

**INTERPRETING METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE IN COLDPLAY'S
SONG LYRICS: A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS**

Thesis

*Submitted as Partial Fulfillment for Bachelor Degree Requirement of English
Department*



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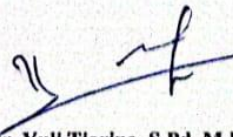
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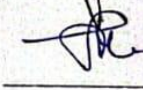
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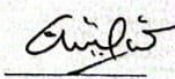
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ABSTRACT

Sukra, yoghi Ananda Sukra, 2025. Interpreting Metaphorical Language In Coldplay's Song Lyrics : A Semantic Analysis. Undergraduate Thesis Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

This research explores how metaphors work in the lyrics of ten selected songs by the British band Coldplay. Rather than focusing only on the types of metaphors, this study also looks deeper into their functions of these metaphors to express meaning and emotion. Using a descriptive qualitative method and a semantic approach, the research applies two major theories: the Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), which sees metaphor as a tool for understanding abstract ideas through concrete experiences, and Ortony's (1975) theory, which outlines three key functions of metaphor: expressing what cannot be said literally, providing concise expression, and clarifying emotional meaning. The data were taken from ten popular Coldplay songs including *Hymn for the Weekend*, *A Sky Full of Stars*, *My Universe*, and others. The results show that structural metaphors are the most commonly used (83.33%), followed by ontological metaphors (16.67%), with no orientational metaphors found. In terms of function, most metaphors help clarify emotional experiences such as love, pain, joy, or loss making them easier to understand and more relatable. They allow listeners to feel, imagine, and reflect more deeply on what the songs are trying to express. The findings offer valuable insight for students, teachers, and anyone interested in how language and emotion work together in music. In conclusion, metaphors in Coldplay's lyrics are more than decorative language they are essential tools for expressing emotion, shaping thought, and building listener connection.

Keywords: *Metaphor, Song Lyrics, Meaning, Coldplay, Semantic Analysis*

ABSTRAK

Sukra, yoghi Ananda Sukra, 2025. Interpreting Metaphorical Language In Coldplay's Song Lyrics : A Semantic Analysis. Undergraduate Thesis Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana metafora bekerja dalam lirik sepuluh lagu pilihan oleh band Inggris Coldplay. Daripada hanya berfokus pada jenis metafora, studi ini juga melihat lebih dalam fungsi metafora ini untuk mengekspresikan makna dan emosi. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dan pendekatan semantik, penelitian ini menerapkan dua teori utama: Teori Metafora Konseptual oleh Lakoff dan Johnson (2003), yang melihat metafora sebagai alat untuk memahami ide-ide abstrak melalui pengalaman konkret, dan teori Ortony (1975), yang menguraikan tiga fungsi utama metafora: mengekspresikan apa yang tidak dapat dikatakan secara harfiah, memberikan ekspresi yang ringkas, dan mengklarifikasi makna emosional. Data diambil dari sepuluh lagu Coldplay populer termasuk *Hymn for the Weekend*, *A Sky Full of Stars*, *My Universe*, dan lainnya. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa metafora struktural adalah yang paling umum digunakan (83,33%), diikuti oleh metafora ontologis (16,67%), tanpa metafora orientasional yang ditemukan. Dari segi fungsi, sebagian besar metafora membantu memperjelas pengalaman emosional seperti cinta, rasa sakit, kegembiraan, atau kehilangan, sehingga lebih mudah dipahami dan lebih relevan. Metafora memungkinkan pendengar untuk merasakan, membayangkan, dan merenungkan lebih dalam apa yang ingin diungkapkan oleh lagu-lagu tersebut. Temuan ini menawarkan wawasan berharga bagi siswa, guru, dan siapa pun yang tertarik pada bagaimana bahasa dan emosi bekerja sama dalam musik. Kesimpulannya, metafora dalam lirik Coldplay lebih dari sekadar bahasa dekoratif dan metafora merupakan alat penting untuk mengekspresikan emosi, membentuk pikiran, dan membangun koneksi dengan pendengar.

Kata kunci: *metafora, lirik lagu, makna, Coldplay, analisis semantik*

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DEDICATION

Alhamdulillah, praise be upon Allah SWT on His blessing. Great greeting is highly dedicated to our prophet Muhammad SAW. I dedicate my deepest thanks and appreciation to the following people:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Problem

Language is a verbal communication tool and an arbitrary system of sound symbols used by humans to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Its main function is as a tool for communication and interaction with others. By maintaining contact with their environment, individuals preserve social relationships through actions like asking for news or greeting others. According to Yule (2010), language is the system of communication used by a particular community, emphasizing its crucial role in social interaction. This reinforces the idea that language is essential for both transmitting meaning and maintaining relationships in daily life.

Linguistics is the study of language. One branch of linguistics is semantics which studies the meaning of words and sentences. It aims to find out the exact meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence and eliminate anything confusing that can make the reader think that a word has many meanings. Huang (2017) support this by stating that semantics also focuses on how different linguistic elements interact to shape overall meaning in specific linguistic environment.

Frawley (2003) explains that studying semantics analyzes how meaning is structured in sentences and larger texts. This means that the interpretation of a word or phrase depends on how its meaning is encoded in the linguistic structure, such as the relationships between words, syntax, or the

inherent properties of the word itself. For instance, words can have multiple meanings and their interpretation within a sentence depends on how they are combined grammatically and semantically with other words. In line with that, Griffiths (2006) describes semantics as a systematic study of meaning that includes both individual words and larger sentence structures. He emphasizes that understanding meaning depends on how words and sentences are structured and how their relationships within the language system shape interpretation.

In semantics, figurative language is a part of its study, focusing on a form of language that goes beyond literal meaning, encouraging readers to interpret the author's intentions imaginatively (Sharndama & Suleiman, 2013). Figurative language can enhance social communication by allowing experts to influence the reader's or listener's perception by comparing a words or ideas to something else (Dewi et al., 2020). Understanding figurative language involves interpreting standard meanings in order to comprehend multiple layers of meaning. Figurative language can be divided into personification, hyperbole, metonymy and metaphor.

Metaphor as a part of figurative languages comes as a thinking process that allows individuals to understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiences, emphasizing the role of metaphor in everyday language and thought (Kövecses, 2010). According to the conceptual metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors are not just linguistic decorations but cognitive structures that underlie the way humans think.

Through metaphors, abstract concepts such as love, life, or death can be understood through concrete concepts such as travel, light, or battlefield. This research aligns with the view that metaphors play a significant role in shaping people's understanding and interaction with the world (Lee & Chen, 2018).

One of the important objects of metaphor that can be analyzed is song lyrics. Lyrics function not only as a narrative tool but also as a medium for artistic expression. They often use figurative language such as metaphors, similes, and symbolism to convey deeper meanings. In this study, semantics serves as the bridge to analyze how metaphors in song lyrics are used to express complex and emotional ideas (Zhao, 2019). However, the interpretation of metaphors in song lyrics can be challenging due to their subjective nature, as meanings may vary depending on personal experiences and cultural contexts. According to Kövecses (2002), metaphors are not just linguistic expressions, but tools that shape our understanding of the world. Analyzing these metaphors in lyrics is important because it reveals how songwriters craft meaning and how these meanings resonate with audiences, making the metaphor an essential component of lyrical expression

The use of figurative language such as metaphor in song lyrics allows listeners to interact with the song on a deeper and more personal level. According to Safarnejad & Ghani (2019), metaphors in song lyrics have the ability to invite different interpretations from listeners, depending on their cultural and emotional backgrounds. Metaphors convey messages directly and trigger imagination and new understandings of the world. Therefore, song

lyrics are seen as a form of verbal communication and an aesthetic experience that involves a complex process of interpreting meaning (Collins, 2018). Thus, in order to understand the message conveyed in a lyric, a deep understanding of metaphor is required.

There are studies about metaphor in song's lyric conducted by some researchers such as a study by Zalukhu et al. (2024), which uses the metaphor theories of Andrew Goatly (1997) and Leech (2003). The results of their research, based on a total of 26 data from 13 songs, found that 13 data used Symbolism Metaphor, 4 data used Active Metaphor, 1 data used Subjective Metaphor, and 1 data used Mimetic Metaphor. The authors also found that there was only one type of meaning, called Connotative Meaning, which was used in 6 data from the lyrics of Pamungkas' selected songs. Additionally, a study by Nasruddin et al. (2025), which employed Subroto's (2019) metaphor theory, identified 53 metaphorical functions in the lyrics of Pusakata's songs from the Time Machine album. The metaphorical functions found include overcoming vocabulary limitations with a total of 24 data, expressive function with 15 data, and the metaphorical function of avoiding monotony with 14 data. Finally, a study by Septiani et al. (2022) using Stephen Ullman's (1962) theory identified three different types of metaphors in the lyrics of *Hati-Hati di Jalan* by Tulus. The types of metaphors found include synesthetic metaphors, anthropomorphic metaphors, and metaphors from concrete to abstract.

While studies like those by Zalukhu et al. (2024), Nasruddin et al. (2025), and Septiani et al. (2022) have explored metaphors in song lyrics, they mainly focus on different artists and few songs, using theories by Goatly, Leech, and Ullman. These theories, though valuable, may not fully capture the cognitive and conceptual depth of metaphors like George Lakoff's theory does. This study fills that gap by applying Lakoff's theory to analyze metaphors in ten selected Coldplay songs; Hymn for the Weekend, A Sky Full of Stars, Adventure of a Lifetime, Every Teardrop Is a Waterfall, Green Eyes, Life in Technicolor II, Let Somebody Go, Ghost Story, My Universe and Higher Power. Lakoff's cognitive theory helps uncover deeper emotional and conceptual meanings, offering a fresh perspective on how metaphor shapes themes in Coldplay's music, ranging from personal reflection to social commentary.

One example of the strong use of metaphor can be found in the lyrics of the band Coldplay. The band has long been known for its lyrical style, which is full of metaphors and symbolism and often conveys complex emotions and ideas. Coldplay's lyrics provide rich ground for metaphor analysis (PeMad, 2021). Songs with emotional depth and abstract concepts, such as Coldplay's "Viva La Vida" or "Fix You," are ideal because they use metaphors to convey complex themes like power, loss, and hope. Lyrics that express intense emotions or philosophical ideas often contain symbolic metaphors that add layers of meaning, making them valuable for analysis (American Songwriter, 2020).

One example of the strong use of metaphor can be found in the lyrics of the band Coldplay. The band has long been known for its lyrical style, which is full of metaphors and symbolism and often conveys complex emotions and ideas. Songs such as "Fix You", "Viva La Vida", and "The Scientist" are good examples of how Coldplay uses metaphor to describe a person's emotional journey, inner struggle, and search for the meaning of life. In the song "Fix You", for example, the metaphor "lights will guide you home" provides a visual and emotional image of support and hope in the face of life's difficulties. Likewise, "Viva La Vida" uses the metaphor of empire and revolution to describe the regrets and reflections of someone's life who was once at the peak of power but eventually fell.

This study focuses on the semantic analysis of the use of metaphors in Coldplay's song lyrics. By understanding these metaphors, this study explores the meaning behind the lyrics to convey profound and universal messages. Popular songs, including Coldplay's works, have become an important part of global culture, with millions of listeners around the world connected through the experience of listening to their songs. According to Ritchie (2018), figurative language in song lyrics helps create an emotional bond between the listener and the song's lyric, ultimately strengthening cultural and personal identity. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing how Coldplay, as one of the most popular music bands in the world, uses metaphors in their lyrics to convey deep and emotional meanings.

This study uses a semantic approach to examine the metaphorical meanings contained in Coldplay's song lyrics based on Lakoff and Johnson (2003) theory. This analysis involve identifying metaphors, grouping types of metaphors, and interpreting meanings based on semantic perspective. The results of this study are expected to contribute to contemporary linguistic studies on the use of figurative language in popular song lyrics and open new insights into how listeners understand and interpret song lyrics through metaphors.

B. Identification of Research Problem

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors are conceptual tools that help people understand abstract ideas through more concrete experiences. They argue that metaphor is fundamental to human thought, not just language. Meanwhile, Ortony (1975) explains that metaphors serve three key functions: (1) expressing the inexpressible, (2) achieving compactness of expression, and (3) clarifying emotional meaning. These functions allow metaphors to convey complex ideas efficiently and with emotional impact.

However, most previous studies have focused only on identifying the types of metaphors, without examining their functions. There is limited research that combines both Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual framework with Ortony's functional perspective, especially in the context of song lyrics like those of Coldplay. Therefore, this research aims to explore not only the types of metaphors used in Coldplay's lyrics, but also their functions in conveying

meaning and emotion, based on both conceptual and functional metaphor theories.

C. Limitation and Scope Research Problem

The limitation of the research are mainly look at the lyrics of Coldplay's from *Hymn for the Weekend*, *A Sky Full of Stars*, *Adventure of a Lifetime*, *Every Teardrop Is a Waterfall*, *Green Eyes*, *Life in Technicolor II*, *Let Somebody Go*, *Ghost Story*, *My Universe* dan *Higher Power*. This study focuses on the words and metaphors alone toward ten song's lyric.

D. Formulation of Research Problem

Based on identification and limitation and scope of research problem, formulation of research problem is 'What are types and functions of metaphor used in Coldplay's song lyrics? ''.

E. Research Questions

1. What are types of metaphors used in Coldplay's song lyrics?
2. What are the functions of metaphors used in Coldplay's song lyrics?

F. Purposes of the Research

1. To find out types of metaphors used in Coldplay's song lyrics
2. To find out the functions of metaphors used in Coldplay's song lyrics

G. Significances of Research

Theoretically, the research contributes to the development of theories regarding the role of metaphor in lyric, a relatively underexplored area. These findings provide a basis for further understanding of how metaphors interact

with other lyrical elements to shape meaning and influence listeners' interpretations. Practically, this research can benefit general music listeners and song lyric readers by offering a deeper understanding of the metaphorical meanings embedded in the lyrics. By learning how to recognize and interpret metaphors in songs, they can enhance their appreciation and emotional connection to the music, resulting in a more meaningful listening experience.

H. Definition of Key Terms

- a. Semantic: The process of interpreting and analyzing the meanings of words, phrases, sentences, or texts. This research uses semantic analysis to explore the meanings conveyed by metaphors in Coldplay's lyrics, focusing on how these metaphors contribute to the songs' overall narrative and emotional impact.
- b. Figurative Language: A form of expression that goes beyond literal meaning, encouraging readers to interpret the author's intentions in a more imaginative way. It adds beauty and emotional depth, often creating a strong connection between the writer and the reader through comparisons. This style of language is commonly used in poetry and song lyrics to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a more expressive and impactful manner
- c. Metaphor: A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, often used to draw a comparison between two unrelated things to highlight a particular quality

or concept. In this study, metaphors are examined within Coldplay's lyrics to uncover deeper meanings and thematic significance.

- d. Coldplay: A British rock band known for their poetic and often metaphorical lyrics, which are central to the band's artistic identity. This research focuses on Coldplay's song lyrics as the primary data for analysis.
- e. Song Lyrics: The words of a song, specifically those written to be sung. This study analyses the lyrics of selected Coldplay songs to identify and interpret metaphorical language.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

Based This study has explored the use of metaphorical language in ten selected songs by Coldplay through a semantic analysis. By applying the Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) and the functional approach from Ortony (1975), the research revealed how metaphors in Coldplay's lyrics are not only stylistic features but essential elements for constructing meaning and expressing emotion.

The analysis found that structural metaphors were the most frequently used, representing 83.33% of the total, while ontological metaphors made up 16.67%, and no orientational metaphors were identified. This suggests that Coldplay tends to represent abstract ideas such as life, love, identity, and emotion through more concrete, familiar experiences. Metaphors like "*Life is a drink*", "*Love's a drug*", and "*You are my universe*" illustrate how the band transforms complex feelings into vivid imagery that listeners can relate to and feel deeply.

In terms of function, the most dominant purpose of metaphor in Coldplay's lyrics is clarifying emotional expression, accounting for 66.67% of the data. This shows how metaphor serves as a bridge between inner emotional experiences and shared understanding, helping listeners not only to comprehend the lyrics intellectually but also to experience them emotionally. Other metaphors

served to express what is otherwise difficult to articulate directly, and some conveyed complex ideas in a compact, efficient manner.

Compared to previous studies, this research provides a more integrated perspective by combining both the cognitive structure and emotional function of metaphor. While earlier works mainly focused on categorizing types or identifying functions in general, this study emphasizes how metaphors work on multiple levels—conceptually, emotionally, and communicatively—especially in a poetic medium like song lyrics.

In conclusion, Coldplay's use of metaphor enriches their lyrical content by transforming abstract emotions into concrete images, shaping the way listeners feel, think, and interpret their music. Through metaphor, the band is able to deliver profound messages in a way that is emotionally powerful and intellectually engaging, confirming that metaphor is not just a poetic device, but a fundamental way of understanding human experience.

B. Suggestion

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that future researchers explore metaphorical language in other musical genres or artists, perhaps across different cultures or languages, to see how metaphor functions in a broader context. Since this research only focused on Coldplay's lyrics, similar approaches could reveal interesting comparisons or patterns in other artists work. For general music lovers, this study shows that paying attention to metaphor can deepen your

appreciation of lyrics not just for how they sound, but for the emotional stories they tell with song lyrics.

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