

**A Lexical Semantic Analysis of Song Lyrics in Bruno Mars’
Unorthodox Jukebox Album**

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SUBMISSION TRACK	A B S T R A C T
Submitted : 29 September 2025 Accepted : 1 December 2025 Published : 3 December 2025	Understanding the meaning of lyrics in contemporary popular music can be difficult because many expressions carry intentions that exceed their surface definitions. Responding to this issue, this study investigates how literal (lexical) meanings and context-based meanings operate in several tracks from Bruno Mars’ <i>Unorthodox Jukebox</i> album. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach in which the selected lyrics are examined through semantic classification, comparing dictionary-based meanings with the interpretive shifts that emerge from the surrounding lyrical environment. The analysis indicates that while numerous words retain straightforward lexical senses, their significance frequently expands when considered within the emotional and narrative structure of the songs. For example, in <i>When I Was Your Man</i> , the term <i>man</i> evolves from a simple reference to gender into an indicator of emotional development, regret, and accountability. Similarly, expressions such as <i>heaven</i> and <i>locked out</i> in <i>Locked Out of Heaven</i> evoke symbolic and affective layers not present in their literal meanings. Overall, the study highlights that a comprehensive interpretation of modern song lyrics requires attention to both lexical meaning and the contextual forces that reshape it.
KEYWORDS	
Lexical Meaning, Contextual Meaning, Semantic Interpretation, Song Lyrics Analysis, Bruno Mars	
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Introduction

Human communication relies heavily on linguistic systems, which function as essential instruments for expressing meaning. Within the realm of music, this linguistic element becomes even more powerful. Music, as a deeply influential form of art, merges poetic lyrics with melody to transmit thoughts, emotions, and narratives to diverse audiences. In popular music, song lyrics serve not merely to entertain but also to convey profound emotional insights and reflections on individual or social experiences. Yet, to fully grasp their essence, one must look beyond literal interpretation and explore the semantic depth embedded within the lyrics.

Semantics is the area of linguistic study that focuses on how meaning is formed and understood in language (Of et al., 2025). Within linguistic studies, particularly in Semantics, meaning is generally approached from two main perspectives: lexical and contextual. Lexical meaning relates to the standard or dictionary-based interpretation of a word. A lexical element may consist of a single word, a combination of words, or a specific portion of text (Ballatore et al., 2015). Lexical relations structure how different senses are connected to one another (Khalilia et al., 2021). Socialness can facilitate responses in lexical semantic (Diveica et al., 2024).

Lexical or semantic meaning represents the actual description of a concept to which a word refers (Rohbiah, 2020). Individuals possessing a larger vocabulary are likely to have access to broader lexical resources, enabling the activation of lexical items through spreading activation processes, which in turn facilitate their comprehension of written material (García-Castro, 2020). The connection between lexical meaning and

Morphology, particularly involving the lexicon, is examined within lexical Semantics through the study of affixation processes such as prefixes and suffixes that contribute to meaning transformation (Devina, 2022). The growth of lexical and semantic abilities starts gradually around 18 months and shows significant progress by the close of the second year of life (De Anda & Friend, 2020).

Lexical meaning has traditionally been regarded as a fixed and straightforward form of denotation or linguistic function (Hogeweg & Vicente, 2020). The creation of new words can be led through lexical-semantic method (Irgashovna, 2024). Lexical-semantic analysis is applied to determine the appropriate meaning of phrases (Tafiati et al., 2022). Developing lexical semantic annotation datasets can provide fresh insights into how the meanings of lexical items evolve over extended periods (McGillivray et al., 2022). Lexical Semantics studies how a word represents the meaning it conveys (Joseph & Oghoghophia, 2023).

The notion of lexical meaning suggests that a lexeme's interpretation is influenced by the overall meaning of the sentence where it appears (Zulaikah et al., 2024). Antonymic structures function as lexical devices in literary traditions (Jayakumar, 2016). A lexical semantic network consists of interconnected nodes that represent lexical concepts or items, each linked through associative relationships (Agustín-Llach & Rubio, 2024). In lexical relations there are lexical meanings (Nyoman & Tri, 2025). Contextual meaning arises from the specific situation in which the word is used. These meanings often work together, especially in creative texts like song lyrics, where simple language can take on greater significance due to emotional or metaphorical elements. This interplay of meanings poses a unique challenge for those seeking to understand how meaning is shaped within musical compositions.

Lexical meaning denotes the central or commonly accepted sense of a word, typically presented in dictionaries. It represents a conceptual type of meaning that reflects the shared understanding among speakers of a language. This aspect of meaning is viewed as relatively stable, since it usually does not vary according to the context in which the word appears. The literal interpretation plays a vital role in communication, allowing individuals to comprehend words in a consistent and predictable manner (Leech, 1981).

In this research, lexical meaning plays an important role in examining how Bruno Mars uses specific words in his song lyrics. Words often carry their conventional definitions, such as the word "man," which generally signifies an adult male. Identifying such literal meanings is a necessary starting point for deeper analysis. Understanding the fixed meaning of a word allows researchers to then look at how context adds emotional or symbolic significance. Recognizing this basic level of meaning is essential before considering how it may shift or develop within the structure and themes of the song.

This research centers on a semantic analysis of selected lyrics from Bruno Mars' album *Unorthodox Jukebox*, with a specific focus on the relationship between literal definitions and their contextual applications. Bruno Mars, known for his expressive and genre-blending style, offers a valuable body of work for this kind of linguistic exploration. By studying particular songs from the album, the research investigates how seemingly straightforward words can shift in meaning depending on their placement within lyrical narratives.

Using a qualitative descriptive method, this research highlights the importance of examining both literal and contextual meanings of words to grasp the deeper layers of modern song lyrics. The findings reveal that even seemingly simple words can acquire emotional and symbolic power when viewed within their musical framework. This study enriches the field of Semantics by providing an understanding of how contemporary

musicians, such as Bruno Mars, employ language not only as a form of entertainment but also as a tool to establish emotional and interpretive bonds with their audience.

Research Method

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative design to understand how lexical and contextual meanings operate within selected songs from Bruno Mars's album *Unorthodox Jukebox*. This design is appropriate for semantic investigation because it allows the researcher to describe clearly how meaning is constructed in authentic language use and to observe how the interpretation of words may shift when placed within a specific lyrical environment. In Semantics, this method helps us understand how words work in certain situations, like in song lyrics, by looking at their basic meaning and how that meaning can change in context (Sandelowski, 2000).

The data for this study consist of five tracks from *Unorthodox Jukebox*, specifically *Locked Out of Heaven* (2012), *When I Was Your Man* (2013), *Treasure* (2013), *Gorilla* (2013), and *If I Knew* (2013). These songs were chosen because they present strong emotional themes, expressive figurative language, and vocabulary items that significantly shape the messages conveyed in the lyrics. Their subject matter, which covers ideas such as affection, regret, desire, and personal reflection, provides an ideal foundation for semantic analysis. All lyric texts were taken from dependable and official sources, including the original album booklet and the verified website of the artist, in order to ensure that the data remain accurate and trustworthy. Stating the basis for selecting the songs strengthens the transparency and repeatability of the research.

The analysis was carried out through several stages. First, the five songs were examined because they display emotional richness and frequent use of semantic features such as metaphor, symbolism, and expressive comparison. Important words and expressions that play a central role in shaping lyrical meaning were then identified. Each lexical item was checked in reputable dictionaries to obtain its basic meaning as commonly understood. After establishing these literal definitions, the same items were reviewed again within the lyrical context so that changes in meaning caused by tone, situation, or surrounding lines could be recognized. The results were then organized into thematic categories, including love, sadness, longing, or conflict, and further classified according to the nature of the meaning shift, such as metaphorical interpretation, connotative extension, or ironic expression. The interpretations were supported by relevant semantic theories and earlier studies to ensure that the findings are academically reliable.

Through this sequence of steps, the research provides a detailed and organized explanation of the ways in which specific lexical items contribute to meaning construction in the five selected songs from *Unorthodox Jukebox*.

Result and Discussion

This research uses five songs from Bruno Mars's *Unorthodox Jukebox* album as its primary material. The selected tracks are *Locked Out of Heaven* (2012), *When I Was Your Man* (2013), *Treasure* (2013), *Gorilla* (2013), and *If I Knew* (2013). The study explores how the wording in these lyrics, which normally carries a fixed dictionary meaning, can take on new interpretations once placed within the emotional and narrative flow of each song. In this analysis, semantic meaning is understood as the standard definition of a word, while contextual meaning develops from the surrounding situation, the mood of the lyrics, and the intention behind the lines. Through this lens, many

everyday words maintain their basic sense yet acquire additional meanings shaped by themes such as affection, sorrow, longing, and desire.

From the examined data, several tendencies in meaning shifts become apparent. Words with plain definitions, such as heart, man, and paradise, express deeper emotional weight when interpreted within the songs, reflecting vulnerability, devotion, or disappointment. Meanwhile, expressions like born again, spiritual, and heaven extend beyond their literal or religious associations and function as symbols of inner renewal or intimate closeness. These recurring patterns suggest that Bruno Mars relies on simple vocabulary but reshapes its significance through context, enabling ordinary words to convey more complex emotional messages. This interaction between stable semantic meaning and adaptable contextual meaning forms an essential part of understanding how lexical choices contribute to depth in song lyrics.

Table 1. The song “*Locked Out of Heaven*” (Mars, 2012)

Words or Phrases	Semantic Meaning	Contextual Meaning
“Never had much faith in love or miracles” (Mars, 2012).	Lack of belief in romantic love or supernatural events.	The speaker is emotionally closed off due to past disappointments in love.
“Never wanna put my heart on the line” (Mars, 2012).	Avoiding emotional risk or commitment.	Fear of vulnerability or getting hurt in a relationship.
“Swimming in your water is something spiritual” (Mars, 2012).	Being in someone's water feels like a holy experience.	A metaphor for intimacy that is deeply emotional and meaningful.
“I'm born again every time you spend the night” (Mars, 2012).	Being renewed each time someone stays overnight.	Emotional and spiritual renewal through physical closeness.
“Your sex takes me to paradise” (Mars, 2012).	physical intimacy elevates the persona to a state of bliss or transcendence.	The physical relationship brings intense emotional and spiritual joy.
“You make me feel like I've been locked out of heaven” (Mars, 2012).	Feeling excluded from paradise.	Before this relationship, the speaker felt unfulfilled and disconnected from happiness.
“You bring me to my knees, you make me testify” (Mars, 2012).	Causing someone to kneel and declare something.	Overwhelmed by love or passion, likened to religious devotion.
“You can make a sinner change his ways” (Mars, 2012).	Someone helps another person become morally better.	The partner's influence is so powerful it inspires personal transformation.
“Open up your gates 'cause I can't wait to see the light” (Mars, 2012).	Open the doors so that light can enter.	A call for emotional honesty and human connection.
“Can I just stay here? Spend the rest of my days here?” (Mars, 2012).	Wanting to remain in a place permanently.	Desire to stay in the emotional state of love and happiness forever.

“Never had much faith in love or miracles” (Mars, 2012)

This expression reflects a lack of trust or belief in romantic emotions and extraordinary events. The word 'faith' refers to a strong trust in someone or something, while 'love' and 'miracles' point to emotional connection and supernatural phenomena. Using Leech’s concept of lexical meaning, each word maintains a clear, dictionary-level definition understood by most speakers.

“Never wanna put my heart on the line” (Mars, 2012)

The phrase illustrates hesitation toward emotional vulnerability. The word 'heart' commonly symbolizes feelings or emotions, while 'on the line' refers to being in a situation of risk. Even though this expression is idiomatic, the basic meanings of its individual parts are still stable and widely recognized.

“Swimming in your water is something spiritual” (Mars, 2012)

This metaphor conveys the idea of being deeply immersed in someone's presence, which feels sacred. Literally, 'swimming' means moving through water, 'water' is a natural substance, and 'spiritual' refers to something connected to the soul or inner life. Though poetic, the words retain their core meanings as described in a dictionary.

“I’m born again every time you spend the night” (Mars, 2012)

This lyric expresses a sense of emotional renewal experienced in intimacy. 'Born again' is a phrase often used to describe spiritual rebirth, while 'spend the night' means staying somewhere for an entire night. Based on Leech's theory, the meanings of these words are precise and agreed upon across different contexts.

“Your sex takes me to paradise” (Mars, 2012)

In this sentence, the word 'sex' is a direct reference to physical intimacy, and 'paradise' is a place or state of extreme happiness. The literal meanings of these words form the foundation for the emotional tone of the lyric, consistent with Leech's focus on denotative meaning.

“You make me feel like I’ve been locked out of heaven” (Mars, 2012)

In this context, the phrase *being excluded* denotes a sense of restriction, while *heaven* symbolizes complete happiness and serenity. These lexical meanings create a sense of emotional distance from happiness and are central to understanding the emotional message behind the phrase.

“You bring me to my knees, you make me testify” (Mars, 2012)

This line uses strong visual imagery where 'knees' suggest a posture of surrender or submission, and 'testify' refers to giving a truthful statement, often in religious or legal settings. The core meanings of both words are consistent with their usual definitions.

“You can make a sinner change his ways” (Mars, 2012)

The word 'sinner' is commonly understood as someone who has done wrong, especially in a moral or religious sense. 'Change his ways' means to alter one's behavior for the better. These meanings are conceptually clear and contribute to the idea of transformation.

“Open up your gates 'cause I can’t wait to see the light” (Mars, 2012)

The term '*gates*' conveys the idea of a boundary or point of entry, while '*light*' is commonly linked to truth, enlightenment, and optimism. These literal definitions remain intact even when used symbolically, making them compatible with Leech's framework of fixed meaning.

“Can I just stay here? Spend the rest of my days here?” (Mars, 2012)

This phrase communicates a desire for permanence in a peaceful or happy condition. The words 'stay' and 'spend the rest of my days' (Mars, 2012) are clearly defined in the context of remaining in one place or state for a long time, fitting the criteria of lexical meaning.

Table 2. The song “*When I Was Your Man*” (Mars, 2013)

Words or Phrases	Semantic Meaning	Contextual Meaning
“Same bed but it feels just a little bit bigger now” (Mars, 2013)	The bed is the same size but feels larger.	The emptiness felt after a breakup makes the space feel lonelier.
“Our song on the radio but it don't sound the same” (Mars, 2013)	Their song still plays, but it sounds different.	Hearing their shared song is now painful due to emotional loss.
“When our friends talk about you / All it does is just tear me down” (Mars, 2013)	When friends mention the former partner, the speaker feels hurt.	Memories of the ex hurt the speaker deeply and trigger sadness.
“My pride, my ego, my needs, and my selfish ways” (Mars, 2013)	Describing personality traits: pride, ego, needs, selfishness.	Admitting that personal flaws caused the breakup.
“Now my baby's dancing / But she's dancing with another man” (Mars, 2013)	His former partner is dancing with someone else.	She has moved on and is now happy with a new partner.
“That I should've bought you flowers / And held your hand” (Mars, 2013)	The speaker regrets not giving flowers or holding hands.	A reflection of missed gestures of love and care.
Take you to every party / 'Cause all you wanted to do was dance” (Mars, 2013)	She wished to join parties and dance, yet he never brought her along.	Regret over not supporting her passions and desires.
“Now I never, never get to clean up the mess I made” (Mars, 2013)	He can't fix what he broke.	He feels deep remorse for the damage done to the relationship.
“Although it hurts / I'll be the first to say that I was wrong” (Mars, 2013)	Although it hurts, he acknowledges his mistake.	Shows maturity and acceptance of responsibility after loss.
“I hope he buys you flowers / I hope he holds your hand” (Mars, 2013)	Hoping someone else does what he failed to do.	Wishing happiness for an ex, despite personal regret and sorrow.

“Same bed but it feels just a little bit bigger now” (Mars, 2013)

The lyric “Same bed but it feels just a little bit bigger now” (Mars, 2013) describes a physical space that has remained unchanged in size. The term "bed" refers to a piece of furniture used for resting, and "bigger" signals something of increased dimensions. While nothing about the object has actually changed, the absence of a loved one makes the space

feel emptier. This contrast between the literal description and the emotional experience conveys a sense of loss.

“Our song on the radio but it don’t sound the same” (Mars, 2013)

In the line “Our song on the radio but it don’t sound the same” (Mars, 2013), the word “song” means a musical piece and “radio” refers to a device that plays music. Although the tune is still the same, the emotions attached to it have shifted. The meanings of the words are clear in themselves, but the emotional connection once shared through the music has now been replaced with sorrow.

“When our friends talk about you / All it does is just tear me down” (Mars, 2013)

“When our friends talk about you / All it does is just tear me down” (Mars, 2013) uses simple vocabulary. “Friends” are people one is socially connected with, and “talk” is spoken interaction. The phrase “tear me down” does not describe a physical action but rather the emotional pain caused by these conversations. The meanings of individual terms are direct, though the overall message conveys deep sadness.

“My pride, my ego, my needs, and my selfish ways” (Mars, 2013)

In the phrase “My pride, my ego, my needs, and my selfish ways” (Mars, 2013), each noun stands for particular personality characteristics. These are used to reflect on the speaker’s own shortcomings. The vocabulary clearly identifies internal issues that likely contributed to the breakup. Each term retains its core meaning while building the context of self-reflection.

“Now my baby’s dancing / But she’s dancing with another man” (Mars, 2013)

The line “Now my baby’s dancing / But she’s dancing with another man” (Mars, 2013) uses familiar words. “Baby” is used as a loving nickname, “dancing” is the act of moving to music, and “another man” refers to someone new. Although the terms are literal, the image of the former partner dancing with someone else highlights a painful emotional transition.

“That I should’ve bought you flowers / And held your hand” (Mars, 2013)

“That I should’ve bought you flowers / And held your hand” (Mars, 2013) refers to romantic actions the speaker now wishes he had taken. “Flowers” are often associated with affection, and “hand” refers to physical closeness. These terms express regret for missed moments of kindness and care. The literal meanings are not altered but carry emotional weight due to the context.

“Take you to every party / 'Cause all you wanted to do was dance” (Mars, 2013)

“Take you to every party / 'Cause all you wanted to do was dance” (Mars, 2013) contains terms like “party,” meaning a social gathering, and “dance,” referring to rhythmic movement to music. These words retain their dictionary meanings, yet they reflect the speaker’s awareness of having failed to meet his partner’s desires, revealing a tone of remorse.

“Now I never, never get to clean up the mess I made” (Mars, 2013)

In the line “Now I never, never get to clean up the mess I made” (Mars, 2013), “clean up” normally means to tidy or fix something, and “mess” suggests disorder or chaos. Used metaphorically, these terms relate to emotional damage that the speaker can

no longer repair. Although figurative, the individual words stay true to their standard meanings.

“Although it hurts / I’ll be the first to say that I was wrong” (Mars, 2013)

The statement “Although it hurts / I’ll be the first to say that I was wrong” (Mars, 2013) uses simple but emotionally heavy language. “Hurts” implies emotional pain, and “wrong” signifies being at fault. These words retain their usual meanings while showing the speaker’s willingness to admit his mistakes and take accountability.

“I hope he buys you flowers / I hope he holds your hand” (Mars, 2013)

In the final line “I hope he buys you flowers / I hope he holds your hand ” (Mars, 2013), the repeated use of words like “flowers” and “hand” continues, with “hope” showing a positive wish. The speaker is expressing a sincere desire that the new partner will treat the former lover better. The meanings of the words remain clear, while the emotional tone suggests acceptance and emotional growth.

Table 3. The song “*Treasure*” (Mars, 2013)

Words or Phrases	Semantic Meaning	Contextual Meaning
“Baby squirrel, you's a sexy mother-fucker” (Mars, 2013)	Uses a metaphor to refer to the woman in an affectionate, playful, and provocative way.	Bruno Mars is using bold, humorous language to flatter and capture the listener’s attention, creating a cheeky and intimate vibe.
“Give me your attention, baby” (Mars, 2013)	A direct request for the listener to focus on the speaker.	He is trying to draw her attention to compliment her and express affection.
“You're wonderful, flawless, ooh, you're a sexy lady” (Mars, 2013)	Adjectives that express strong admiration and attraction.	These words are meant to boost the woman's confidence and show how highly the speaker thinks of her.
“But you walk around here like you wanna be someone else” (Mars, 2013)	Suggests that the woman is insecure or lacks self-confidence.	Bruno is trying to empower the woman by highlighting her true worth, which she may not recognize herself.
“I know that you don't know it, but you're fine, so fine” (Mars, 2013)	Implies unrecognized beauty or value.	He reassures her that she is attractive even if she doesn’t realize it herself.
“Treasure, that is what you are” (Mars, 2013)	Metaphor comparing the woman to a valuable object.	Bruno emphasizes that she is precious and irreplaceable in his eyes.
“Pretty girl, pretty girl, pretty girl, you should be smiling” (Mars, 2013)	Repetition emphasizes beauty and the idea that beauty should come with happiness.	He encourages her to be happy and confident, as she deserves joy.
“You're everything I see in my dreams” (Mars, 2013)	Hyperbolic expression of affection.	Reveals the depth of his admiration and romantic interest.
“If you let me treasure you” (Mars, 2013)	Implies a desire to care for and value the woman.	He is asking for her permission to love her and make her feel special.
“You are my treasure” (Mars, 2013)	Reinforces the metaphor of high personal value.	Acts as a refrain to continually affirm the central message of love and appreciation.

“Baby squirrel, you's a sexy mother-fucker” (Mars, 2013)

In the lyric "Baby squirrel, you's a sexy motherfucker" (Mars, 2013), Bruno Mars employs a metaphor that is both humorous and affectionate. The term "baby squirrel" is not meant to be taken literally but serves as an unusual and playful pet name. Paired with a bold compliment, the expression creates a flirtatious and confident tone. The literal meanings of the words are clear, yet their combination generates a unique emotional flavor that conveys admiration in a cheeky manner.

“Give me your attention, baby” (Mars, 2013)

The phrase "Give me your attention, baby" (Mars, 2013) is a straightforward appeal. "Attention" signifies focused awareness, while "baby" is a common term used to show affection. Through this line, Bruno Mars seeks emotional presence and acknowledgment from the woman, indicating his desire for connection. The emotional resonance stems from his longing to be noticed and appreciated, setting a romantic tone for the rest of the song.

“You're wonderful, flawless, ooh, you're a sexy lady” (Mars, 2013)

When the singer says "You're wonderful, flawless, ooh, you're a sexy lady" (Mars, 2013), he uses a string of descriptive words that directly express admiration and desire. Words such as "wonderful" and "flawless" carry strong positive associations, while "sexy lady" shifts the tone toward physical attraction. These simple yet powerful terms emphasize his deep fascination and the high regard he holds for the woman.

“But you walk around here like you wanna be someone else” (Mars, 2013)

In the line "But you walk around here like you wanna be someone else" (Mars, 2013), Bruno Mars comments on the woman's apparent insecurity. Although the language is literal, it evokes a deeper meaning about self-doubt and identity. The singer uses this moment to suggest that she should embrace her authentic self rather than trying to become someone she is not.

“I know that you don't know it, but you're fine, so fine” (Mars, 2013)

The lyric "I know that you don't know it, but you're fine, so fine" (Mars, 2013) highlights the idea of unrecognized beauty. The word "fine" is a casual expression for being attractive. Its repetition emphasizes the singer's sincere admiration. This line communicates that the woman may not see her own worth, and Bruno Mars offers a gentle reminder of her value.

“Treasure, that is what you are” (Mars, 2013)

In the expression "Treasure, that is what you are" (Mars, 2013) the artist uses a metaphor to liken the woman to something extremely valuable. While "treasure" usually refers to an object of great worth, here it symbolizes the singer's emotional appreciation for her. This metaphor reinforces her unique importance in his life and expresses his deep affection.

“Pretty girl, pretty girl, pretty girl, you should be smiling” (Mars, 2013)

"Pretty girl, pretty girl, pretty girl, you should be smiling" (Mars, 2013) uses repetition to underline the woman's beauty. The phrase "pretty girl" is a direct compliment, while "smiling" suggests both physical appearance and emotional well-

being. The message goes beyond looks, encouraging her to feel happy and confident in herself.

“You're everything I see in my dreams” (Mars, 2013)

The line "You're everything I see in my dreams" (Mars, 2013) is an example of romantic exaggeration, emphasizing how central she is to the singer's desires. The phrase implies that she occupies his thoughts both during sleep and in his aspirations. This poetic statement turns ordinary words into a heartfelt declaration of love.

“If you let me treasure you” (Mars, 2013)

In the lyric "If you let me treasure you" (Mars, 2013) the word "let" indicates a respectful request, while "treasure" conveys the idea of cherishing someone deeply. This line reflects the importance of mutual consent in a relationship and expresses the singer's intention to treat her with care and devotion.

“You are my treasure” (Mars, 2013)

Finally, "You are my treasure" (Mars, 2013) echoes the main metaphor of the song. By calling her his "treasure," the singer expresses her unique value to him. The possessive form makes the statement more intimate, encapsulating his admiration, loyalty, and emotional dedication.

Table 4. The song “Gorilla” (Mars, 2013)

Words or Phrases	Semantic Meaning	Contextual Meaning
“Ooh, I got a body full of liquor with a coco kicker” (Mars, 2013)	Describes intoxication with alcohol mixed with coconut flavor (possibly referencing a cocktail).	Expresses the speaker's euphoric and uninhibited state, setting a wild and sensual mood.
“And I'm feelin' like I'm 30 feet tall” (Mars, 2013)	Hyperbole to show extreme confidence or empowerment.	Reflects the speaker's boosted ego and arousal under the influence.
“You got your legs up in the sky with the devil in your eyes” (Mars, 2013)	Sexual imagery and metaphor for intense passion or desire.	Suggests a moment of physical intimacy filled with fierce emotional energy.
“Look what you're doin', look what you've done” (Mars, 2013)	Acknowledges the partner's impact on the speaker.	Implies that the partner has provoked uncontrollable passion.
“But in this jungle, you can't run” (Mars, 2013)	Metaphorical reference to the intensity and inescapability of the situation.	Portrays the bedroom as a wild, primal place where instinct takes over.
“You'll be bangin' on my chest, bang, bang, gorilla” (Mars, 2013)	Alludes to gorilla behavior; a metaphor for wild, animalistic sex.	Evokes raw physicality and dominance in the sexual encounter.
“You and me, baby, makin' love like gorillas” (Mars, 2013)	Explicit comparison to animalistic mating behavior.	Celebrates a passionate, unrestrained sexual experience.
“I got a fistful of your hair, but you don't look like you're scared” (Mars, 2013)	Implements imagery of rough physical interaction.	Reinforces mutual consent and shared intensity in the act.
“Call the sheriff, call the SWAT, we don't stop” (Mars, 2013)	Exaggeration implying the act is so intense it might draw police attention.	Symbolizes disregard for social norms or interruptions—total immersion in the moment.
“You'll never be the same, baby, once I'm done with you” (Mars, 2013)	Promises a transformative experience.	Conveys the speaker's confidence in the impact of their physical connection.

“Ooh, I got a body full of liquor with a coco kicker” (Mars, 2013)

This line describes someone who is under the influence of alcohol. The term "body" refers to the person's physical being, while "liquor" indicates strong alcoholic drinks. The word "coco" likely suggests a coconut flavor, and "kicker" implies something with a strong or surprising effect. The vocabulary used presents a literal scenario where someone is heavily intoxicated, perhaps with a tropical twist. Based on Leech's lexical approach, the terms are used in their direct, standard meanings to describe the condition.

“And I'm feelin like I'm thirty feet tall” (Mars, 2013)

The phrase expresses a heightened emotional state. "Feelin" shows a current emotion or sensation, while "thirty feet tall" is an exaggerated measure of height. Although this is figurative language, the terms themselves refer to familiar concepts like measurement and size. Literally, it reflects a moment of overwhelming confidence or empowerment. According to Leech's theory, the literal definitions help anchor the intended feeling.

“You got your legs up in the sky with the devil in your eyes” (Mars, 2013)

This line uses straightforward nouns such as "legs," "sky," "devil," and "eyes." Each word carries a familiar and easily understood meaning. The sentence creates a strong visual impression, suggesting a moment of intense emotion or energy. The lexical definitions help establish the literal picture before exploring deeper symbolic interpretations.

“Look what you're doin look what you've done” (Mars, 2013)

The statement employs dynamic verbs to describe a response to another person's actions. "Look" invites observation, while "doin" and "done" refer to present and past actions. These words maintain their usual meanings, helping emphasize the emotional impact of another person's choices. Leech's view supports that these verbs retain their concrete value.

“But in this jungle you can't run” (Mars, 2013)

"Jungle" is understood as a wild, dense forest and "run" means to move quickly on foot. Taken literally, it paints a picture of a chaotic or wild setting where escape is not an option. These interpretations remain close to their dictionary meanings and help express a mood of being trapped or overwhelmed.

“You'll be bangin on my chest bang bang gorilla” (Mars, 2013)

The expression employs descriptive and lively wording. "Bangin" means hitting with force, "chest" refers to the upper part of the torso, and "gorilla" suggests a powerful animal. These words help create an image that connects human action with animalistic behavior, reflecting strength and passion. The basic meanings of the words stay consistent with their normal definitions.

“You and me baby makin love like gorillas” (Mars, 2013)

The lyric portrays intimacy as resembling animal instincts. "Makin love" means engaging in romantic or physical closeness, and "gorillas" are known for their strength and natural instincts. The words here express a raw, physical connection while maintaining clear, literal interpretations.

“I got a fistful of your hair but you don't look like you're scared” (Mars, 2013)

"Fistful" implies grabbing a quantity with the hand, "hair" refers to strands from the head, and "scared" shows fear. The phrase suggests an intense moment that, despite its physicality, is not frightening. This tension between action and emotion adds complexity, but the core word meanings remain unchanged and contribute to a clear depiction of mutual experience.

“Call the sheriff call the SWAT we don't stop” (Mars, 2013)

"Sherriff" and "SWAT" are both associated with law enforcement, and "stop" means to bring an activity to an end. These terms are used in a literal sense but help exaggerate the urgency or intensity of the situation. The clarity of the meanings helps ground the dramatic tone.

“You'll never be the same baby once I'm done with you” (Mars, 2013)

"Never," "same," and "done" each keep their ordinary meanings. The message suggests that something permanent has changed as a result of what happened. According to Leech, these consistent lexical meanings allow the reader or listener to understand the depth of the effect being described.

Table 5. The song “*If I Knew*” (Mars, 2013)

Words or Phrases	Semantic Meaning	Contextual Meaning
“I was a city boy” (Mars, 2013)	Denotes an individual from the city, typically linked to a fast or carefree lifestyle.	The speaker reflects on his past persona, possibly highlighting immaturity and a wild lifestyle.
“Right into danger's where I'd always run” (Mars, 2013)	Suggests a tendency to pursue risky or reckless behavior.	Implies a pattern of self-destructive choices made before he met his significant other.
“But I wouldn't have done all the things that I have done if I knew one day you'd come” (Mars, 2013)	Conveys remorse about previous behavior.	The speaker wishes he had known love would enter his life, suggesting he would have acted differently.
“I know it breaks your heart to picture the only one you wanna love in someone else's arms” (Mars, 2013)	Conveys emotional suffering caused by envisioning a partner with another person.	Acknowledges the hurt caused by his past relationships or infidelities.
“Oh baby, please, let's leave the past behind us” (Mars, 2013)	A plea to move forward and let go of past mistakes.	The speaker is asking for forgiveness and a fresh start in the relationship.
“So that we can go where love will find us” (Mars, 2013)	Hopeful metaphor indicating a future where their love can thrive.	He envisions a positive future if they can overcome the past together.
“I know most girls would leave me, but I know that you'll believe me” (Mars, 2013)	Admits his flaws but expresses faith in the partner's trust.	He sees her as special and understanding, unlike others who might not forgive him.
“I wish we were 17 so I could give you all the innocence that you give to me” (Mars, 2013)	Wishes to go back to a more innocent time.	He feels undeserving of her purity and wishes he could offer the same.
“If I knew one day you'd come” (Mars, 2013)	A recurring expression of regret.	Emphasizes the emotional core of the song—he would have changed his past for her.

“I was a city boy” (Mars, 2013)

This expression refers to the speaker identifying himself as a young male raised in an urban environment. The phrase suggests he was likely influenced by the lifestyle commonly associated with city living, which might include limited emotional depth or youthful impulsiveness. The words “city” and “boy” are applied using their standard dictionary definitions, emphasizing a straightforward reflection on the speaker’s past identity.

“Right into danger's where I'd always run” (Mars, 2013)

In this lyric, terms like “danger” and “run” are employed with their typical meanings. “Danger” conveys a sense of threat or risk, while “run” describes the act of moving quickly, often toward something. The speaker implies a tendency to head directly into risky situations, revealing a pattern of reckless behavior. These lexical choices support the idea that the speaker used to embrace risk without caution.

“But I wouldn't have done all the things that I have done if I knew one day you'd come” (Mars, 2013)

This part reflects strong feelings of guilt and sorrow. Words such as “done,” “things,” and “come” are used in their usual definitions—completing actions, referencing various unspecified events, and the act of someone arriving. The line clearly expresses that the speaker regrets his past decisions, suggesting that had he anticipated the arrival of someone special, he would have acted differently. The vocabulary illustrates a contrast between his past ignorance and present regret.

“I know it breaks your heart to picture the only one you wanna love in someone else's arms” (Mars, 2013)

In this statement, the phrase “breaks your heart” is used to describe emotional suffering. Words like “picture,” “love,” and “arms” are interpreted literally, referring to imagining, strong affection, and another person’s embrace. The line shows the listener’s pain when imagining the person she loves being with someone else. Although the message carries strong emotional weight, the language itself is rooted in its literal meanings, making the sorrow more relatable and vivid.

“Oh baby, please, let's leave the past behind us” (Mars, 2013)

The speaker uses the terms “leave,” “past,” and “behind” according to their common meanings. These words indicate moving away from previous experiences and focusing on what lies ahead. This part of the lyrics reflects a desire to move on from past mistakes and begin anew. The language is direct and clear, helping underline the emotional plea for reconciliation.

“So that we can go where love will find us” (Mars, 2013)

Here, words such as “go,” “love,” and “find” maintain their basic meanings: to proceed to a place, to feel affection, and to be discovered. The line suggests a shared journey toward emotional fulfillment. The vocabulary choice supports the theme of hope, indicating that love may naturally reach them if they take steps forward together.

“I know most girls would leave me, but I know that you'll believe me” (Mars, 2013)

The verbs “leave” and “believe” are used in their ordinary senses to depart from someone and to accept something as true. This part of the song emphasizes the uniqueness

of the listener, contrasting her loyalty and trust with the speaker's expectations of how others might react. The simplicity of the vocabulary highlights the sincerity in the speaker's voice.

I wish we were 17 so I could give you all the innocence that you give to me

This sentence uses “wish,” “innocence,” and “give” in their literal definitions: a longing for a different reality, purity or naivety, and the act of offering something. The line reflects a sense of emotional imbalance, with the speaker desiring to reciprocate the purity he receives. It also reveals a nostalgic longing to return to a more innocent time.

“If I knew one day you'd come” (Mars, 2013)

The repeated line employs language that maintains its direct meaning. “Knew” implies awareness in the past, “day” refers to a point in time, and “come” suggests the act of someone arriving. Lexically, the repetition underscores the theme of regret for not having anticipated the importance of this person in his life. The vocabulary stays within its conventional use while strengthening the emotional tone of the lyrics.

Conclusion

This research analyzed the lexical meanings found in five songs from Bruno Mars' album *Unorthodox Jukebox* by applying the conceptual meaning framework proposed by Geoffrey Leech. The study showed that Mars repeatedly selects words with clear and consistent dictionary meanings, such as boy, danger, arms, past, and love. These terms form a literal layer of meaning that supports the emotional messages found in the lyrics. Although the vocabulary is simple, it becomes an effective foundation for expressing deeper themes such as regret, longing, affection, and emotional struggle. The results indicate that the songwriter uses accessible lexical items to communicate feelings in a direct and relatable way, while still allowing listeners to interpret the lyrics based on their own experiences.

The findings also highlight the value of popular music as material for examining how literal meaning functions in everyday language. The outcome of the study can assist teachers or researchers who want to use song lyrics to explain how basic word meanings contribute to emotional expression. However, this research had several limitations. The focus was restricted to literal meanings alone, and only a small set of songs from one album was analyzed. These boundaries limit the depth and range of the interpretation. For future studies, it is recommended to investigate implied meanings, figurative expressions, and the role of cultural influences in shaping how words are understood in songs. Expanding the investigation to include other artists or musical collections may also provide a broader picture of how lexical meaning operates in contemporary music.

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