

METAPHORS IN THE “ESPRESSO” SONG BY SABRINA CARPENTER

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and identify the types of metaphors found in the lyrics of the song “Espresso” performed by Sabrina Carpenter. The song was selected as the primary data source due to its rich use of metaphorical expressions that convey a strong, confident, and captivating persona. Through these metaphors, the lyrics creatively express complex emotions and personal identity, making it a compelling subject for analysis. A descriptive qualitative method was employed in conducting this research. Data were collected using listening and documentation techniques, focusing on identifying figurative language within the song. The analysis was guided by the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which classifies metaphors into three main categories: structural, orientational, and ontological. The findings of this study reveal the presence of eight metaphorical expressions within the lyrics. Specifically, there are three structural metaphors, two orientational metaphors, and three ontological metaphors. Each type of metaphor plays a distinct role in shaping the tone and meaning of the song. Structural metaphors help construct abstract ideas through more familiar concepts, orientational metaphors frame emotions through spatial orientation, and ontological metaphors present abstract experiences as concrete entities. These findings suggest that metaphors in song lyrics not only serve as stylistic devices but also enhance the overall semantic depth and emotional resonance of the song. By utilizing metaphorical language, the songwriter effectively communicates themes of self-assurance, desire, and individuality, thereby enriching the listener’s interpretive experience.

Keywords: metaphor, semantics, song lyrics, *Espresso*, Sabrina Carpenter.

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INTRODUCTION

Language, as a means of communication and an expression of emotion and thought in works of art such as songs, is often used figuratively. In linguistic studies particularly semantics, which examines both literal and non-literal meaning metaphor serves as one of the figurative language forms that enables the imaginative expression of abstract ideas, as exemplified in the song “*Espresso*” by Sabrina Carpenter.

A song is one of the most effective forms of artistic media for conveying messages, as it has the power to evoke a wide range of emotions such as hope, desire, joy, and even madness. It combines melody, rhythm, and lyrics into a beautiful harmony that is typically sung. A song can stand alone as a musical composition or be part of a larger musical work. The lyrics, often resembling poetry, serve as a means of verbal communication because they contain messages the songwriter intends to deliver to the listener. At the same time, the accompanying music enhances the meaning and emotional depth of the words, making it also a form of nonverbal communication. Thus, a song is not only a work of art but also a communication tool that conveys profound messages through the combination of sound and language.

The metaphors in this song depict a confident and captivating persona by comparing herself to *Espresso* a beverage that is strong, concentrated, and enticing. As semantic studies in linguistics continue to evolve, it becomes increasingly important to understand how figurative meanings like these whether universal or culturally bound are constructed and interpreted based on individual knowledge and life experience.

The concept of metaphor was first developed in the book *Metaphors We Live By*, published in 1980 by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are not merely rhetorical devices but carry additional layers of meaning and serve primarily as tools for understanding. They argue that all human languages utilize metaphors at various levels in communication. Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson classify metaphors into three main categories: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors.

1. Structural Metaphors

This type of metaphor involves one concept being explained or understood through the structure of another concept. It includes two key components: the source domain and the target domain, where one concept is used to frame or shape the other in a metaphorical manner.

2. Orientational Metaphors

These metaphors are related to spatial orientation, such as up-down, in-out, or forward-backward. This orientation stems from everyday physical human experience and is then used to understand emotional or abstract concepts. Since each culture has different experiences and ways of thinking, the metaphorical orientations used can also vary. Common examples of orientational metaphors include: "Health is up", "Life never flat", and "Happy is up".

3. Ontological Metaphors

Ontological metaphors turn abstract concepts like thoughts, feelings, or experiences into entities with physical form or qualities. For example, in the phrase "My mind can't control myself," the mind is treated as an entity capable of controlling actions. Ontological metaphors help people understand intangible aspects by framing them in more concrete, tangible terms.

LITERAL REVIEW

Song lyrics can be considered a form of short poetry that expresses emotions and uses figurative language. According to Semi, as cited in Zhariff (2017), song lyrics are part of literary works that employ a language style free from formal linguistic rules and often contain elements of metaphor.

Metaphor itself is a type of figurative language that functions to compare one thing with another. Based on the theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is a way of understanding one concept through the framework of another. They categorize metaphor into several main types.

Structural Metaphor is a type of metaphor that compares one concept using the framework of another. Lakoff and Johnson (2003:14) explain that this metaphor occurs when a concept is shaped or understood through the metaphorical structure of another concept. This type of metaphor typically arises from systematic correlations found in everyday experiences.

Oriental Metaphor refers to metaphors related to direction or spatial orientation, such as up-down, forward-backward, or in-out. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003:15), this type of metaphor is grounded in human physical experience with their surrounding environment. Since individuals have different experiences and cultural backgrounds, the use of orientational metaphors can vary across cultures. Examples include phrases like *Health is up*, *Life never flat*, and *Happy is up*, which illustrate how emotional or abstract states are mapped onto spatial directions. These metaphors provide a conceptual structure based on spatial orientation or physical positioning.

Ontological Metaphor is a type of metaphor that gives physical form or tangible existence to abstract concepts, including personification and container metaphors. This metaphor arises when we perceive events, activities, emotions, or ideas as objects or real entities. Ontological metaphors allow us to understand and discuss unclear or abstract things as if they have recognizable physical characteristics. In other words, they describe abstract concepts through the framework of existing concrete entities. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003:27), ontological metaphors help us approach and make sense of something logically, based on everyday experience.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive research method. Descriptive research is conducted when the researcher seeks to find answers to problems related to an ongoing phenomenon. It includes both understanding the phenomenon as it is and examining the relationships between variables and the phenomenon being studied (Arif, 2019:6).

The data used in this study consists of metaphors found in individual words or phrases. The context of each sentence will then be examined to interpret and understand the meaning of the metaphors. The data source is taken from several lines of lyrics in the song *Espresso* by Sabrina Carpenter.

The data analysis technique is used to explain the outcome of the data collection process and the method used to process the data, aiming to ensure it aligns with the proper procedures (Arif, 2019:66). In this study, each sentence containing a metaphor will be analyzed to determine its metaphorical category.

FINDING RESEARCH

Structural Metaphor

Metaphor	Meaning
He's drinking me up like <i>Espresso</i>	The speaker is likened to <i>Espresso</i> : small, strong, captivating addictive after just one taste.
My life is a movie, I'm the director	The speaker presents themselves as the director of their own life.
Switch it up like Nintendo	Describes the speaker as adaptable, ever-changing, and full of variety.

Oriental Metaphor

Metaphor	Meaning
Feel it in my body, high like a soprano	A feeling of emotional ecstasy or intense excitement.
I'm working late	Implies hard work driven by ambition and the pursuit of achievement.

Ontological Metaphor

Metaphor	Meaning
I'm sweet but I might get bitter	Traits and emotions are personified through taste (sweet-bitter).
<i>Espresso</i>	The speaker's identity is depicted as something consumable, like <i>Espresso</i> .
He's thinking 'bout me every night	Thoughts are portrayed as a consistent and tangible activity, like a nightly routine.

The discussion below outlines the findings from the analysis of metaphor frequency in Sabrina Carpenter's song "*Espresso*." The identified metaphors are grouped into three categories: Structural Metaphors (three instances), Oriental Metaphors (two idioms), and Ontological Metaphors (three instances). This demonstrates the song's use of diverse metaphors to enhance the depth of its lyrics. The following points offer more detailed information, which is presented in the accompanying table.

- **Structural Metaphor**

"He's drinking me up like *Espresso*"

The speaker is metaphorically compared to *Espresso* a small, strong, and intense drink suggesting that they are captivating and addictive. This reflects a structural metaphor, where the concept of self ("I") is constructed through the transfer of structure from the domain of a beverage to that of a human, merging two distinct concepts into a meaningful relationship.

"My life is a movie, I'm the director"

The speaker positions themselves as the one in control of their own life story by metaphorically representing life (an abstract concept) as a film and themselves as the director. This illustrates the use of a structural metaphor, where the concept of life is depicted through the concrete narrative framework of a film.

"Switch it up like Nintendo"

The speaker describes themselves as someone who is adaptable and full of variety, shaping their character through the structure of a game system that can be switched or modified. This represents a form of structural metaphor, where the concept of self is framed using the flexible and dynamic framework of the gaming world.

- **Orientational Metaphor**

“Feel it in my body high like a soprano”

The phrase “*Feel it in my body high like a soprano*” expresses a sense of ecstasy or intense emotional excitement, with the word “*high*” representing a peak emotional state. This phrase falls under orientational metaphor because it uses vertical direction (*high*) to symbolize a positive emotional condition. According to Lakoff and Johnson's theory, the concept *happy is up* shows that upward direction is associated with happiness or positive feelings. Thus, *high like a soprano* refers not only to a high vocal pitch but also to a heightened emotional intensity.

“I’m working late”

This phrase implies hard work driven by ambition and achievement, using the word “late” and working at night as metaphors for moving forward or upward in a social or professional context. It reflects the use of orientational metaphors, where time and effort are associated with progress and status elevation.

- **Ontological Metaphor**

“I’m sweet but I might get bitter”

This phrase personifies traits and emotions through taste, such as sweetness and bitterness, to describe personality. Since taste is usually associated with physical objects like food or drink, its application to emotions makes it an ontological metaphor conceptualizing emotions as entities that can be tangibly experienced.

“*Espresso*” as self-identity

The speaker's self is depicted as something consumable, like *Espresso*, by personifying a human as a physical object. This is an ontological metaphor, as it portrays the concept of the self as a tangible entity that can be 'drunk' or concretely experienced.

“He’s thinking 'bout me every night”

The mind, which is an abstract concept, is described as a tangible activity like a nighttime routine. By portraying the mind as a concrete and repetitive action, this phrase serves as an example of an ontological metaphor conceptualizing something abstract as a tangible and scheduled entity.

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