

THE ANALYSIS OF SEMANTICS METAPHOR IN THE SONG LYRICS “THE NIGHT IS STILL YOUNG” BY NICKI MINAJ

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Abstract

This research discusses the use of semantic metaphors in the lyrics of the song “The Night Is Still Young” by Nicki Minaj. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method and Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory to identify and analyze various metaphorical expressions that build deep meanings in the song lyrics. The analysis shows that metaphors such as “the night is still young,” “get twisted,” and “aim for the stars” not only embellish the lyrics, but also represent the themes of freedom, youth, optimism, and self-empowerment. Through metaphors of time, parties, and aspirations, the song invites listeners to enjoy life, take advantage of opportunities, and not be afraid to dream big. In addition, these metaphors also strengthen the emotional connection between the singer and the listener, and reflect cultural values about youth and freedom. This research shows that the use of metaphors in popular music can be an effective means of conveying universal messages that are relevant to everyday life experiences. The findings are expected to contribute to linguistic, literary and cultural studies, particularly in understanding the role of language in shaping meaning and experience through song lyrics.
Keywords: *Semantic, Metaphor, Lyrics, Song, Youth*

Article History

Received: June 2025

Reviewed: June 2025

Published: June 2025

Plagiarism Checker No 234

Prefix DOI : Prefix DOI :

10.8734/argopuro.v1i2.365

Copyright : Author

Publish by : Argopuro



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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important tool for humans to express ideas, feelings, and culture. In songs, language is not only used to communicate but also to create deeper meanings and emotions. One way songwriters do this is by using metaphors. A metaphor is a way of describing something by comparing it to something else, helping listeners understand abstract or complex ideas in a simpler and more vivid way. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not just figures of speech but are part of how we think and understand the world: “Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”.

In popular music, metaphors are widely used as a powerful tool to make song lyrics more engaging, vivid, and meaningful. Rather than simply stating facts or emotions directly, songwriters use metaphors to create images and ideas that invite listeners to interpret and feel the message on a deeper level. Semantic metaphors, which focus on the meanings and concepts behind words, help convey complex emotions and abstract ideas in a way that is relatable and memorable. These metaphors allow listeners to connect personally with the song, as they can imagine and experience the feelings being expressed.

Nicki Minaj, a well known and influential artist in the music industry, is recognized for her creative and skillful use of metaphors in her lyrics. Her ability to craft metaphors adds richness and depth to her songs, making them not only entertaining but also thought-provoking. In her song “The Night Is Still Young,” Minaj employs various semantic metaphors to explore themes such as youth, freedom, and the joy of living in the moment. Through metaphorical language, she encourages listeners to embrace the excitement and possibilities of youth, highlighting the idea that the night and by extension, life is full of opportunities that are yet to be experienced.

By using metaphors, Minaj transforms simple ideas about enjoying life into powerful images that resonate emotionally with her audience. This technique not only enhances the artistic quality of the song but also helps communicate universal feelings in a fresh and impactful way. As a result, the metaphors in “The Night Is Still Young” serve as a bridge between the artist’s personal expression and the listener’s own experiences, making the song meaningful to a wide range of people.

This study aims to conduct a detailed analysis of the semantic metaphors present in the lyrics of “The Night Is Still Young” by Nicki Minaj. By identifying and interpreting these metaphors, the research seeks to uncover how meaning is constructed and how these linguistic devices contribute to the song’s overall thematic and emotional impact. Furthermore, this analysis will provide insights into the ways in which language in popular music reflects and influences cultural attitudes toward youth and life experiences.

Understanding the use of semantic metaphors in song lyrics is significant not only for literary and linguistic scholarship but also for broader cultural studies. It allows for a deeper appreciation of the artistry involved in songwriting and offers a window into the cognitive and cultural processes that shape meaning-making in contemporary society. As such, this research contributes to the interdisciplinary field of linguistics, literature, and music studies by bridging theoretical concepts with practical analysis of a popular cultural text.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study refers to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which explains that metaphor is not merely a figure of speech but a fundamental cognitive mechanism by which humans understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiences. According to this theory, metaphors consist of source domains (concrete experiences) and target domains (abstract concepts), connected through mappings that shape meaning. This theoretical framework has been widely applied in analyzing language use in various contexts, including song lyrics, to reveal deeper meanings embedded in everyday expressions. This research aims to analyze semantic metaphors in the song lyrics “The Night Is Still Young” by Nicki Minaj, focusing on how metaphors construct themes of freedom, youthfulness, and optimism. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and the conceptual metaphor framework, this study seeks to uncover how metaphorical language enriches the emotional and cultural meanings of the song.

This study is related to several previous researches that also highlight the role of metaphor in song lyrics. First, Sinaga, Sidabutar, and Siahaan (2024) analyze metaphors in James Arthur’s song lyrics, classifying types of metaphors such as structural, orientational, and ontological, and revealing how metaphors convey complex emotional experiences like love, memory, and loss. Second, Mawaddah and Rahmat (2023) conduct a semantic analysis of the song “Life Too Short” by Aespa, demonstrating how metaphors in the lyrics express themes of life’s brevity and the importance of seizing the moment. Third, Ndraha (2018) examines metaphors in Westlife’s song lyrics, showing how metaphorical language functions to express emotions and abstract ideas in a relatable way for listeners.

These studies provide a solid foundation for this research, especially in understanding how conceptual metaphors function in popular song lyrics to communicate complex emotions

and cultural values. Therefore, this research builds on the conceptual metaphor theory and previous empirical findings to analyze the semantic metaphors in Nicki Minaj's "The Night Is Still Young," enriching the interpretation of its lyrical meaning.

3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is a research method to explore and understand the meaning that some individuals or groups of people think come from social or human problems (Creswell, 2013) which is suitable for exploring and understanding the use of semantic metaphors in song lyrics. Qualitative research focuses on describing and interpreting the meanings embedded in language rather than measuring or quantifying data. This approach allows for a detailed examination of how metaphors function within the lyrics of "The Night is Still Young" by Nicki Minaj, providing insights into the deeper meanings and emotional effects conveyed through language.

The primary data source for this study is the official lyrics of "The Night Is Still Young". These lyrics were collected from verified online lyric databases and cross checked with official releases to ensure their accuracy. Using authentic and reliable sources is essential to maintain the integrity of the analysis, as even small differences in wording can affect the interpretation of metaphors.

Data collection began with a thorough review of relevant literature on metaphors, particularly focusing on semantic and conceptual metaphors as explained by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This theoretical foundation guided the identification and classification of metaphors in the lyrics. The researcher carefully listened to the song multiple times while reading the lyrics to identify all expressions that contain metaphorical meanings. These expressions were then extracted and recorded systematically for further analysis.

The data analysis was conducted using directed content analysis, which involves identifying specific elements in this case, semantic metaphors based on existing theories. First, all metaphorical expressions in the lyrics were highlighted and listed. Next, these metaphors were classified according to their conceptual domains, such as metaphors related to youth, freedom, or time, following Lakoff and Johnson's framework. Each metaphor was then interpreted to explain its meaning and how it contributes to the overall message and emotional tone of the song. Finally, the metaphors were analyzed within their cultural and emotional contexts to understand their significance and impact on the listener.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher cross-checked the identified metaphors by repeatedly listening to the song and consulting multiple lyric sources. The interpretations were grounded in well established semantic theories, which helped maintain consistency and reduce subjective bias. This careful process strengthens the credibility of the findings and supports a clear understanding of how semantic metaphors operate in the song.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The lyrics of "The Night is Still Young" by Nicki Minaj are rich in semantic metaphors depicting freedom and fun. The phrase "The night is still young" serves as a symbol of potential and opportunity, encouraging listeners to celebrate the present moment. In addition, the use of elements such as alcohol in the lyrics creates images of escapism and partying, emphasizing themes of collectivity and shared experiences. Through upbeat and optimistic lyrics, the song invites listeners to enjoy life and let go of worries.

Data 1

"Yo, ayo tonight is the night that I'ma get twisted"

The phrase “get twisted” literally means to get drunk or lose control due to alcohol, but semantically in this song the metaphor symbolizes detachment from social pressures and restrictions, inviting listeners to enjoy uninhibited freedom and fun. The phrase “tonight is the night” emphasizes that tonight is a special and appropriate time to let loose, celebrate, and live the moment with passion. By combining the concepts of time as a special occasion and freedom as an emotional state, this metaphor creates a powerful image of a night full of possibilities to enjoy life to the fullest and spontaneously.

Data 2

“Myx Moscato and vodka, I'ma mix it”

The phrase “Myx Moscato and vodka, I'ma mix it” uses the metaphor of mixed drinks as a symbol of the fusion of experiences and sensations that will be experienced during the party. These drinks consisting of two types of alcohol symbolize a combination of freedom and intense pleasure, creating an atmosphere of color, energy, and spontaneity. Semantically, the mix not only refers to the physical drink, but also describes how the different elements of freedom and excitement come together to create a rich and enjoyable emotional experience for the listener.

Data 3

“We fresh to death, down to the shoes”

The phrase “fresh to death” is a metaphor that means very cool, neat, and stylish to the max. It describes a very attractive and confident appearance. “Down to the shoes” emphasizes that the neatness and style is seen from head to toe, including the shoes. So, overall, the lyrics convey that they look very confident and stylishly perfect from top to bottom.

Data 4

“Yo, ayo tonight is the night that I'ma get lifted”

The metaphor “get lifted” has a similar meaning to “get twisted,” but emphasizes more on feeling emotionally or spiritually uplifted. Semantically, “get lifted” describes a state of euphoria, freedom, and mood elevation experienced while enjoying an evening without any burdens or pressures. This metaphor implies a mental and emotional experience that transcends the physical state, showing how the night becomes a moment to feel light, happy, and free from any worries.

Data 5

“What is the hurry? It's pretty early”

The phrase “What is the hurry? It's pretty early” uses the metaphor of time to convey a message about patience and enjoying the process without rushing. “It's pretty early” semantically symbolizes that there is still plenty of time available, so there is no need to rush through life or enjoy the night. This metaphor invites listeners to cherish every moment and make room for experiences to evolve naturally, in line with the song's theme that emphasizes the importance of enjoying life and celebrating freedom without the pressure of time.

Data 6

“The night is still young”

The phrase “the night is still young” is the main metaphor in this song that symbolizes a time full of opportunities and chances that have not yet run out. The “night is still young” semantically invites the listener not to rush to end the fun, but to continue to enjoy life and celebrate the moment with gusto. This metaphor depicts optimism and freedom in living life,

emphasizing that there is still plenty of time to have fun and explore new experiences without pressure or restrictions. As such, it symbolizes hope and a dynamic spirit of life.

Data 7

“Live in the present, that gift is for the gifted”

The phrase “Live in the present” contains a metaphor that invites listeners to focus on and appreciate the present moment as precious. The next sentence, “that gift is for the gifted,” uses the metaphor of “gift” to describe the special abilities or wisdom possessed by people who are able to truly live in the present moment. Semantically, this metaphor emphasizes that the ability to enjoy and appreciate the present is not something that comes easily to everyone, but rather a gift or privilege that only those who are wise and aware of the value of life have. Thus, this lyric contains a deep message about the importance of awareness and appreciation of the present time as a form of life wisdom.

Data 8

“So make sure the stars is what you aim for”

The phrase “make sure the stars are what you aim for” uses the metaphor of “stars” as a symbol of the highest goals or big dreams in life. Semantically, stars symbolize high aspirations and ideals worth aiming for. The lyrics encourage listeners to set ambitious and meaningful goals and strive to achieve the best things in life. By using this metaphor, the song emphasizes the importance of having a strong vision and motivation in order to achieve true success and happiness.

Data 9

“What is the hurry? It's pretty early”

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Data 10

The night is still young (how dare we sit quietly)

The night is still young (and watch the world pass us by?)

The night is still young (how dare we sit quietly?)

So are we

The phrase “The night is still young” is again the main metaphor that symbolizes time and opportunities that are still wide open to be enjoyed and utilized. The phrases “how dare we sit quietly” and “and watch the world pass us by?” contain metaphors criticizing passivity and inaction, which semantically means missing out on opportunities and potential. In other words, the young night is a symbol of opportunities to be seized, so sitting quietly and letting time pass by without doing anything is considered a waste and lack of courage. The line “So are we” reinforces this metaphor by stating that we too are young and have the same opportunities to act and enjoy life. Overall, this section invites listeners to actively utilize time and opportunities, reject passivity, and celebrate the spirit of life full of energy and courage.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the lyrics of the song “The Night Is Still Young” are rich in the use of semantic metaphors that reinforce the main message of freedom, youthful spirit, and optimism in living life. Metaphors like “the night is still young” are used to describe a time full of opportunities and chances, while expressions like “get twisted,” “get lifted,” and “aim for the stars” emphasize the invitation to celebrate life, dare to dream, and enjoy the moment without fear or pressure. In addition, other metaphors such as “live in the present” and “fresh to death” add depth to the meaning by highlighting the importance of awareness of the present and confidence in expressing oneself. Overall, the use of metaphors in this song not only embellishes the lyrics, but also builds an emotional connection between the singer and the listener, and reflects cultural values about youth, freedom, and the courage to take chances. This research shows that semantic metaphors in popular song lyrics can be an effective means to convey universal messages that are relevant to people's daily lives and collective experiences.

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