



Ontological Metaphor in Taylor Swift's Selected Songs of Reputation Album

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ABSTRACT: Metaphor is one of figurative languages mostly applied in literary works and becomes the focus of this study. The main purpose of this study is to find and analyze one type of metaphor namely *ontological metaphor*. The data source of this study comes from the song lyrics of Taylor Swift's Reputation Album. Her song lyrics are picked out because they provides enough of ontology metaphorical aspect that becomes the main concern of this study. To collect the data, documentation method and note taking technique was employed. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) theory *Metaphor We Live By* was exploited in order to analyze the data source. The result of data is presenting by applying qualitative method, meaning that the analysis was descriptively explained in the form of words and sentences. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the use of ontological metaphor within the song lyrics is important to convey the ideas, emotions, and thoughts, and also to embellish or give a color, so it seems artistic to read and listen to.

KEYWORDS: Ontological metaphor, Taylor Swift, three song lyrics, reputation album, meaning

INTRODUCTION

An utterance is a way of people to express and describe the ideas, thought, feelings, and even emotions. However, what people feel and have in their mind sometimes are delivered in indirect way. The utterances usually can be in a form of a words, phrases, and sentences. One example can be taken from the song lyrics. For the lyricists, writing or composing the lyrics in the songs is helping them to reveal their thought and emotion, despite of the medium is not allowing them to put a lengthy explanation. Therefore, the figurative aspect is implemented, especially metaphor, to make the vague idea clearer, so that the lyrics become easier to be visualized and understandable.

Metaphor is a figure of speech that deals with an implicit comparison between two unrelated things that share some common characteristic. Precisely, one thing is conceptualized or viewed into another thing which is familiar, so the whole idea becomes understandable. According to Ramadhanti (2021) the metaphor comes from Greek, metaphor derived from *meta* means "over" and *pherein* means "to carry". It refers to a particular set of linguistics processes whereby aspects of one object are "carried over" or transferred to another object, so that the second object is spoken of as if it was the first. The main key in metaphor is to use word choices that equate something with something else (Simanjuntak, 2019). In comparing and equating things, metaphors use direct comparison without being followed by comparative words such as like, as, etc. (Monika, 2020). Ramadhanti (2021) also adds that metaphors can explain concepts and ideas by colorfully linking the unknown with the known, the abstract with the concrete, and the incomprehensible with the intelligence. Another statement comes from Silalahi (2022) that metaphor is one of the figures of speech most often used because of its artistic and rhetorical value, which can be applied for various purposes, especially those related persuasion.

According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003: 4), the metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. In other words, human's conceptual system that one thinks and acts is largely metaphorical. In their theory, there is one conceptual metaphor where something is understood through the experiences of physical, discrete entities, and substances namely ontological metaphor. The implementation of the ontology metaphorical aspect can be found in novel, stories, newspaper, poems, and even speech. This phenomenon leads to a conclusion that ontological metaphor is ubiquitous figure of speech whereby it serves a variety of purposes regarding the context of situation. Regarding the preceding explanation, the subject matters discussed are about analyzing one type of metaphor namely ontological metaphor that is contained in the song lyrics fused with its meaning.



MATERIAL AND METHODS

The main focus of this study lies on dissecting the ontological metaphor in song lyrics of Taylor Swift's Reputation Album, which was published on November 10th, 2017. All of the songs in this album was arranged, composed, and written by a global sensation singer named Taylor Swift. This album became the most-wanted album as it had officially sold more than one million copies in the first week, labeling it as the highest-selling album at that time. This study only concerned on five lyrics namely *Ready for it ...?*, *Don't Blame Me*, *Dancing With The Hands Tied*, *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things*, and *Dress* since it contains ontological metaphorical phenomenon. To collect the data, this study implied documentation method and note-taking technique, which was done by listening the songs attentively and jotting down the data suspected to have the metaphorical aspects in a piece of paper. The collected data was analyzed by applying a descriptive-qualitative method. Meaning that the analysis was explained in thorough manner. The process of analysis was mainly supported by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) theory namely *Metaphor We Live By*, proposing three conceptual metaphors such as structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting several steps to obtain the data contained of ontology metaphor within the song lyrics, this section deals with the analysis of the selected data. The results is in the form of words and sentences. In addition, the presentation of the data will be in two ways. The word printed in italic means the data plays a role as target domain, and the data is typed in italic plus bold way becomes the source domain.

Data 1

I've been *breaking hearts* a long time – Don't Blame Me

In data (1), the metaphorical phenomenon is spotted, in this regard, ontological metaphor. The use of ontological metaphor is represented by applying a concrete property to the word of "heart" which stands as a non-physical object. On this matter, the abstract nature is the target domain, on the other hand, the word "heart" becomes source domain. In denotative meaning, heart is the organ in the chest that sends blood around the body, usually on the left in humans (Oxford Learners Dictionaries). If the heart does not function as it is, probably affected by some virus or diseases, it definitely can put someone in danger, in this case, lead one to death. Meanwhile, the concept of human's "heart" does not carry its actual meaning in this context. Herein, the concept of human "heart" is acted up as a place for human emotion or feeling to gather in connotative terms. Precisely, what is referred to as a heart, in this context, is feeling of love. In data 1, the abstract concept is pictured as a fragile glass that might easily be shattered in the slightest touch. Something is made of glass material should be treated carefully to avoid an unexpected event happening.

Combining the word "break" and "heart" serves the concept of **Love is A Brittle Object**. Basically, "to break" means an action of someone or something that causes an object to be separated into two or more pieces. When something is broken, it impossibly puts them together back into its original shape. Even if it does, the shape will be not good as how it is supposed to be in the first place. Also, the broken things can bring harm to someone such as causing a scratch to their skin of the body. In real world, it is impossible to break someone's heart by hands since the concept of heart (love) here is an abstract term. Although, in metaphorical point of view, the concrete property is applied into an abstract concept in order to support an action mentioned in data 1 such as breaking heart of someone into pieces.

Data 2

Because you *break them* (trust) – This Is How We Can't Have Nice Things

Another ontological metaphor phenomenon is spotted in this song lyric, where the use of physical quality applied in the word "trust". The word "trust" does not possess the concrete aspect to it, so it belongs to the abstract nature. Additionally, the action becomes the target language, meanwhile the abstract idea play a role as the source domain. Denotatively, the definition of "trust" is



to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable (Cambridge Dictionary). In some case, someone put the trust on you, it denotes that he or she relies on your sincerity and honesty that will never do anything harm to that one. For some people, being trusted is a top-tier level of development in relationship because you are viewed as an incredible and reliable person to someone. Hence, the trust is a valuable thing that should be carefully treated to maintain the good relationship.

In the data (1), “to break” is already mentioned and explained. Connecting to the preceding part, here, the data (2) also portrays the “trust” as a fragile figure, meaning that it delivers the concept of **Trust is A Brittle Object**. As previously mentioned, “trust” does not possess a role as a concrete does, so that it seems impossible to be broken by an action in real world. However, from the metaphorical point of view, “trust” possibly acts up as a concept of concrete things to support an action such as breaking a trust between two people that brings about commotion to them.

Data 3

My love had been frozen – Dancing With Our Hands Tied

A metaphorical phenomenon is highlighted in the data (3). The combination of the two opposite words arise the question and interest in mind. It is because the aspect of love in this context does not imply a form of concrete material, thus, the “frozen” concept does not own the ability to affect the subject. As the characteristic of two words becomes unmatched to each other, through metaphorical lens, the physical quality is given to the abstract nature, so, it is capable to support the idea to be easily visualized. On this matter, the “frozen” aspect becomes target domain, meanwhile the concept of love represents source domain.

In denotative term, something or someone being frozen means it has become very had because the weather is very cold (Collins Dictionary). It mostly happens during the winter season. Thus, it is quite hard for the living creatures to perform some activities. That situation forces ones to seek for a closed place and stay there to keep themselves warm. Furthermore, in an extreme winter, being in unusual frozen state can put someone’s life in danger. To prevent that, ones should be prepared in providing material that can maintain their body’s heat.

Meanwhile, connotatively, the word “frozen” indicates a state of someone who is cold, emotionless, or lacking in empathy or warmth. In other words, that particular person is callous, detached, and unwilling to show or feel emotion. That kind of state is sometimes caused by something big that leaves traumatic impression on someone. Those worst moment eventually affects someone’s emotion or feeling, and also the way she or he reacts to or behaves in a particular situation. Relating to the explanation, it draws a conclusion that data 3 implements the concept of **Love is A Weather Deficiency** as how someone is losing the ability of receiving and giving the love as if the love is surrounded and hardened by the winter. Commonly, it is due to the unpleasant moment one underwent such as betrayal and breakups.

Data 4

Deep blue, but you *painted me golden* – Dancing With Our Hands Tied

In data (4), it is found the use of metaphorical aspect in the combination of word “painted” and “golden”. The target domain is detected in the action of paint, and the color of golden is acted up as the source domain. Denotatively, “to paint” means a process of putting or adding a color in a picture or design (Collins Dictionary). Generally, the purpose of applying colors to something is to make that particular thing alive and beautiful. In art field, an artist mostly adds or paints colors to his or her painting because it makes the arts more fascinating and attractive. Based on Collins Dictionary, golden simply is a bright yellow in color. Golden color also represents the pure value of something. As an example, “those golden necklaces are worth one million rupiahs.” Furthermore, something described as golden implies that it is wonderful because it is likely to be successful and rewarding, or it is the best of its kind. For instance, “This will be a golden opportunity for you to meet your pop idols.”

The combination of the action of “paint” and the color of “golden” serves the concept of **Love is An Art** in the data (4) as the love conceptualized into a color that is able to be applied or painted on a blank canvas. In the data (4) the color of “deep blue”



is mentioned as a representation of a great sadness and disappointment moment one's undergoing in romantic relationship. Afterward, that "deep blue" color is totally changed into the golden color afterward. It indicates the changes of one's emotion after being influenced by someone. The transition of the color as an indication of alteration is marked by the motion of "paint". Here, the concept of loves is conceptualized into the color concept of golden, meaning that the love is so precious, genuine, and pure. To sum up, the data (4) means one's genuine love successfully changes the traumatic and tragic moments of breakups, so his or her partner's situation and condition becomes more alive, better, fascinating, and shining as bright as golden color.

Data 5

Echoes of your name inside my mind – Don't Blame Me

This lyric of the song is put under this category since it serves metaphorical aspect where the abstract realm is conceptualized into the concrete things. In reality, "mind" does not own any concrete quality to it, so that it cannot be quantified or measured as how the physical things have. However, the "mind" is qualified to be served as a physical property in metaphorical point of view. The word "echo" basically refers to a series of sounds that is caused by a noise of something or someone being reflected off a surface such as a wall (Collins Dictionary). Given its definition, it remains possible to be sensed or caught, especially by a human's hearing. The echo appears when something or someone produces a series of sounds in a widely empty place. Also, it causes a repetition or reverberation effect after the original sound has stopped.

On the other hand, "mind" is the crucial element of humans. It is denotatively defined as the ability of human to be aware of something such as to think and to reason (Collins Dictionary). Here, the word "mind" does not act according to its original meaning. Connotatively, it has a role to be a container (concrete property), meaning that something can be fully filled in, in this regard, by the "echo". It can be stated that the "echo" is viewed as an object that owns the ability to fill in a container or a place. The containers could be a glass, building, bag, etc. They also can be in any shape and size that has a function to hold something in place securely. The characteristic of an object that is able to stay in the container might be hard objects or liquid. In conclusion, the concept of **Mind is A Container** is implemented in the data (5).

Data 6

You saw the *truth* in me – Dress

The combination of the words "saw" and "truth" seems strange to be put together in one sentence. Thus, it is placed in this category as carrying metaphorical element, especially ontological metaphor. In actuality, "truth" does not possess a concrete aspect to it. Although, in metaphorical point of view, "truth" as a non-physical object is structured or altered into a physical property to support the action. To add, the action plays a role as the target domain, meanwhile, the abstract idea becomes the source domain. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, the word "truth" denotatively is defined as the quality or state of something that is accordance with factuality and reality. When someone tells the truth to others, it implies the quality of the statements or ideas are based on the factuality. In other words, something is defined as the truth when there is evidences or proofs attached to it. On the contrary, the original meaning "truth" does not apply in this case.

The word "saw" is the past form of the word "see". The definition of "to see" simply is the ability human possess to visibly perceive something or someone with the eyes. The moment one sees something or someone, she or he notices the real object is at that position or location. In this case, the "truth" as an abstract idea is treated as a physical property that is able to be perceived by human's eyes. In other words, the "truth" becomes a noticeable object. To conclude, the data (6) delivers the concept of **Truth is A Visible Object** as it demonstrates one possess the ability of detecting the genuine or true intention or feeling his partner has by his own eyes.



Data 7

Stealing hearts and running off and never saying sorry – Ready for it ...?

This piece of lyrics suspected to be a part of metaphorical phenomena as how the word “heart” does not deliver its literal meaning in this context. Here, the concept of lover (heart) is given a physical quality in order to support the action of “steal”. Based on Collins Dictionary, the definition of “to steal” is referring to an action of someone who takes another person’s property or items without permission or legal right, and without intending to return it. In real world, people are against this stealing behavior of ones because it gives the others disadvantages. Not only the properties or items are taken intentionally, but also that negative action leaves fear and traumatic feeling to someone. Those who are illegally take other’s things without any consent needs to be punished by sending them to jail.

Combining the action of “steal” and the concept of lover in “heart” as a concrete object implies that heart possibly is able to be stolen or taken by someone’s hands. Love, for most people, is viewed as a valuable thing to be treasured. They might be willing to do anything to protect the precious things, including love. As how it is served as a high valuable items, it surely becomes the main target of those who want to own it by taking it whether with approval or without any consensual agreement. Conclusively, the data (7) is applying the concept of **Love is An Object**.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, in five songs namely *Ready for it ...?*, *Don’t Blame Me*, *Dancing With The Hands Tied*, *This Is Why We Can’t Have Nice Things*, and *Dress* found ontological metaphor. The implementation of the ontological aspect is used to comprehend the human’s experience. In the discussion, the target domain is compared to something’s concrete which is very familiar. Meaning that the application of a physical property to the abstract realm supports the action that is performed.

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