic content within song titles that acts as a basic tool of re-creation for an appropriate audience perception. It postulates that titles constitute some sort of rhetorical function intended to capture the emotion, as well as the ideology the artist embodies. For many rap and hip-hop song titles, defiance or even resistance or identity convey historically rooted social activism values for the genre. Moreover, an analysis by Moore in 2012 sustains the notion that song titles may be associated with the intent of artists but also evoke the feelings of listening through the attuned cultural and social dimension (Krimms, 2000; Tagg, 2000; Frith, 1998). Genre-specific Expectations: How Does Genre Influence Interpretation in Song Titles?

The following is a detailed outline that explains how genre expectations also influence the framework for the interpretation of song titles.

Hip-hop, for instance, employs many languages to reflect ideas of identity, survivance, and social comment. Titles in Nigerian hip-hop often mix Pidgin with English or native tongues, reflecting the genre's role as a platform to narrate cultural and social challenges. Krimms says that, on the titles, one reflects the concerns of truth and social comment concerning the identity of personification and community. For instance, in the song "Last Last" by Burna Boy, the use of idiomatic expressions is a good example that creates a more authentic song in terms of mirroring natural language usage (Owoyale, 2024) [7†source]. Moore's value-neutral approach to genre supports an inclusive interpretation of popular music. Averting hierarchical assessments, Moore emphasizes that titles should be understood as contextual and genre-specific tools, allowing each genre to maintain unique interpretive elements that shape audience engagement (Middleton, 1999; Tagg, 2000). In this way, titles do more than introduce a song; they reinforce its authenticity, inviting listeners to identify with the artist's message on a deeply personal level.

Semantic analysis of song titles is very rich in terms of how listeners understand and connect with music. Frameworks like Leech's (1981) and Moore's (2012) listener-centered methodology are used by researchers to identify the ways linguistic choices create emotions, establish cultural

connections, and frame interpretation. Through a mix of cultural nuances and stylistic elements, song titles become the most potent tools that define the experience of the music for the listener. Titles create semantic anchors, bringing with them all the connotations and the thematic aspects they contain: they relate ideas, and elements, and, consequently are priceless for any student of pop music.

### Methodology

This study would analyze how song titles function in terms of giving or taking meaning from songs among listeners by focusing particularly on the song "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" by Atif Aslam. Adopting a qualitative approach and taking Leech's (1981) framework, encompassing seven types of meaning-denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, reflected, stylistic, and thematic-this will help to analyze semantic depth in the title, showing its influence on perception at the level of interpretation in listeners. Leech's framework allows one to use it in the evaluation of various levels of meaning within the spoken and the word written and thus would best help to identify how song titles create a frame to interpret a song's theme. The paper uses a qualitative research methodology through content analysis and thematic analysis to interpret the findings. Qualitative content analysis has been chosen since it offers a systematic exploration of the use of language and may reveal patterns and meaning within the data. Thus, the study digs both literal and figurative interpretations behind the title "Tera Hone Laga Hoon.". Data gathering is textual analysis which focuses on the title "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" as one phrase, and analysis via Leech's categories tries to identify the layers hidden in words. This exam forms a basis for getting an idea of the semantic as well as cultural implications carried by this title within South Asian music.

### Leech's Seven Types of Meaning

This is Leech's (1981) model applied systematically to break up the title "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" by its seven types of meaning:

**1. Denotative Meaning:** The literal or dictionary meaning of the title is that it translates to "I am becoming yours" in Urdu. The word "becoming" in

this context means a process of romantic surrender, which is a very common theme in South Asian music. By establishing a baseline understanding of how the words convey a very straightforward yet culturally resonant message about love and attachment, the study analyzes the literal meaning of the title.

**2. Connotative Meaning:** This refers to the emotional and associative meanings carried beyond the literal sense. "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" could give one the impression of vulnerability, long love, and commitment through the use of familiar Urdu idioms by the listener. Listeners' emotional responses to romantic subtexts in this title will be captured for analysis.

**3. Collocative Meaning:** This type of meaning arises from the usual collocations of words in a natural language. The idiomatic phrase "hone laga" (beginning to become) is usually found in romantic contexts in Urdu, where it is frequently used to describe a shift in emotions over time. Examination of this collocation in the title will show how language use that is culturally inscribed contributes to the understanding of listeners.

**4. Affective Meaning:** This section is concerned with the affective meaning, with respect to how the title itself affects the listener's feelings or emotions. "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" leaves an impression of emotional submissiveness or enhanced love, which brings about responses in the emotive dimension of the listeners. It explains how the language used in the selection of words for title writing can determine one's emotional reaction while listening to the song.

**5. Reflected Meaning:** Reflected meaning attempts to understand other meanings arising out of other contexts. Since "hone laga" is interpreted to mean romantic in the title, this means that it could indicate changes or a state in oneself and therefore might also imply a state where change occurs beyond the interpretation as being romantic. Therefore, the analysis will further highlight if the title only implies a romantic meaning or also suggests an emotional path taken.

**6. Stylistic Meaning:** It concerns the language and cultural context. The use of the title in Urdu is well within the stylistic context of South Asian romantic music because Urdu is preferred due to its poetic value. In this analysis, how the choice of language has been appreciated by the listener, who associates Urdu with refinement and emotional depth.

**7. Thematic Meaning:** The theme meaning or the central idea/message or focus that comes with the structure of this title itself, as has been conveyed through it may be termed as thematic meaning. "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" would suggest movement/changes. The theme seems to revolve around emotional bonding building up. This above debate shall see how the theme conveyed through the title is constructed in such a manner to make the audience believe in the presentation that involves love evolution or attachment-based storytelling.

#### **Data Analysis**

The analysis has been used in content analysis as well as thematic analysis. In this content analysis phase, through Leech's framework, every type of meaning has been examined independently. Therefore, this stage would identify each kind of meaning, which, from literal to stylistic, gives a cohesive impact of the title in total.

In the thematic analysis phase, the research collects the meanings discovered to derive recurrent themes in interpretations of the title. The thematic analysis will allow insight into how the title shapes listener expectations and emotional engagement. Common emotional and cultural associations will be analyzed, so the thematic analysis will allow insight into how the title shapes listener expectations and emotional engagement. A combination of content and thematic analysis provides an understanding of how the title's linguistic elements impact the interpretive process. All analyses are conducted within cultural contexts and thus uphold ethical integrity. The research will also strive to make interpretations aware of the diversity of the background of the listeners, with no attempt to superimpose a single storyline on the meaning of the title.

Applying Leech's framework for semantics (1981), this research will discover in what ways song titles

represent interpretive frames as evident in "Tera Hone Laga Hoon.". This approach allows for an all-rounded analysis of the linguistic and emotional layers of the title, revealing how different kinds of meanings can influence a listener's involvement with the song. By this methodology, the study contributes to the understanding of semantics in popular music, demonstrating how song titles can be a powerful tool for cultural resonance and emotional connection among listeners. ---

### Conclusion

This research delved into the semantic richness of Atif Aslam's song title, "Tera Hone Laga Hoon," using Leech's seven types of meaning framework, developed in 1981 to examine how linguistic choice would impact listener interpretation and emotive engagement. An additional close reading of denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, reflected, stylistic, and thematic meanings reveals that this is more than a portal of access to love and emotional surrender themes.

This title is a literal encapsulation of a process of romantic attachment, but it points to a vulnerability and longing felt deep down on the connotative and affective layers. Urdu as the cultural context adds some depth to that feeling, in terms of emotional resonance, to connect listeners with their cultural heritage. Further, the critical discussion has illustrated how the meanings drawn from the idiomatic collocation "hone laga" contextualize the transformative character of love, whereas the stylistic decisions have concretized the romantic connotation of the title within South Asian musical cultures.

The current study demonstrates that titles are not just head labels in the superficial sense but a crucial part of the listening experience, framing expectations and thus interpretation. The linguistic elements in "Tera Hone Laga Hoon" reflect how song titles can encompass intricate emotions and narratives, thereby making them effective instruments in establishing a relationship between the artist and the audience. This study adds to the general understanding of semantics in popular music, giving much importance to song titles in cultural representation and emotional expression

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