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SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF METAPHORS OF SELECTED JAMES ARTHUR'S SONG

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Abstract

Metaphor is a form of figurative language, which refers to words or expressions that have a different meaning than the literal definition. This research examines the use and significance of metaphors in the lyrics of James Arthur's songs. Through a semantic analysis, the research aims to identify and categorize the types of metaphors used and to interpret their meanings within the context of the songs. This research was designed in qualitative research. The study categorizes metaphors into three types: structural, orientational, and ontological. Based on research findings, the researcher found that ontological metaphors are the most frequently used, followed by structural and orientational metaphors. By exploring the metaphors in songs like "Say You Won't Let Go," "A Year Ago," "Safe Inside," and "Empty Space," the research found how metaphors convey complex emotional experiences and articulate themes of love, memory, safety, and loss. The technique of descriptive analysis was applied to analyze data by reading the data and identify the types of metaphor used in James Arthur's selected song lyrics. Data collection is conducted through document study and non-participatory observation. Primary data is derived from the song lyrics, while secondary data is gathered from related journals and resources. These results are expected to help English teachers to use metaphors in the teaching process, and using metaphors in class can be an effective

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*way to expand students' vocabulary, besides that it can be material for
consideration and support for future researchers.*

Keywords : *Metaphor, Semantic Analysis, James Arthur, Figurative Language,
Song*

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Introduction

Figurative language is language which departs from the straight-forward use of words, it creates a special effect, clarifies an idea, and makes writing more colourful and forceful (Sala-Suszyńska, 2016). Figurative language is the use of words that make a reader have to make a good interpretation not only by seeing what the words refer to or what it is said on the text, but also by interpreting it from the context. Because of that, it can create a misinterpretation (Defisyani, 2016). This may be caused by the reader's lack of understanding of figurative language or mistakes by guessing without looking for the meaning behind the figure of speech. Not literally, but contextually. Each writer employs distinct techniques to effectively communicate their ideas to their audience, and the writing style of an article is shaped by the researcher's unique perspective. Additionally, the use of figurative language enhances literary works by imbuing them with a more vivid and engaging quality, elevating their overall impact and value. Apart from that, the use of figurative language is also revealed to function in various ways, namely to evoke, shorten, embellish, explain, illustrate, visualize, enliven and emphasize. Figurative language is not intended to be interpreted in a literal sense but it appeals on to the imagination (Hutauruk, 2019). According to Rahim & Maryadi (2019), figurative language has words often presented to be equated, compared, or connected with unrelated meanings. It can be concluded that figurative words are the use of words in a way that deviates from meaning to explain or convey complex meanings so that they are easy to imagine.

In literary works such as short stories, poems, novels and songs, diction or figures of speech are often used to beautify the work of art. One figure of speech that can easily be found is a metaphor. A metaphor is defined as the creation of a new frame as a result of the interaction of two or more starting frames in which some important feature of each of them is shared by all (Penchev, 2016). According to Liu & Hsieh (2020) statement, "Metaphor has long been seen as the most important of figurative language use and is typically seen as attaining its most advanced forms in literary or poetic language. Metaphors, by virtue of their ability to transcend literal meanings, enable writers to craft vivid and evocative descriptions that resonate more deeply with readers than straightforward language. This figurative language not only enhances comprehension but also fosters a more personal connection by engaging the reader's imagination. Furthermore, metaphors provide a powerful tool for conveying emotions and impressions, allowing writers to tap into the reader's emotional landscape and create a more immersive experience. In other words, metaphor is considered the most impactful aspect of linguistic style, achieving its highest form in written or literary language. This is



because metaphor showcases the power of language to evoke a specific response or effect. In a nowadays, many literary works, especially song, have used metaphors.

According to (Sofian, 2022), song is a one of the ways for humans to communicate through sounds, and a song may also express a feeling, sense, idea, emotions or thought. Song is a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, fostering a sense of unity among people from diverse backgrounds. This unique ability to bridge gaps makes song a distinct and influential art form. As individuals grow and develop within their cultural, social, and natural environments, their song preferences and tastes evolve alongside them. This dynamic relationship between song and society means that song reflects and responds to the changes in social life, often serving as a reflection of the times. Furthermore, song can be utilized as a tool to positively impact individuals and societies.

As we know, song seems to have coexisted with us and is enjoyed by many people, regardless of age, class, songs go through all levels of many people. Song has been shown to activate different areas of the brain involved in language processing, memory and emotions. Listening song is one of the good way to learn the English language because songs can be easily remembered and also easily learned vocabulary (Baene, 2023). Song can also improve students' concentration and motivation and provide them with a more fun and interactive way to learn. It can also help reduce stress and anxiety and create a more positive learning environment. In other words, students will like song that can bring entertainment and knowledge. Therefore, incorporating song into the learning process can have significant benefits for students' cognitive and emotional development.

This research investigates the use of metaphors in James Arthur's song lyrics because of their important role in communication and artistic expression. Metaphors add meaning to lyrics and better express complex feelings and experiences. Known for his poetic and profound lyrics, James Arthur offers a wonderful opportunity to analyze the use of metaphors. The purpose of this semantic analysis of the metaphors found in his songs is to find out how metaphors contribute to the meaning and emotional impact of the lyrics. In addition, this study investigates how James Arthur's worldview and artistic style are reflected in metaphors. This study aims to enhance our understanding of the use of metaphors in popular song. It also enhances our knowledge of how figurative language affects listeners' perceptions and experiences. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a metaphorical analysis entitle “Semantic Analysis of Metaphors of Selected James Arthur’s Song”



Literature Review

1. Metaphor

a. Definition of Metaphor

Metaphor is a rhetorical device that uses one word or expression to replace another to provide intuitive analogy (Yang, 2023). In a metaphor, no function words are used, something is described by stating another thing with which it can be compared (Youguo, 2013). Metaphors are common in everyday discourse, affecting our thoughts and actions by offering fresh views. They can make complex topics more concrete and intelligible by relating them to everyday events. For example, depicting time as a thief emphasizes its elusiveness. Metaphors in literature help to improve a story's visual and emotional effect. Redden (2017) states that metaphors go beyond and compare seemingly unrelated ideas in a way that forces people to re-evaluate the primary subject of comparison. They enable writers to express complicated concepts concisely and strongly. By employing metaphors, authors can elicit deeper connections and resonance with their readers. Metaphors are also important in domains like physics and philosophy, where they serve to shape new theories and models.

b. Types of Metaphor

According to Lakoff & Johnson in Zulfadhlin et al (2022), structural metaphor allows a concept that is metaphorically organized inside another term. In other words, saying something in another term that has a similar meaning Smithiana & Hanidar in Zulfadhlin et al (2022). For example, "Time is Money," we conceptualize time as a valuable resource similar to money. This metaphor is reflected in everyday language with phrases like "spending time," "saving time," and "wasting time." By saying that time equals financial value, this metaphor leads us to prioritize efficiency and productivity. In addition, it implies that time is limited and must be managed carefully, which greatly influences how we behave and make decisions about how we allocate our time.

According to Lakoff & Johnson in Zulfadhlin et al (2022), orientational metaphor deals with the whole system of the concepts that have organized and have a relationship with one another as well as spatial orientation such as up-down, in-out, and front-back. For example is "Good is Up, Bad is Down" says that good experiences and qualities correlate with improvement, while bad experiences and qualities correlate with decline. Phrases like "things are looking up", which refers to improvement and success, and "he fell into a bad situation", which refers to failure and setbacks. This metaphor describes our physical experience in that upward movements usually feel stronger and more positive, while downward movements can feel weaker or more negative. This shapes the way we perceive and



communicate abstract concepts such as well-being, morality and quality through the lens of spatial orientation.

According to Lakoff & Johnson in Zulfadhlinia et al., (2022), ontological metaphor is a metaphor that is based on how human views in experience with something more concrete. For example is "Life is Journey", we see life as a journey with roads, destinations, obstacles, and progress. "He has come a long way," and "They are on the right track" are commonly used expressions. With this metaphor, we can describe life experiences, choices, and goals in terms of travel and movement. By comparing it to a physical journey, this metaphor provides a framework for understanding life's progress and difficulties. It makes abstract experiences easier to understand and organize.

2. Song

a. Definition of Song

Antemas (2018) defines a song as a musical component that includes lyrics. According *Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary*, song is a short piece of song with words that you sing. When sing a song or listening a song, some individuals might overlook the lyrics, particularly if the song incorporates figurative elements. However, there are often deeper meanings hidden within the lyrics. Unlike everyday conversation, song lyrics frequently employ uncommon words and figurative language to convey their own unique meaning. If listeners take the time to delve deeper into these lyrics, they can uncover the intended meaning. Despite understanding the lyrics, listeners will still form their own opinions, which may not align with the composer's original intention. This highlights the importance of using figurative language effectively in song lyrics to convey meaningful ideas, requiring both beautiful words and the ability to convey these ideas through the use of figurative language.

b. Generic Structures

- Intro

The intro of a song plays a crucial role in capturing the listener's attention, similar to how the opening of a novel sets the tone for the rest of the story. In English song, the intro can make or break a listener's interest in continuing to listen to the song. To avoid losing the listener's attention, it is important to create an interesting intro that keeps them interested and prevents them from getting bored

Additionally, the intro serves as a foundation for establishing the tempo, rhythm, and emotional atmosphere of the song, setting the stage for the rest of the song to unfold.

- Verse



In English song, the verse is a vital component that initiates the storytelling process through lyrics. It sets the narrative in motion, with the composer and singer aiming to evoke a specific mood that guides the development of the story. Notably, a song can have multiple verses, each contributing to the overall narrative. Moreover, the verse is often where the primary emotional tone of the song is established, providing a foundation for the rest of the song elements to build upon.

- Pre-Chorus

Not all English songs include a pre-chorus, as it is an optional element that is not necessary for a song's structure. When present, the pre-chorus typically serves as a transitional section that bridges the verse and the chorus, guiding the listener's attention towards the main hook. The pre-chorus often exhibits distinct harmonies, as it is often an experimental part created by the composer to add variety and interest. Additionally, the pre-chorus tends to be brief, sometimes consisting of just a single sentence or phrase with a unique pattern and tone that sets it apart from the rest of the song.

- Chorus

In English song, the chorus is a crucial element as it encapsulates the core ideas and themes of the song. Many singer-songwriters even base their song titles on the key phrases or keywords found in the chorus, effectively summarizing the song's essence. The chorus is often the most memorable part of a song, and its brevity allows it to be easily repeated and recalled. In promotional materials, the chorus is frequently highlighted due to its catchiness and ability to convey the song's essence. Additionally, songwriters often dissect the chorus to extract key emotions and ideas that are then woven throughout the rest of the song, making it a pivotal component in the overall composition.

- Bridge

In English song, the bridge is a pivotal section that typically falls between the two choruses, providing a contrast to the rest of the song. The lyrics in this section are usually concise and brief, serving as a moment of respite before the final chorus. The bridge can also appear at the end of a song, often as a final thought or conclusion. The lyrics and melody in the bridge often exhibit a distinct rhythm and tempo, differing from the rest of the song to create a sense of surprise and add variety to the overall structure.

- Outro

In English song, the outro is the final section of a song, marking the conclusion of the song composition. Typically, the outro features a gradual slowing down of the lyrics and rhythm, often culminating in a fade-out or a final, lingering note. As the outro unfolds, listeners become aware that the song is nearing its end,



providing a sense of closure and finality. This section serves as a gentle transition from the energetic and engaging parts of the song to its conclusion, leaving a lasting impression on the listener.

Research Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is research that examines the object of scientific study where the researcher is the main instrument in the research process (Tiva, F., & Danu, 2018). This research aims to deepen understanding of the true meaning of the use of metaphorical figurative language of selected James Arthur's song. The researcher chose this type of approach because the qualitative approach requires the researcher to understand more deeply the aspects of the actual meaning in the song, while the descriptive approach focuses on reviewing, describing and analyzing in detail the use of metaphor. Data collection is conducted through document study and non-participatory observation. According to (Arikunto, 2017) data collecting instruments are tools that are chosen and used by researchers in their activities to gather data in order to make these activities more organized and simple. In this research, the primary data collected in this study were taken from each verse in these songs. And the secondary data were from the journal and any resources which are related to the study. In collecting data, the researcher takes several steps:

1. Listening songs from James Arthur which is Say You Won't Let Go, Safe Inside, A Year Ago, and Empty Space.
2. And then, the researcher will searching the lyric of James Arthur's song in Spotify
3. After that, the researcher will reading intensively and selects verses that contain metaphorical expressions found in the several lyrics of James Arthur's songs by taking them into the source data.
4. Furthermore, the researcher will analyzing and interpreting the data based on three types of metaphor which is ontological metaphor, structural metaphor, and orientational metaphor.
5. In the end, the researcher will concluding the result.

In this study, the researcher used data reduction, data presentation, and data verification as data analysis techniques. In data reduction, the researcher listened to the 4 songs that had been selected and read each lyric of the 4 songs by James Arthur. Then the



researcher read books and other sources about figurative language that can support this research such as journals, theses and articles from the internet and libraries to be able to help researchers find out the meaning of metaphors. In data presentation, the researcher will describe the data containing the types of metaphors found in 4 selected songs by James Arthur. And in data verification, researchers will conclude data reduction and data presentation to ensure the final results of this research.

Findings and Discussion

Research finding and discussion based on data analysis through qualitative analysis. This research was conducted to analyze the metaphors found in 4 selected songs by James Arthur

| Songs | Structural Metaphors | Orientationa l Metaphors | Ontologica l Metaphors |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Say You Won't Let Go | 1 | - | 2 |
| Safe Inside | 1 | 2 | - |
| A Year Ago | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Empty Space | - | - | 4 |

1. Say You Won't Let Go

a) Structural Metaphor



- I met you in the *dark*, you *lit me up*

Structural metaphors found in the lyrics are 'dark' and 'lit me up'. The real meaning of dark is darkness, but in this song the author makes 'dark' as if sadness and loneliness are so deep. Then the real meaning of 'lit me up' is to illuminate me, but in this song the author illustrates that 'lit me up' or illuminating what is meant here is illuminating with happiness that makes the author feel joy.

b) Ontological Metaphor

- My lungs give out

The actual meaning of this lyric is that the writer's lungs come out, but in this song the writer's lungs don't really come out, but the writer wants to illustrate that he will love his lover until his lungs don't work or you can say until the writer meets death. Thus, the reason why this lyric can be said to be an ontological metaphor is because the writer associates his physical condition with his abstract feelings of love.

- Darling, your love is more than worth its weight in *gold*

The ontological metaphor found in this piece of lyrics is 'gold' which has the actual meaning of gold. But in this song, the author describes that the love that his lover has for him which is abstract is made as if it has physical properties such as weight and value as heavy as gold. Thus, this piece of lyrics can be said to be an ontological metaphor because the author associates abstract love with physical gold to illustrate how valuable love is.

2. Safe Inside

a) Structural Metaphor

- Now that I'm not the *fire in the cold*

Structural metaphor found in this lyric fragment is 'fire in the cold' which is used by the author not with the actual meaning. The meaning of the lyrics 'fire in the cold' used by the author is a fire that is described as warmth in a difficult or cold situation. However, the writer here describes that he no



longer feels 'fire in the cold' which means that the writer no longer feels the warmth of the person he loves.

b) Orientational Metaphor

- As you're *walking away*

The orientational metaphor found in this piece of lyrics is 'walking away' which has the actual meaning that the writer's lover is walking away from him. In the lyrics 'walking away' in this song, the writer describes separation or feelings of loss with physical movement.

- I won't sleep 'til you're *safe inside*

The orientational metaphor found in this piece of lyrics is 'safe inside'. The author does not use the actual meaning of 'safe inside', but uses a meaning that describes that the author feels safe in a protected place (inside) that is physical.

3. A Year Ago

a) Structural Metaphor

- You embody *everything that I am not*

Structural metaphor involves mapping one concept onto the structure of another more concrete or recognizable concept. This metaphor maps the abstract concept of "everything that I am not" into the physical structure of "incarnating in someone's body". It describes how the characteristics of the person being missed complement or contradict those of the singer.

- Now I'm just *somebody you forgot*

The concept of being forgotten is mapped onto one's identity making "someone forgotten" the identity structure. It depicts a change in how the singer sees herself, showing a shift in identity due to the loss of the relationship.

b) Orientational Metaphor

- I wish that I could hold you *close*

The spatial orientation of "close" indicates a desire for emotional closeness. The spatial orientation of "close" reflects the desire for emotional closeness.



The desire to hold someone reflects the desire to erase emotional and physical distance.

- Driving past your house

Orientational metaphors involve orientation usually related to direction to express emotion or state. The physical movement past one's house indicates a perceived emotional distance. Driving past the house reflects the inability to go back in time or approach the person emotionally.

c) Ontological Metaphor

- Your name's still *on my coffee cup*

The ontological metaphor contained in the lyric line is "on my coffee cup". This metaphor uses a physical object (name on the coffee cup) to describe the presence of the person who is missed. Although the person is not present, his or her name on the coffee cup creates the illusion of a physical presence that helps describe the longing.

- The way you left *my car* a mess

Ontological metaphor uses a physical object to give form to an abstract concept, In this lyric fragment it is shown to "my car". The physical mess in the car serves as a reminder of the person's presence. This metaphor utilizes a physical object (a messy car) to describe the memories and impact of the person missed.

- The way you took up half the bed

Ontological Metaphor personifies an emotion or idea as a physical object. The physical presence of a person on the bed is used to describe the (abstract) emotional presence that is now missing. The half-empty bed serves as a metaphor for a sense of loss and incompleteness.

4. Empty Space

a) Ontological Metaphor

- You're not in every window I look through

This metaphor uses the physical object of a window to convey the absence of the abstract person in the singer's life. The idea that the person is not



visible through every window suggests his absence in the singer's daily life and thoughts.

- You're not in every single thing I do

Here, this metaphor uses physical actions to express the person's absence in every aspect of the singer's activities. It shows how the person is no longer present in every single thing the singer does and the singer feels alone.

- I'm *alone in my head*

This metaphor uses the concept of physical space within the mind to represent the singer's emotional state. Being "alone in my head" conveys a sense of loneliness and isolation.

- Only you could fill this *empty space*

This Ontological Metaphor uses the concept of physical space to represent the emotional void left by the person. The "empty space" symbolizes the emptiness and longing that the singer feels after being abandoned, which can only be filled by that person.

Conclusion

From the data found above, the author found 17 metaphors from the lyrics of selected songs by James Arthur entitled Say You Won't Let Go, A Year Ago, Safe Inside, Empty Space. This research delves into the semantic analysis of metaphors by uncovering the intricate ways used by songwriters where metaphorical language is used to articulate complex emotional experiences. There are three types of metaphors found in the song lyrics: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. After analyzing the data, the researcher classifies that the first type found is structural metaphor with a total of 4 metaphors. Then there is the second type found by the researcher is orientational metaphor with a total of 4 metaphors. and the third type found by the author is ontological metaphor with a total of 9 metaphors. The ontological metaphor type is the most frequently used type in song lyrics.

In "Say You Won't Let Go", physical sensations are described as emotional states, while the metaphor of love as a journey describes the evolving nature of romantic relationships. In "A Year Ago", the metaphors of time and memory are



used to show how past experiences impact current life, which shows how emotional states change over time. In "Safe Inside", the metaphors of space and time are used to illustrate the concept of safety and protection, which aligns with psychological theories of attachment and security. Finally, "Empty Space" describes feelings of loss and absence by using analogies of physical pain and emotional emptiness. This emphasizes the tangible effects of emotional experiences.

The meaning of metaphors is also revealed from the analysis process which shows the state of her love story, starting from falling in love, being in a good and bad relationship, and also separation. It can be seen that metaphors have been used as a tool in communication to make such an impression in the interpretation of the listeners. The metaphor also shows the band's concept and point of view towards the actual situation.



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