

Metaphors in Frank Ocean's Pink+White lyrics

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ABSTRACT

Song lyrics are one of the linguistic media to analyze since it contains so many analysis possibilities in it and one of them is metaphor. This study is aimed to analyze the lyrics from a song by Frank Ocean entitled Pink + White by using Lakoff and Johnson's metaphors analysis method. The purposes of the study are (1) to describe the metaphors contained in the lyrics and (2) to determine the function of them. A descriptive qualitative method was used in this research to find metaphors in the lyrics. This research explores the use of Lakoff and Johnson's *source* and *target* domain theory in analyzing the lyrics, and how the semantics approach helps to find the function of each metaphor found in the lyrics. The conclusion from this research is the lyrics employed metaphors along with the conceptual metaphor in it and several functions occurred along with the metaphor to help the listeners understand the meaning.

Keywords: *Metaphor, Semantics, Lyrics, Frank Ocean*

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Introduction

A language gateway to the world of literature is a metaphor. a method of access that individuals often utilize to approach literature. Lakoff and Johnson (2017) use metaphors in various ways as implementing strategy. Lakoff notes in his study that there are several instances of metaphor in daily life and talks about them in his book. By using linguistic techniques, daily occurrences or actions that have been or are purposefully exposed to metaphors may be thoroughly examined.

Metaphor is a linguistic approach. By breaking the metaphor's elements using the Source Domain and the Target Domain. Lakoff's metaphorical technique integrates two domains to create a notion from a metaphor, also called a conceptual metaphor. A conceptual metaphor is a fundamental idea that is used to create a metaphorical statement that it has not completely structured (Kamaliah, 2013).

In practice, as mentioned above, metaphor can be applied to a literary work, in this case, song lyrics are a work that is combined with music and becomes a song that is pleasing to the ear and that definitely has a message to convey. In writing song lyrics, the writer must consider all the aspects used to determine the diction of the lyrics,

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which can contain metaphors. I do not know if this is a comparison or an equation. So that good lyrics are created and have elements of metaphor and a deep message to be conveyed.

Frank Ocean is a songwriter who is not very well known in global circles, but has a name to be reckoned with in the American music scene. He once received an award nomination, filled out the nomination program, and for the first time appeared on the screen.

The songwriter has one phenomenal album, which was released in 2011. The album is titled *Blond*. His soft music and various samples of music that he collects can be heard through arrangements that can be considered amazing, and we rarely meet on the global music scene. The Hip-Hop RnB music that he is passionate about reached its peak when, starting in 2012, he toured around America and several countries in Asia. On the album, the song "Pink + White" appears as the third track and opens up a lot of horizons. Frank is one of the victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. The lyrics of this song are specifically dedicated to remembering the disaster. It started with the feeling that this song was a song for a lover, but after listening to it properly, this song turns out to tell a lot about his mother. Who was with him when the disaster hit and how his mother gave him strength when he was down and continued to support him when he was in prosperity.

In addition to the metaphorical, semantic approach to language through meaning, it is also applied to explain the lyrics of the song "Pink + White". The meaning taken as a whole from the various contexts provided will strengthen the existing metaphorical descriptions and form a functional concept of the metaphors in the song lyrics. This semantic approach is solely to find out the portion of the metaphor that is determining or influencing the meaning of the expression as a whole and determining its function.

To strengthen this analysis, similar studies are presented to find out the presence of metaphors in song lyrics and related to them. First, research conducted by Kamaliah (2013) studied about conceptual metaphors in Coldplay songs, followed by Shomad (2014) who studied metaphors in the context of slavery resistance in Bob Marley's song lyrics, Ndraha (2018) studied metaphors in Westlife's songs, thus Lukmana, Rosa and Marlina (Lukmana et al., 2019) choose Minangkabau songs as their data, and finally, Rahmadhanti et al (Rahmadhanti et al., 2022) studied metaphor analysis in Different World song lyrics.

The previous researchers have conducted research on the metaphor based on its structure, concept, and meaning of the metaphor. This research is different from the previous research as in the focus of the study. This research focuses on describing the metaphor and its meaning through the function by employing how Lakoff and Johnson (2008) define and explain metaphor. By that, the aims of this study are (1) to find and describe the metaphors contained in the lyrics of the song "Pink + White", and (2) to determine the function of these metaphors through the semantic meaning contained in the metaphorical expressions.

Metaphor: Source Domain and Target Domain

Metaphor is a concept or means of an expression that uses a slightly exaggerated and poetic language (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017). From this statement, we can take an idea that every language used to express a feeling, idea, and idea can be in the form of a metaphor because it contains poetic things that are not everyday language and the vocabulary used

varies, but these expressions can be used for conversation, discussion, or any form of communication that humans do.

Metaphor is the study of concepts that use something that exists outside of language as a comparison. Metaphor is a concept in which a field or thing is compared to another thing by stating that it is another thing before (Kovesces, 2010). Simply put, metaphor is an expression of words, phrases, sentences that do not have a real meaning to express one thing by comparison or similarity. In the book *Metaphor We Live By*, Lakoff explains that a language, by using metaphors, can provide a new view of something outside the language. This view is formed because of the conceptual triangle, image - linguistic expression - way of delivery (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017). Metaphor is also considered a style of talk that is often used in communication with language (Winter, 2019).

To clarify this conceptual knowledge, Lakoff gives an example with ARGUMENT IS WAR. In this expression, one can see how the human mind which is considered normal and normal holds or is very metaphorical. In these expressions, metaphors make us as readers understand something that is relatively abstract and is indicated by 'arguments', then metaphors also make us realize something more concrete than that expression, namely 'war'. These two things are part of understanding the metaphorical concept, namely *the source domain* and *target domain*.

Source domain is an expression of the concept of metaphor which is poured into a linguistic form and is something concrete. Meanwhile, *target domain* is an expression of the concept of metaphor which is poured into a linguistic form and is abstract in nature. Returning to the expression ARGUMENT IS WAR, this expression clearly contains two concepts of the source domain and the target domain. This concrete source domain can be seen in the word 'war', and word 'argument' which are abstract in nature, included in the target domain. From the concept of the metaphor a concept pattern has been formed and produces several examples as follows.

- (1) Your opinion is invincible.
- (2) He shot me with my own argument
- (3) His criticism is always right on target

These three examples are the result of the metaphorical concept of 'argument is war'. The two words in bold are the result of the comparative association of the metaphorical concept. So, it can be said that in metaphorical expressions, there is a concept that lives in it. The concept can be an idea or a feeling that the author has. Thus, a view of thought can be expressed and realized through metaphorical expressions with similar concepts in different forms and ideas. Kovesces (2010) also provides his understanding of metaphor, that conceptual metaphor is an understanding of a realm of concepts which is usually in the form of abstract thought through concepts from other domains which are more concrete ideas.

Lakoff also provides a view on how metaphor, through the concept of the source and target domains, is able to help a human being create or construct a reality. The reality is obtained from the views and feelings of the author. Even in this picture of reality, we can guess what message the author wants to convey through the metaphors used in an expression, writing, or a literary work. In this case the reality is embodied in a piece of writing which also shows itself as the author's style of writing.

Writer's Style: The Use of Metaphors in Song Lyrics

Writing style can be seen from various linguistic sides. The side in question is the approaches (theories) that exist in this linguistics, so that it can examine and determine the writing style of a writer. A writer's writing style is usually influenced by factors of writing that affect the construction of ideas, thoughts, and deeper feelings of the writer. This is the main reason of how a writer uses vocabulary and a series of sentence structures that are diverse and can be different from other writers.

The ideas that form the basis of writing are also influenced by factors, such as history, experience, stories obtained, and books read. Everything that exists outside of language can be the key in someone's writing style. Narrowly, in terms of style, vocabulary is used to determine the style. If in daily life we can see idiolect—language that is only used by one individual as a marker of a person's personal characteristics—as a style of speech then in a written work, vocabulary can be a marker of that style.

Vocabulary is a form of linguistic media that metaphors use to express something contained in it. The selection of a diction or vocabulary is done by a writer to grab the reader's attention. In the lyrics of a song, the use of metaphors is intended to reinforce an idea or notion of the message the lyricist wants to convey to the listeners of the song. Back to how Lakoff said that metaphor is able to provide a reality for those of us who read or hear the lyrics of this song.

The reality presented is usually about social reality. By studying this, we can know and understand how the feelings and messages the author is trying to convey with the style of language he uses (Shomad, 2014). Please note, the lyrics in a song are often equated with poetry. In the song lyrics, there are many vocabulary words that have poetic elements. These poetic words are always associated with everyday life, so the lyrics written for a song are also able to convey the social reality that exists in the writer or the general public. Something that is very important in the characteristics of literary language must have something to do with the use of language in human daily life and using references to it to carry out studies and approaches is the most appropriate way (Leech, 2013).

The metaphor embedded in the lyrics of the song that shows the author's characteristics and what message it will convey to the minds of the people who hear it is a form of concept that needs to be explored. The message is the meaning contained in the lyrics. The diction used is able to give meaning to a work, so indirectly meaning also has a role in determining the style of language. Thus, it is understandable that meaning can determine a style of language (Keraf, 2006).

Metaphor Functions Through Semantics

In a metaphor, the area of an expression has a figurative language that shows the skill of the writer. After that, the meaning in the expression that has a metaphor in it is expressed through one linguistic approach to another. This approach is a semantic approach.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that is used to examine a meaning from language products in the form of speech or text. Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences (Yule, 2022). Metaphor studies in semantics are worth discussing in the world of linguistics, which is not could easily make to make many people

understand the meaning (Rahmadhanti et al., 2022). In identifying a meaning, semantics, according to its definition, is the most appropriate approach. A vocabulary used by a writer has meaning in it, both the conceptual meaning created and the meaning associated with other things. To examine the metaphors explained earlier, we must understand what conceptual meaning and associative meaning are.

Conceptual meaning is the meaning that includes the basic essence of a concept whose use is interpreted by a word. In the word *needle* we can understand the basic concept that a needle is small, sharp, and used for sewing. In other words, this meaning is a real meaning, a meaning that is understood by humans and society in general. Everyone understands this meaning without exception.

Meanwhile, the associative meaning is the second meaning or side meaning that a word has and is clearly beyond the conceptual meaning. Associative meaning can mean the meaning that is associated or associated with the meaning of other words. Let's take the following example, in the word *needle* the meaning of the association can be *cigarettes (Djarum)*, *hard to find*, and so on. There are also *low calories* as a substitute for the word *healthy*. These examples show that the meaning is the meaning that is not visible or the meaning that is hidden behind the conceptual meaning which is the primary meaning of a word.

In identifying the metaphors in song lyrics, understanding the concept of conceptual meaning and associative meaning is very much needed. Thus, expanding the scope of analysis in determining the concept of an expression. The meanings contained in these expressions are able to facilitate the analysis of the concepts carried by the metaphorical vocabulary.

Method

This research used descriptive qualitative method because the aim was to describe the metaphor used in Frank Ocean's Pink + White song lyrics. After determining the data to be used as material for analysis, a semantic approach was used to determine the function of the metaphors found in the lyrics of the song by reviewing and looking deeper into the meaning contained in the metaphorical expressions.

Based on the Lakoff's metaphor analysis method to reveal any metaphor embedded in a text or discourse (Creed & McIlveen, 2018), the data collection procedures were adapted for lyrics and carried out by (1) listening to the song while reading the lyrics at the same time, (2) identifying the lyric that contains metaphor, (3) establishing their contextual meaning and marking them, (4) re-selecting the lyrics that had been marked as metaphors. (5) give a number code for each line or sentence that is metaphorical to make the analysis easier. Thus, the metaphors can be identified by determining the source domain and the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017).

After the data had been collected, the data analysis used a metaphorical approach and a semantic approach, which were carried out in the following stages: (1) Identifying the metaphor used by paying attention to the vocabulary employed and determining the concept employed by the author, and then (2) elucidating the meaning embedded in the metaphor derived from the specified concept, thereby revealing the function of the metaphor in the lyrics of the song written by Frank Ocean.

Lyrics of the song "Pink + White"

[Verse 1: Frank Ocean]

**That's the way every day goes
Every time we've no control
If the sky is pink and white
If the ground is black and yellow
It's the same way you showed me
Nod my head, don't close my eyes
Halfway on a slow move
It's the same way you showed me
If you could fly then you'd feel south
Up north's getting cold soon
The way it is, we're on land
Still I'm someone to hold true
Keep you cool when it's still alive
Won't let you down when it's all
ruined**

[Hook: Frank Ocean]

Just the same way you showed me,
showed me
You showed me love

**Glory from above
Regards my dear
It's all downhill from here**

[Verse 2: Frank Ocean]

**In the wake of a hurricane
Dark skin of a summer shade
Nosedive into flood lines
Tall tower of milk crates
It's the same way you showed me
Cannonball off the porch side
Older kids trying off the roof
Just the same way you showed me (you
showed)
If you could die and come back to life
Up for air from the swimming pool
You'd kneel down to the dry land
Kiss the Earth that born you
Gave you tools just to stay alive
And make it out when the sun is
ruined**

The presentation of data analysis in the discussion section of this article is a descriptive narrative of the discussion of metaphors and their functions. Also, not all the data found is used in the presentation of the discussion.

Results and Discussion

In this section, metaphorical expressions found in Ocean's Pink + White lyric were analyzed using Lakoff's metaphorical approach. Lakoff explains that in projecting metaphor, the source domain should be projected onto the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017). This section establishes the meaning behind the metaphors to determine the function of the metaphors. The presentation will describe on how the meaning is embedded in the lyrics and followed by the explanation of the function of the lyrics for the listeners. Given that metaphor fundamentally involves conceptualizing one thing in terms of another, its primary purpose lies in facilitating understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017).

(1) That's the way every day goes

As it happens every day

(2) Every time we've no control

We've never had power

(3) If the sky is pink and white

If the sky is pink and white

(4) If the ground is black and yellow

If the soil is black and yellow

(Datum 1)

The lyrics above are the first metaphors that appear in the lyrics of the song "Pink + White". In the first two sentences, we don't see the metaphor used, but when we read the complete four sentences (four lines) of the lyrics, the metaphor appears there. In lines (3) and (4) the color expression shown by Frank is not meaningless. **Pink and white** describes the pink and white sky. This expression is associated with and is a metaphor for the violet twilight in the afternoon. Then, **black and yellow** it's associated with street asphalt and road markings, which are yellow—the color of American streets. **Pink and white** and **black and yellow** are the target domains of **sky** and **ground** as the source domains. The conceptual metaphor that appears is that all objects have a variety of colors. It is known that metaphorical concepts go beyond ordinary ways of thinking and talking, entering the realm of figurative, poetic, colorful, or imaginative thought and language (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017).

In the basic concept that humans know, every object has its own basic color, such as green leaves, blue sea, and various other basic color concepts. However, these two metaphors show a concept of diversity of colors that the sky is not always blue and when we hear the word land it doesn't have to be brown and overgrown with grass. The two metaphors are still related to the two previous lines, namely (1) and (2) where the first line states an event or something that exists every day and the second line states something that humans cannot change. If it is connected with two lines (3) and (4) which contain the meaning of the two metaphors that have been described previously, these metaphors provide additional exemplary functions of associating events or things that exist in the daily life of mankind and we have no power over them, namely the variety of colors that exist in every existing object can come out of basic human concepts.

(5) If you could fly then you'd feel south

If you can fly then you will feel it and head south

(6) Up north's getting cold soon

It's getting colder up north

(7) The way it is, we're on land

We're still on the ground as usual (as is)

(8) Still I'm someone to hold true

I'm still the right person

(9) Keep you cool when it's still alive*What keeps you calm when it (love) is still there***(10) Won't let you down when it's all ruined***Who won't let you fall when that (love) thing breaks*

(Datum 2)

The piece of lyrics above is the second metaphor that appears in the lyrics of the song “Pink + White”. The first two lines, (5) and (6) are a metaphor for a journey. The words **south** and **north** can be interpreted literally as *south* and *north*. These two words have a hidden meaning behind them, namely as a form of migration for birds due to winter. In America, when winter, many birds migrate from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere in search of warmth and safety because they cannot live in cold places. The conceptual metaphor that emerges from this metaphor is that *feeling is a journey* using the orientational metaphor as the source concept. Metaphorical orientations, stemming from our physical and cultural experiences, are not arbitrary, as they rely on physical polarities such as up-down and in-out, yet their expressions can vary across cultures (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017). The source area of (5) is **feel** and the target domain is **south**. Whereas for (6) the source domain is **cold** and the target domain is **north**.

On the basis of the basic concept that exists, the feeling that birds have to migrate is very natural because they have an instinct to survive. The equivalence for humans is the same. Humans have a tendency to seek safety and comfort. In these lines of lyrics, (5) and (6) have links with (7) and (8). The lyrical lines (7), (8), (9), and (10), by applying a semantic approach, namely the meaning of association, explain the purpose of a person's journey. If someone finds himself sad, sick, or at the lowest point in his life—associated with the north—then it should go to someone who is right and always there—associated with south—that keeps that person calm when he is still being given pleasure and continues to strengthen that person when given a trial and it happened because they were still on the same footing. So that the metaphor has a function as a description or illustration of a situation.

(11) You showed me love*You showed me a love***(12) Glory from above***A triumph when viewed from above***(13) Regards my dear***I appreciate it honey***(14) It's all downhill from here***(But) it's all (love) like sliding down the hill (sliding down/sliding down) from (up) here*

(Datum 3)

The lyric snippet in Datum 3 above is the third metaphorical appearance in the lyrics. The lyrical lines indicated by the metaphor in the lyrics are (12) and (14). In the lyrical line (12) the word **glory** literally means glory which is always related to being in the top position. Then, in the lyrical line (14) the word **downhill** means going down or sliding

down a hill which is always associated with a lower position or being under. These two words are metaphors of **love** which were previously mentioned in the lyrical line (11). Thus, showing that love is at its peak (hard-earned happiness) and all of that can fall and fall down. The conceptual metaphor used in the lyrics above is direction. As orientation has a concept in physical basis, normally our eyes look in the direction in which we typically move as ahead, forward, above, below, etc. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017). In the lyric line (12) the target domain of the metaphor is **glory** and the source domain is **above**, then in the lyric line (14) the target domain is **downhill** and the source domain is **here**—which means equal to **above**, namely above.

The basic concept that is understood is that everything in the form of glory, prosperity or prosperity is always synonymous with the upward direction or something that is always on top. And all that was achieved with great difficulty. The love that is at the top is the love that is extraordinary and is achieved with great difficulty. The lyrical line (12) shows this by associating **glory** with love and being at the peak of his glory. However, in line (14) Frank Ocean uses the word **downhill** to mean a downturn as a warning. If linked from the lyrical lines (11), (12), (13), and (14), these four lines of lyrics mean that someone has shown a love that is already at its peak and Frank appreciates this and reminds him that afterwards one can only fall like going down a hill. From this meaning, it can be seen that the function of the metaphor is to illustrate a situation (love).

(15) In the wake of a hurricane

In the middle of a storm

(16) Dark skin of a summer shade

Dark skin of summer shade

(17) Nosedive into flood lines

Swooped down into the flood current

(18) Tall tower of milk crates

Tower of tall milk crates

(19) Cannonball off the porch side

The cannonballs fell from the side of the porch

(20) Older kids trying off the roof

Older kids try but fall from the roof

(Datum 4)

For the discussion of Datum 4, it is better to explain the meaning of the six lines of lyrics above. Related to the lyrics line (14) as Lakoff and Johnson explain about how direction is being part of orientational metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017), namely **It's all downhill from here** which means (*However*) *it's all (love) like sliding downhill (sliding down/sliding) from (up) here*, the six lines of lyrics are a form of the existing depression and Frank had warned.

The metaphors that appear in Datum 4 are in lines (18), (19), and (20). In line (18) **tall tower** means a tall tower and can collapse at any time, in the lyrical line (19) **cannonball** literally means cannonballs and can fall anywhere after being fired, (20) **off** which means it fell from something high. The three metaphors refer to the same thing,

namely going down, either by falling, collapsing, and so on. Each word used is a synonym for everything that fell because of the disaster mentioned in (15) and (17). The “falling” in vocabulary is related to the word **nosedive** in (17) which means to dip (down). The target domain and source domain of the three lyric lines are respectively (18) **tall** tower and **flood** located at (17), then (19) **cannonball** and porch, and finally (20) **off** and roof. So, it can be concluded that the conceptual metaphor used is that falling is a disaster.

Something scattering, falling, breaking, for some reason is the basic concept of disaster. The three lines of the lyrics have the same meaning about the disaster that occurred and the debris that fell because of it and that meaning is the meaning of the association attached to these three words. If a disaster-flood-strikes, the buildings that are passed by the flood flow line can collapse and fall, for example (18) **tall tower** that collapsed, (19) **cannonball**, which can be interpreted as debris that rolled like a cannonball, and (20) **off** those who jumped from the roof. These three metaphors convey the meaning that everything will collapse and be destroyed when disaster strikes. And the function that emerges from this meaning is to give examples of disasters-floods-that hit such as collapsing buildings and debris sliding from the tops of buildings and houses.

Conclusions

Metaphors are indeed commonly used in forming a concept of poetry and several other literary works. In song lyrics, metaphors are used in such a way from various angles to create an implicit message. In addition, to understand a metaphor in a lyric, we also need to understand the culture or cultural or historical background of the country or environment where the lyrics were created. In the end, in analyzing the metaphors in the lyrics of this song, there are two results that can be drawn.

- (1) Based on the discussion above, metaphors in Pink and White lyrics used the concept of the source domain and target domain to build the expressions. They are shown in lines (3), (4), (5), (6), (12), (14), (18), (19), and (20) as explained in the discussion. The conceptual metaphors occurred are varies such as (3) and (4) employ *variety of colors* as its conceptual metaphors, (5) and (6) employ *feeling is a journey* through their orientational metaphors, (12) and (14) employ *directions*, and finally (18), (19), and (20) employ *falling is a disaster*.
- (2) The functions made by those metaphors shown in the lyrics are following the use of metaphors in each line. Metaphors from lines (3) and (4) have a function to associate events or things that exist in the daily life of mankind and we have no power over them. Next, metaphors in lines (5) and (6) have a function to as describe or illustrate a situation. Then metaphors from lines (12) and (14) have a function to illustrate a situation. And finally, lines (18), (19), and (20) have a function to give examples of disasters-floods-that hit such as collapsing buildings and debris sliding from the tops of buildings and houses.

The conclusion that we can take from the results is the lyrics of Pink + White song employed metaphors with some conceptual metaphors that occurred along with them and every metaphor in the lyrics has a function to make the listeners understand the meaning inside the lyrics. Thus, the metaphorical concept that is formed in a song lyric cannot be applied to the entire song as a whole. The concept that appears in the expression is special

so that it cannot be applied as a whole in the body of the lyrics. However, a song lyric with various metaphors makes it fun and more meaningful. Identifying metaphors is not as easy as writing down Lakoff's theory or literary metaphors through Leech.

In identifying metaphors, we as analysts must also think about the purposes of the classification needed, for example in determining conceptual metaphors. There is no specific criterion for determining this except understanding knowledge of the cultural scope and background of the lyrics as a medium for analysis.

Since this article has shown the use of using source domain and target domain to describe metaphors and understanding their functions, analyzing other metaphor analysis methods is something that further researchers can do. A suggestion for further metaphor research is to analyze other Lakoff theories of metaphors such as causation in metaphors, complex coherences across metaphors, etc. to enhance and prove the use of this type of analysis is still relevant today. It can be from lyrics of a song, novel, textual information such as advertisement, or any media that provides linguistic data to analyze.

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