ARGOPURO

LOVE IMAGERY AND METAPHORS IN ED SHEERAN'S "THINKING OUT LOUD"

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Abstract.

This study aims to analyze the use of imagery and metaphors in Ed Sheeran's *Thinking Out Loud* lyrics as a representation of love expression. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach and conceptual semantic analysis, this research investigates how figurative language contributes to the emotional conveyance of love. The findings reveal the presence of various forms of imagery visual, kinesthetic, and tactile and conceptual metaphors such as love as a journey, love as physical strength, and love as time. These elements enhance the emotional and cognitive interpretation of love, making the song a powerful medium for articulating deep human feelings.

Kata Kunci: Imagery, Metaphor, Semantics, Song Lyrics, Love Expression

INTRODUCTION

Language has a central role in human life, not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for the expression of ideas, emotions and cultural values. In the study of linguistics, especially semantics, the meaning of language becomes the main focal point in understanding how humans convey and interpret messages. Semantics includes not only lexical or grammatical meanings, but also figurative dimensions such as imagery and metaphors that serve to communicate abstract concepts such as love.

According to Rahmadyanti (2022), language is a symbol of a sound system that follows certain rules, making communication activities possible. This structure of language allows humans to convey ideas and feelings in a complex way, one of them through artistic mediums such as songs. Song, as a form of popular literary work, harnesses the power of figurative language to

create deep meaning. Imagery and metaphor become linguistic devices that reinforce the emotional and aesthetic aspects in lyric texts.

Stockwell (2002) explained that imagery is a linguistic representation that evokes sensory images such as sight, hearing, and touch. While Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stated that metaphor is a way of thinking and understanding the world through the process of conceptualization, not just a style of language. In the context of love, metaphors and imagery help shape emotional understanding and relational experiences.

The song "Thinking Out Loud" by Ed Sheeran was chosen as an object of study because it contains many figurative expressions about love. Lyrics like "Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love?"or" Darling, I will be loving you ' til we're 70" combines sensory imagery and conceptual metaphors that reinforce the meaning of eternal love.

This study aims to analyze how imagery and metaphor are used in the lyrics of the song to convey the concept of love from a semantic perspective.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at analyzing the use of figurative language, specifically imagery and metaphor, in the lyrics of the song *"Thinking Out Loud"* by Ed Sheeran. This approach was chosen as it is considered suitable for exploring meaning in depth and understanding linguistic phenomena in a contextual manner.

The main object of this study is the lyrics of *"Thinking Out Loud,"* obtained from official sources, including reputable lyrics websites and legal music platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music. The data collection technique used is documentation, which involves transcribing and recording lines from the lyrics that contain figurative language elements. This research does not utilize physical laboratory tools, as the analysis is conducted linguistically on textual documents. The research setting is non-field-based (textual analysis), and therefore does not involve human respondents. Data analysis was carried out using conceptual semantics theory and conceptual metaphor theory as developed by (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The analysis procedure was conducted in three stages: identification, classification, and interpretation.

First, the researcher identified lines in the lyrics that contain imagery and metaphor. Second, the identified data were classified based on types of imagery (visual, tactile, kinesthetic, etc.) and types of metaphor (conceptual, structural, orientational, etc.). Third, the figurative meanings were interpreted based on the context of the song and relevant semantic theories.

The results of the analysis are presented in tabular form to facilitate readers' understanding of the types and functions of figurative language used in the lyrics. The method of analysis used in this study refers to the semantic discourse analysis approach as described by (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), and does not involve statistical analysis software, as the focus of the study is on meaning and linguistic structure.

RESULTS

The results showed that the lyrics of the song "Thinking Out Loud" contains many elements of figurative language consisting of imagery and metaphors used to express feelings of love deeply and poetically. Such figuratives not only embellish the language of the lyrics, but also create a strong emotional and conceptual meaning about love. The results of identifying and classifying the data are presented in the following table:

Table 1 Classification of Figurative Language in the Lyrics of "Thinking Out Loud"

No	Lyrics	Figurative Types	Subcategories	Semantic Implementation
1.	"When your legs don't work like they used to before"	Imagery	Kinesthetic	Describes the physical condition when old; love persists even though the body is weakened.
2.	"And I can't sweep you off of your feet"	Metafora	Physical-Emotional	Sweeping the legs as a symbol makes a person impress or fall in love.
3.	"Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love?"	Imagery	Gustatory	Love is described through taste; it creates an emotional sensation that feels real.
4.	"Will your eyes still smile from your cheeks?"	Imagery	Visual	Describe the expression of happiness as a physical form of love.
5.	"Darling, I will be loving you till we're 70"	Metaphor	Love-Time	Love is shown as something that lasts throughout the ages.
6.	"And baby, my heart could still fall as hard at 23"	Metaphor	Emotions-Intensity	Love is still as strong as youth; it symbolizes unchanging feelings.
7.	"I'm thinking 'bout how people fall in love in mysterious ways"	Metaphor	Love-Travel	Falling in love is described as an inexplicable process.
8.	"Maybe just the touch of a hand"	Imagery	Taktil	Physical touch as a trigger for deep love emotions.
9.	"Well me I fall in love with you every single day"	Metaphor	Love-Daily Cycle	Love as an activity that keeps repeating and never fades.
10.	"And I just wanna tell you I am"	-	Literal Emosional	Direct expression of emotions without being figurative, but in favor of a love narrative.
11.	"So honey, now take me into your loving arms"	Imagery	Tactile	Hugs as a symbol of peace and warm love.
12.	"Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars"	Imagery	Visual	Romantic love is depicted in the atmosphere of a starry night sky.
13.	"Place your head on my beating heart"	Imagery	Auditory and tactile	The feeling of love is symbolized by the

				heartbeat and physical closeness.
14.	"I'm thinking out loud"	Metaphor	Mental- Verbal	Honestly expressed thoughts; symbolizing honesty in love
15.	"That maybe we found love right where we are"	Metaphor	Love-a place	Implies that love does not need to be sought it is present in the right place and time.

As shown in Table 1 the song's predominant use of imagery creates a connection between emotions and sensory experiences, such as touch, sight, taste, and hearing. This makes the love in the song feel real and close to the experience of everyday life.

Meanwhile, metaphors are used to reinforce abstract concepts such as time, eternity, mystery and the intensity of feelings of love. Sheeran uses conceptual metaphors such as" love is time"," love is a journey", and" love is physical presence " that enrich the semantic meaning of his lyrics.

By combining these two figurative elements, Sheeran manages to form a love narrative that is not only aesthetically beautiful, but also conceptually and emotionally meaningful.

DISCUSSION

The song" Thinking Out Loud " by Ed Sheeran presents a number of metaphors and imagery that reinforce the delivery of the meaning of love as a complex, sincere, and lasting emotional experience. Utilizing concrete comparisons, such as the human body, time, and elements of nature, Sheeran creatively portrays love in sensory and conceptual dimensions. Within the framework of conceptual semantics according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the use of metaphor in this song shows that love is not only something that is felt, but also thought and constructed conceptually through language.

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Souce Domain	Target Domain
Taste	Memory of Love
Time	Love Duration
Falling	Emotional Process
Touch	Emotional Intimacy

Table Conceptual Mapping of Source and Domains in Love Metaphors

Some metaphors in the lyrics can be analyzed through the conceptual semantic framework in the lyrics of Thinking Out Loud in Ed Sheeran's songs, namely:
- "Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love?"
  - ✓ Target domain: Emotional memory (love)
  - ✓ Source domain: Taste sensation

- ✓ Explanation: Love is metaphorically represented as a taste that lingers, suggesting that strong emotional experiences can be remembered like a favorite flavor.
- "Darling, I'll be loving you till we're 70"
    - ✓ Target domain: Endurance of love
    - ✓ Source domain: Time and age
    - ✓ Explanation: This metaphor frames love as something that can endure across a temporal span, emphasizing sincerity and emotional commitment.
- "When my hair's all but gone and my memory fades"
    - ✓ Target domain: Change in relationships
    - ✓ Source domain: Aging and memory loss
    - ✓ Explanation: Physical and mental aging is used as a metaphor for change, while love persists beyond these external transformations.
- "People fall in love in mysterious ways"
    - ✓ Target domain: Emotional process
    - ✓ Source domain: Falling and mystery
    - ✓ Explanation: Love is portrayed as an uncontrollable and unpredictable experience, reinforcing the idea that love defies logic yet remains real.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the use of imagery and metaphor in the lyrics of Ed Sheeran's song "Thinking Out Loud" from a semantic perspective. The findings indicate that figurative language in the form of sensory imagery (visual, auditory, and tactile) and conceptual metaphors plays a significant role in constructing emotional and conceptual meanings of love within the song. These elements do not merely serve aesthetic purposes but actively shape the listener's perception of love as something that is sensually tangible and emotionally profound.

The use of conceptual metaphorssuch as "love is time" and "love is taste demonstrates how abstract ideas like love are understood through physical experiences. These metaphors reveal that love is not portrayed as a fleeting emotion but as a sustained commitment that transcends age and physical conditions, thereby reinforcing its cognitive and emotional depth.

Overall, this study confirms that figurative language, particularly imagery and metaphor, functions as an essential semantic tool in representing complex human emotions in popular literary texts such as songs. The semantic approach used in this research underscores the dual function of language in both aesthetic expression and cognitive representation.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the field of linguistics by highlighting the pedagogical value of analyzing authentic texts rich in figurative language. As a follow-up, future studies could explore similar semantic phenomena in other popular songs to further investigate the role of language in shaping meaning and emotional resonance. Such studies can also provide valuable insights for teaching English through engaging, real-life linguistic materials.

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