

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR AND MEANING IN ADELE'S SONG LYRICS *ALL I ASK*

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze metaphorical sentences in one of the western songs that are popular among the world community. "*All I Ask*" is a song by pop singer Adele from England. This song is widely played in various media both in movie soundtracks, at large-scale concerts, music media, on YouTube channels, and has won many awards, one of which is the Best Pop Performance category for solo singers at the Grammy Award. The meaning of this song contains a moral message that represents in its sentences and has a very deep message for the listener, both in its translation meaning and moral message. The lyrics of the song have a meaning that represents expression of the emotions or feelings of the people who hear it and various music critics give supportive reactions. favorable reactions. This research was conducted using descriptive qualitative method because the object of object of this research is the text contained in a song. The research findings show that in the song "*All I Ask*" by Adele, there are five main metaphors used to describe emotions, separation, and deep longing. The results of this metaphor analysis help literature lovers or song listeners more easily imagine and understand the meaning of a song.

**Keywords:** metaphor, song lyrics, Adele, meaning.

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis kalimat metafora dalam salah satu lagu barat yang populer di kalangan masyarakat dunia. "ALL I ASK" adalah lagu karya penyanyi pop yaitu Adele asal Inggris. Lagu ini banyak diputar diberbagai media baik di soundtrack film, di konser skala besar, media musik, di channel YouTube, dan berhasil memenangkan banyak penghargaan salah satunya sebagai kategori Best Pop Performance untuk penyanyi solo di Grammy Award. Makna lagu ini mengandung pesan moral yang mewakili dalam kalimatnya dan memiliki pesan yang sangat dalam bagi pendengarnya, baik dalam makna terjemahannya dan pesan moral. Lirik lagunya memiliki makna yang mewakili ekspresi emosi atau perasaan orang-orang yang mendengarnya dan berbagai kritikus musik memberikan reaksi yang mendukung. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan metode kualitatif deskriptif dikarenakan objek penelitian ini adalah teks yang tertuang dalam sebuah lagu. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam lagu "All I Ask" karya Adele, terdapat lima metafora utama yang digunakan untuk menggambarkan emosi, perpisahan, dan kerinduan yang mendalam. Hasil analisis metafora ini membantu pencinta sastra ataupun pendengar lagu lebih mudah dalam membayangkan dan mengerti maksud ataupun makna pada sebuah lagu*

**Kata kunci:** metafora, lirik lagu, Adele, makna.

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## INTRODUCTION

A song is a rhythmic variety of sound (in speaking, singing, reading, etc.). Songs have elements that come from the arrangement of tones in such a way that they can become rhythmic and harmonious music, especially sounds produced by instruments. That can become harmonious rhythms and music, especially sounds produced by musical instruments that can produce rhythms. Musical instruments that can produce rhythm. Song lyrics are a medium of verbal communication that when properly chosen, a song lyric can have the same value as thousands of words or events, able to captivate the attention of the audience. Or events, able to captivate the attention of individuals who listen to the lyrics of the song (Wahyulianto, 2019: 3).

Songs are able to enter the subconscious of humans regardless of ethnicity and nation and can make a generation dissolve in appreciation. The great biological scientist, Charles Darwin believed that music is important in relation to brain function. He so recognized the greatness of song for humans (Astono, 2007:85). Of course, songs have become part of our daily lives. In this modern era modern era, we can listen to songs wherever and whenever we want. Various types of and genres of songs are created and played to all music lovers every day in the world. Examples include blues, jazz, pop, rock, ragtime, funk and metal music (Widhyatama, 2012: 6-16). Every song seems to have a life that becomes its own addiction for the listener.

The song is an open place, and easily accessible so that the message can be conveyed to the listener who stores the song. The song is an open, and easily accessible place so that the message can be conveyed to the listener who holds the implied meaning (Jebessa & Abdeta, 2022). Moreover, especially if the song is able to touch the heart behind the words and tones produced. However, a work of text must have high readability even though it is a work of art (Awalukita & Afril, 2022). In writing song lyrics, not all songwriters write their lyrics with explicit meaning. write their lyrics with explicit or direct meaning. There are also songs that are written using words that have hidden meanings that we must first examine before being truly understood (Johanis & Afrikiani, 2022). before being truly understood (Johanis & Pendit, 2022). The same is done by Adele.

The object of this research is the lyrics of the song *All I Ask* sung by Adele. The author chose this song as research material because the lyrics are short but contain many metaphorical meanings and also because the music is so good and also because the music is so pleasant to listen to as well as the story conveyed through this song which is so related to human life as well as to the lives of people that is so related to human life and because this song won various awards.

Adele or Adele Laurie Blue Adkins MBE is a British singer and songwriter who sings and creates songs with beautiful meanings who sings and creates songs with beautiful meanings that have a lot of fans from all over the world who has a lot of fans from all over the world. The song "*All I Ask*" is one of the songs that not only emphasizes vocal strength, but also conveys a strong emotional message through simple yet meaningful lyrics. The song tells the story of one's last wish to enjoy the last moments together before the relationship ends. Adele conveys feelings of sadness, loss, and longing through metaphorical expressions that are able to describe complex emotional situations.

In this context, it is important to analyze the meaning contained in the lyrics of this song, especially the metaphors used by Adele to describe the feelings and situations faced. The critical analysis of the metaphors in the lyrics of "*All I Ask*" aims to reveal how the metaphors shape the meaning and how the emotional message of the song is conveyed indirectly.

By conducting a critical analysis, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how figurative language plays a role in enriching the meaning of song lyrics. In addition, this research also aims to add insight into the importance of understanding metaphors in works of art, especially in song lyrics, which are often a reflection of human feelings and experiences.

Another form that exists in music besides rhythm is the word component in lyrics and serves as a medium in conveying messages. The relationship between the elements of music and song lyrics is in the form of communication carried out by a communicator to the communicant. In addition, lyrics are a form of short poetry that contains expressions resulting from emotions. The form of expression is realized in forms such as words and sounds. Song lyrics have guidelines that are usually the same as poetry, for example the existence of metaphors in the sounds and words used, such as explicitly or implicitly.

On the other hand, to obtain a different or specific image as in poetry, the language in song lyrics is concise and dense. In a song, the meaning of metaphor is deep enough to have an impact on the meaning and the artistry. This can be caused by metaphors that multiply the meanings contained in the song, so that the lyrics made not only has a literal meaning but also a metaphorical meaning. A song that stores or has metaphors makes the song provide many different understandings among listeners. The difference in question can be an added value to the song because it will get the audience or those who witness it with a fairly broad level.

Based on the reasons or context listed and conveyed through the previous explanation, this study was conducted with the intention of reviewing the meaning or purpose in the form of metaphors contained indirectly in one of Adel's works, namely the song with the title "*All I Ask*" along with various varieties of metaphors found in the song. Together with that, the lyrics of the song "*All I Ask*" are popular and favored by many people, especially among young people because the sentences conveyed can represent the emotions or feelings of people who hear them.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with its primary focus being the analysis of words, phrases, and sentences rather than numerical data. As articulated by Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), the objective of qualitative research is to provide a detailed verbal description that enables a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. This study specifically aims to analyze the use of metaphors and their meanings in Adele's song "*All I Ask*". The data for this research is derived from the official lyrics of the song, which were obtained from the Genius.com website and verified through Adele's official album 25 released in 2015.

The data collection techniques applied in this study include: Firstly, a thorough reading and listening to the song; secondly, the transcription and cross-checking of the lyrics from trusted sources; and thirdly, the identification of metaphorical expressions present in the lyrics. The subsequent data analysis process follows the steps outlined by Sinaga, Herman, and Marpaung (2020), which involve an intensive reading phase, followed by the identification, classification, and analysis of metaphors based on the conceptual metaphor theory and Larson's (1998) metaphor translation strategies. In the final stage, the researcher draws conclusions regarding the types of metaphors, their meanings, and the translation strategies employed within the context of the song. This methodological approach allows the researcher to explore the figurative language in depth and to understand the role of metaphors in.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Adele's "All I Ask" reveals that metaphorical language is not merely decorative, but serves as a narrative and emotional engine that drives the song's deeper meanings. Metaphors in this ballad function as subtle yet powerful devices to express themes of longing, finality, and emotional vulnerability. Through qualitative textual analysis, the study identifies **five central metaphors**, each of which is unpacked here in detail, including its semantic interpretation, emotional impact, and translation strategy.

### 1. "If this is my last night with you"

This metaphor introduces the emotional premise of the song. Literally, "last night" suggests a final moment, but metaphorically it marks a **symbolic threshold** between emotional closeness and irreversible separation. The phrase conveys urgency and sorrow while reflecting a **temporal metaphor** (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), where time is framed as a limited commodity.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this expression evokes **anticipatory grief**—a sense of mourning that begins before loss actually occurs. The speaker is not merely describing an evening, but invoking the emotional weight of a moment that may never return. It aligns with Larson's (1998) concept of **situational metaphor**, where a physical phrase is used to encapsulate emotional states.

In translation, this metaphor may either be preserved to maintain poetic value, or rendered into a more accessible phrase (e.g., "Jika malam ini adalah malam terakhirku bersamamu") to enhance readability. This strategy, while effective in conveying meaning, may lose some poetic intimacy.

### 2. "Hold me like I'm more than just a friend"

This metaphor speaks to the speaker's desire for **emotional validation and transcendence of relational boundaries**. It carries **simultaneous connotations of physical intimacy and psychological reassurance**, packaged in a socially coded phrase.

The key metaphor here is "like I'm more than just a friend". The speaker is not simply requesting affection, but asking to be **elevated emotionally**, above friendship into the realm of significance. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) would categorize this as a **structural metaphor**, where human relationships are arranged hierarchically.

When translated into another language, particularly Bahasa Indonesia, this metaphor is usually retained due to its clarity and emotional universality: "*Peluk aku seakan aku lebih dari sekadar teman*". In this case, Larson's (1998) **equivalent metaphor strategy** is applicable, preserving both meaning and imagery.

Emotionally, this line reveals the speaker's vulnerability. The act of requesting to be held not as a friend but as someone more important implies that their value is being negotiated at the emotional edge of a fading relationship.

### 3. "Give me a memory I can use"

This line is deeply metaphorical: one cannot literally "use" a memory like an object or tool. Here, "memory" functions as an emotional **souvenir**—a tangible stand-in for an intangible loss. The verb "use" transforms the abstract idea of memory into a functional object, an example of **ontological metaphor** (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), where non-physical experiences are treated as physical entities.

The implied meaning is twofold: the speaker desires to **create a moment powerful enough to be emotionally revisited** in the future, and second, they acknowledge that the relationship will not survive. This dual function—both as farewell and preservation—adds emotional complexity to the song.

From a translation standpoint, this metaphor is particularly nuanced. While a literal version like "*Berikan aku kenangan yang bisa digunakan*" is possible, the metaphor's subtleties may be lost on some readers. Some translators might opt for: "*Buatkan aku kenangan untuk masa depan*"—a **metaphor-to-sense** strategy (Larson, 1998), which simplifies the phrase but potentially sacrifices poetic richness.

#### 4. “Cause what if I never love again?”

This metaphor encapsulates a universal fear—the permanence of emotional emptiness. Rather than explicitly stating fear of the future, Adele frames it as an **open-ended rhetorical question**, increasing its emotional power.

This metaphor does not describe a concrete image, but instead reflects an existential concern, often found in lyrical or poetic discourse. Lakoff (1987) would argue that this metaphor is rooted in **conceptual schema** related to emotional continuity: The fear that emotional capacity has a finite limit.

In Indonesian, this line often remains nearly intact: “*Bagaimana jika aku tak pernah mencintai lagi?*”—preserving both syntax and sentiment. In this instance, the metaphor’s simplicity allows it to survive cross-linguistic transfer with minimal loss. However, the deeper layer of **existential despair** may still vary in impact depending on the cultural context of the reader.

This expression also draws from a shared emotional reality—most listeners can relate to the fear of not being able to replicate a past love. As such, this metaphor reinforces the **universal appeal** of the song’s emotional narrative.

#### 5. “Forget what we’re told, before we get too old”

Here, Adele uses dual metaphors: The first challenges **social conditioning**, while the second draws on **aging as a metaphor for decay and loss of freedom**.

“Forget what we’re told” is a metaphor for **liberation from imposed norms**. It implicitly critiques societal expectations—possibly about relationships, gender roles, or emotional restraint. This aligns with what Critical Discourse Analysis would label as **discursive resistance**.

The second part, “before we get too old,” metaphorically links **aging with the decline of spontaneity or possibility**. Youth, in this framing, represents emotional openness, while aging symbolizes rigidity or regret.

In translation, this couplet may be rendered as: “*Lupakan semua yang diajarkan pada kita, sebelum kita menjadi terlalu tua*”. This maintains both metaphor and rhyme scheme, suggesting that this metaphor is not only semantically but also rhythmically vital.

This line represents the thematic climax of the song—a call to embrace emotional authenticity before it becomes too late. It signals a shift from passive reflection to active decision-making, a rare moment of **empowered agency** within an otherwise somber piece.

#### • Summary of Metaphorical Impact and Translation Strategy

The analysis reveals that the metaphors in “All I Ask” serve multiple intertwined functions:

- 1) **Aesthetic Function**: Enriching the lyrical quality of the song.
- 2) **Emotive Function**: Amplifying the feelings of loss, hope, and intimacy.
- 3) **Cognitive Function**: Allowing abstract emotional states to be conceptualized in physical or temporal terms.
- 4) **Pragmatic Function**: Serving as indirect speech acts that negotiate emotional boundaries (e.g., asking for more than friendship, requesting memory as legacy).

In terms of translation, two of Larson’s (1998) strategies dominate:

- 1) **Metaphor to Sense** - used when metaphorical language may be too culturally bound or ambiguous in the target language.
- 2) **Metaphor to Metaphor** - retained when the metaphor’s imagery is universal or easily understandable cross-culturally.

Interestingly, several metaphors in Adele’s song retain high **cross-cultural intelligibility**, reflecting the universal emotional themes embedded in the lyrics. However, some subtleties—especially related to metaphorical phrasing in English—require thoughtful adaptation to preserve emotional tone and semantic depth.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out, this study concludes that the song "*All I Ask*" by Adele contains a number of metaphors that have an important role in building meaning and strengthening the emotional message in the song lyrics. The metaphors found in this song not only function as a stylistic language that beautifies the lyrics, but also as a means to describe the singer's deepest feelings related to love, separation, loneliness, and fear of loss and uncertainty of the future. Metaphors such as "If this is my last night with you", "Give me a memory I can use", and "Cause what if I never love again?" implicitly convey the hope, longing, and anxiety felt by the persona in the song.

The use of metaphors in this song provides a stronger expression than literal statements. Adele uses metaphors to convey feelings in a more subtle, deep, and double-meaningful way so as to build a more intense emotional connection with the listeners. In addition, the metaphors used in this song tend to be universal, so they can be understood and felt by various groups and cultures.

In the process of translating song lyrics, this study found that most of the metaphors were translated with the strategy of transforming the metaphors into non-figurative expressions to make the meaning more easily understood by the target language audience. However, not all metaphors are removed or changed literally, some of them are retained in metaphorical form because their emotional power and universal messages are still relevant and acceptable in any culture. The right choice of translation greatly influences how the metaphors are understood and perceived by cross-linguistic audiences.

Overall, this study proves that metaphors in the lyrics of "*All I Ask*" are not just an aesthetic element, but an integral part in conveying deep meaning. Through this analysis, it is hoped that readers and listeners can better understand how metaphors function as a bridge to express feelings that may be difficult to convey directly. This study can also serve as a reference for future research in the fields of linguistics, literature, and translation, especially those related to stylistic analysis in song lyrics.

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