

METHAPOR EXPRESSIONS IN “WHEN WE ALL FALL ASLEEP WHERE DO WE GO” ALBUM BY BILLIE EILISH

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Abstract

The use of metaphors in song lyrics could enrich aesthetic values and deep meaning to the listeners. This study aims to examine the kinds of metaphor expressions and the meaning contained in the lyrics of Billie Eilish's “When We All Fall Asleep Where Do We Go” album (2019) using the theory from Lakoff and Johson (2003) for metaphor types and Leech (1981) for the metaphor functions. The researcher used a descriptive qualitative method to conduct this research. The data collection is carried out through observation and note-taking techniques to record the metaphors in the album. It is found that there are 3 types of metaphor expressions as follows: Ontological, Structural, and Orientational. The type of figurative language most commonly used in this album is structural. Furthermore, there are six meanings of metaphor found in this album, as follows: Expressive, Directive, Informative, Aesthetic, Descriptive, and Phatic. The meaning metaphor commonly found in this album is Expressive.

Keywords: *Metaphor, Types, Function, Semantics, Billie Eilish*

INTRODUCTION

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a human is a being that relates to a person or people as opposed to an animal. What makes humans genuinely different from animals is the ability to think, control the environment, and interact or communicate with each other (Laland, 2018). In human life, the most basic element of society is culture, so until today, some anthropologists and sociologists believe in cultural determinism. It means that human behavior and societal attitudes patterns are shaped by culture (Ratnasari, et al., 2022). Culture is defined as a complex of symbols and man-made goods (artifacts) created by certain communities and passed down from one generation to another as determinants and regulators behavior of its members (Setiadi, 2003). Culture can equip a person with a sense of identity and behavior that is acceptable in society, especially when it can be seen from the attitudes and behavior that are influenced by culture, one of the equipments of culture is language (Sani, 2023). Culture and language are closely connected within a social community, with paralanguage, including body language and voice nuances, playing a significant role and influencing patterns of communication, especially across different ethnic groups or bilingual individuals (Bela, 2021).

Language is a system of conventional spoken, written, or manual (signed) symbols used by human beings within a community to express culture and identity and facilitate communication (Crystal & Robins, 2019). The role of language extends beyond simple communication; it is an instrument that carries meaning and serves specific purposes. According to Castilo (2015), language and meaning are autonomous, with meaning taking precedence over its instrumental use. Additionally, language is seen as a technique in the activity of speaking, representing a set of traditional techniques aligned with the meanings of a language (Coseriu, 1985). This perspective emphasizes studying language as a dynamic activity rather than a fixed system, acknowledging its variability across contexts.

Linguistics plays a vital role in understanding and developing language. It is divided into four main branches: phonology, which deals with sounds; morphology, which studies word structures; semantics, focusing on meaning; and syntax, which analyzes sentence structure (Umagandhi et al., 2017). Each branch contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how language functions in

communication. In Chaer's opinion (1994), semantics is the relationship between linguistic signs and the things they signify. In other words, semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning. Meanwhile, according to Keraf (1984), semantics is a part of grammar that has meaning in a particular language, looking for the origin and development of a meaning from a word (Ginting & Ginting, 2019). Meaning has been given different definitions in the past. Meaning equals connotation. The meaning is simply the set of associations that a word evokes, and it is the meaning of a word defined by the images that its users connect to it (Betti and AlFartoosy, 2019). Literature is a name pinned to the results of human creative work with using language as a material for its creation (Tjahyadi, 2020). He also mentioned that literature is not just writing that has the high value of art, but literature must also be understood as a written work that is not an imitation of reality, but a work of creation that contains personal value and aesthetics.

A metaphor, a figure of speech, is "a word or phrase which is used for special effect, and which does not have its natural meaning." "In a metaphor, no function words are used, something is described by stating another thing with which it can be compared." (Richard, et al., 2005). Metaphor, A figure of speech in which a word or expression normally used for one kind of object, action, etc. is extended to another. Used by G. P. Lakoff in the 1980s as a general pattern in which one domain is systematically conceived and spoken of in terms of another (Thompson, 2000). Metaphor, a captivating stylistic device, facilitates the direct comparison of two disparate elements in a succinct manner. An illustrative example of this lies in the lyric "I'll be the shelter that won't let the rain come through" (Remedy). In this metaphor, a person is likened to a shelter, conveying the profound notion that they stand as a steadfast refuge for their lover. The imagery evoked implies a commitment to providing protection and solace, akin to a shelter shielding from the unrelenting rain. As elucidated by Hanisfi, et al. (2022), such metaphorical expressions enrich language by intricately weaving together unrelated concepts, enabling a more profound and engaging communication of ideas and emotions.

Songs are examples of art and literature's work. Song consists of two elements, music as the primary and lyrics as the secondary (Dallin, 1994). Lyrics give the audience a deep understanding of the message contained in the song; in other words, lyrics clarify the message contained in the song (Firdaus, 2013). Lyrics in the song often use metaphor as one of the figurative language. Most of Billie's songs also have figurative language, especially metaphors in, so it is important to use semantics to analyze the album "When We All Fall Asleep Where Do We Go?" to understand what Eilish tries to tell to the audience.

When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go? is the debut album of Billie Eilish, released on March 29, 2019. The album contains 14 tracks, including "!!!!!!," "Bad Guy," "Xanny," "You Should See Me in a Crown," "All the Good Girls Go to Hell," "Wish You Were Gay," "When the Party's Over," "8," "My Strange Addiction," "Bury a Friend," "Ilomilo," "Listen Before I Go," "I Love You," and "Goodbye." It was met with both critical and commercial success, debuting at number one on the Billboard 200 chart.

The track "Bad Guy" became a defining moment in Eilish's career as it earned her first number-one spot on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and won both the Song of the Year and Record of the Year awards at the 2020 Grammy Awards. The album itself was awarded Album of the Year, further solidifying Billie Eilish's status as a major force in contemporary music. Eilish's distinctive blend of dark pop, experimental production, and emotionally charged lyrics resonated widely, making When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go? a significant cultural milestone in modern music. (Britannica, 2024).

Review of literature

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1998), metaphor is something that has another meaning and its main function is to understand. Lakoff and Johnson stated that "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980). Metaphor, in other words, is a type of figurative language that relates one thing to another. According to Lakoff and Johnson, all human languages utilize metaphorical meanings to communicate at different levels of abstraction from concrete reality. This is Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory, also known as

conceptual metaphor theory. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) classify metaphor into three types: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. Structural metaphor is a concept that is structured metaphorically within another concept. Structural metaphors exist based on the systematic correlation of everyday experiences. Orientational metaphor is another type of metaphorical concept that is unstructured but regulates the overall system of concepts related to one another. Lastly, ontological metaphors are metaphors that relate abstract concepts such as ideas, feelings, and processes to physical entities. To put it simply, ontological metaphors consider abstract nouns to be concrete nouns. Ontological metaphors force us to make reasonable decisions based on prior experience.

Metaphors have several functions in song lyrics and each of these functions has an important role. There are five functions of metaphor, those are information function, expressive function, directive function, aesthetic function, and phatic function (Leech, 1981). Information function is a medium to convey information about the thoughts and feelings of the speaker to the listener. This function has characteristics to imply a message that the speaker wants to convey to the listener. Usually, this information function contains elements of ideas, anger, pleasure, worries, and others. The expressive function of metaphor involves conveying the songwriter's attitude or perspective regarding a particular subject, allowing the listener to discern not only what is being communicated but also how the speaker feels about it. This function adds nuance and depth to the lyrical content, enabling listeners to engage more intimately with the emotions conveyed in the music. The directive function is particularly significant in lyrics that seek to influence or persuade the listener, often through imperatives or suggestions embedded within metaphorical language. For instance, songs that encourage resilience or warn against harmful behaviors often employ metaphors to convey these messages more powerfully. The aesthetic function of metaphor focuses on the artistic quality of the lyrics, where metaphorical language enhances the poetic or musical value of the song. In this context, metaphors contribute to the beauty, rhythm, and imagery of the lyrics, making the song more memorable and impactful. Lastly, the phatic function emphasizes the social aspect of communication, where metaphors help maintain the listener's attention and keep the lyrical narrative flowing smoothly.

METHOD

In preparing research, the method is the most important component to be able to present concrete data. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative approach is a descriptive research method, that uses analysis, refers to data, utilizes existing theories as supporting material, and produces a theory. The meaning of descriptive qualitative method is an analysis technique that describes data in detail that has been collected to get a general conclusion (Sugiono, 2017). The instrument used in this research is taking notes and observation. The researcher itself classifies the metaphors found in the song lyrics of Billie Eilish's song. The researcher follows some steps in collecting data.

The research process was carried out using observation and note-taking as the primary instruments. The researcher assumes an active role in identifying and categorizing metaphors present in Billie Eilish's song lyrics. The research follows several systematic steps in the data collection process. First, the researcher conducted an initial observation by reading and listening to the song lyrics from Billie Eilish's album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* through the website Genius (<https://genius.com/>). This platform provided access to the full lyrics, allowing for a thorough review.

In the second step, the researcher identified specific lyrics that contain metaphorical expressions. This phase involved closely examining the lyrics to distinguish lines where one concept is figuratively expressed through another, thereby pinpointing metaphors. The third step employed a note-taking technique to systematically record all identified metaphors. This method ensured that no relevant data was overlooked and allowed the researcher to organize the data for further analysis.

Finally, the collected metaphors were classified based on their types and functions according to the theoretical frameworks established by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Leech (1981). The

categorization involved determining whether the metaphors were structural, orientational, or ontological and identifying their communicative functions, such as informational, expressive, directive, aesthetic, or phatic. This classification provided insights into how metaphors are used in Eilish's lyrics and their impact on the listener's interpretation. The systematic approach adopted in this study ensures that the analysis is both comprehensive and precise, allowing for meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Types and Functions of Metaphors in Billie Eilish's Album "When We All Fall Asleep Where Do We Go"

Table 1.
Types and Functions of Metaphor

No	Track	Lyric	Types of Metaphor	Function of Metaphor
1	Bad Guy	I'll be your animal (S 3, L 4)	Ontological	Expressive
2	Xanny	Don't give me a xanny now or ever (S 2, L 6)	Ontological	Directive
3	You Should See Me in a Crown	Your silence is my favorite sound (S 2, L 2)	Structural	Informative
4	All The Good Girls Go to Hell	My Lucifer is lonely (S 1, L 1)	Ontological	Aesthetic
5	Wish You Were Gay	To spare my pride, to give your lack of interest an explanation (S 5, L 1 & 2)	Structural	Expressive
6	When The Party is Over	Quiet when I'm comin' home and I'm on my own (S 2, L 1)	Orientalational	Descriptive
7	8	I did the best I could, not thinking you would have left me gladly (S 5, L 3 & 4)	Structural	Expressive
8	My Strange Addiction	You are my strange addiction, my doctors can't explain my symptoms or my pain. (S 4, L 2 & 3)	Ontological	Phatic
9	Bury a Friend	Bury a friend, and try to wake up. (S 3 L 2)	Structural	Informative
10	Illomilo	I should know, but it's cold, and I don't wanna be lonely, so show me the way home. (S 2, L 1,2 & 3)	Orientalational	Expressive
11	Listen Before I Go	Sorry, can't save me now, sorry, I don't know how, sorry, there's no way out (sorry) but down, mm down. (S 3, L 1,2,3 & 4)	Structural	Phatic
12	I Love You	Maybe won't you take it back, say you were tryna make me laugh, and nothing has to change today (S 2, L 1,2, & 3)	Ontological	Expressive

Table 2.
Percentage of Types and Functions

No	Types of Metaphor	Data	Percentage
1	Structural	10	41,6%
2	Ontological	8	33,4%
3	Orientalational	6	25%

Total		24	100%
No	Function of Metaphor	Data	Percentage
1	Expressive	11	45,8%
2	Informative	4	16,7%
3	Descriptive	3	12,5%
4	Aesthetic	3	12,5%
5	Phatic	2	8,3%
6	Directive	1	4,2%
Total		24	100%

According to the table above, there are 24 metaphors found for Billie Eilish's songs with 41,6% for structural type, 33,4% for ontological type, and 25% for Orientational type. While the function contained on the album, there are 45,8% for the Expressive function, 16,7% for the Informative function, 12,5% for the Directive function, 12,5% for the Aesthetic function, 8,3% for the Phatic function, and 4,2% for Descriptive function.

Therefore the most common type based on the data above is the Structural type, which shows that Eilish has complex and deep lyrics to arrange the meaning and nuances. It can also indicate that Eilish has good creativity to create the desired effect. Meanwhile, the most common function found on the album is the Expressive function. This is related to the intention of Billie Eilish on the album that she wanted to express her feelings, background experiences, and environmental phenomena through the song lyrics.

DISCUSSION

The data for this study were collected from the transcription of Billie Eilish's song lyrics in the album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* The analysis identified 12 metaphorical expressions, which were categorized based on their types and functions. The researcher focused on sentences containing metaphors, using symbols S (Stanza) and L (Line) to pinpoint their locations. To accurately categorize these metaphors, each was carefully analyzed to determine its underlying conceptual structure and communicative purpose. The analysis involved breaking down each metaphor to understand why it fits within a specific category, such as structural, orientational, or ontological, and assessing its role within the song, whether it conveys information, expresses emotion, gives direction, or enhances aesthetics. The following section provides detailed descriptions of two examples from each metaphor category, explaining their unique characteristics and how they contribute to the overall meaning and artistic expression of the lyrics.

Types of Metaphor

Ontological Metaphors

Data 1 : *"I'll be your animal"*

Track : Bad Guy (S 3, L 4)

This metaphor explains a human taking on the qualities of an animal. It embodies the concept of someone becoming a creature, indicating a transformation in behavior or identity. This metaphor conveys deep emotions and the willingness to adopt a primal or instinctual role for the sake of another person, highlighting a significant personal change or sacrifice.

Data 2 : *"Don't give me a xanny now or ever"*

Track : Xanny (S 2, L 6)

The term "xanny" refers to one of the drugs called Xanax. It is used to represent not just the drug itself but the entire experience or state of mind associated with it. This metaphor serves to instruct or

request, asking the listener to refrain from offering the drug, emphasizing the speaker's desire to stay away from that influence or state.

Structural Metaphors

Data 3 : *"Your silence is my favorite sound"*
Track : You Should See Me in a Crown (S 2, L 2)

This metaphor structures the concept of silence as a form of sound, and not just any sound, but the speaker's favorite. It juxtaposes silence with sound to convey preference and emotional resonance. This metaphor informs the listener about the speaker's state of mind and relationship dynamics, emphasizing how the absence of communication can be more meaningful or comforting than words.

Data 4 : *"To spare my pride, to give your lack of interest an explanation"*
Track : Wish You Were Gay (S 5, L 1 & 2)

The phrase "spare my pride" structures the abstract concept of pride as something that can be spared or saved, making it more tangible. This metaphor expresses the speaker's internal struggle and emotional need to rationalize rejection, providing insight into their feelings and coping mechanisms.

Oriental Metaphors

Data 5 : *"Quiet when I'm comin' home and I'm on my own"*
Track : When The Party is Over (S 5, L 1 & 2)

This metaphor relates to spatial orientation, with "coming home" indicating a return to a personal, familiar space, and "on my own" emphasizing a state of solitude. This metaphor paints a picture of the speaker's physical and emotional environment, describing the solitude and quietness experienced when returning home alone.

Data 6 : *"I should know, but it's cold, and I don't wanna be lonely, so show me the way home"*
Track : Ilomilo (S 2, L 1, 2 & 3)

The phrase "show me the way home" uses spatial orientation to express a desire for guidance and return to a place of comfort and security. This metaphor conveys the speaker's longing for direction and warmth, both literally and figuratively, expressing feelings of vulnerability and the need for companionship.

Function of Metaphor

Expressive Metaphor

Data 1 : *"I'll be your animal"*
Track : Bad Guy (S 3, L 4)

This metaphor expresses strong personal emotions and states of being. The speaker associates themselves with an "animal," which suggests a raw, instinctual, and perhaps uncontrolled aspect of their nature, reflecting a deeper, more primal emotion or behavior.

Data 2 : *"To spare my pride, to give your lack of interest an explanation"*
Track : Wish You Were Gay (S 5, L 1 & 2)

The line above conveys the speaker's feelings about their unreciprocated love and the emotional turmoil it causes. The phrase "to spare my pride" indicates an attempt to protect oneself emotionally, while "to give your lack of interest an explanation" suggests a need to rationalize or make sense of the rejection.

Informative

- Data 3 : "Your silence is my favorite sound"
Track : You Should See Me in a Crown (S 2, L 2)

This lyric provides information about the speaker's perspective and emotional state. The "silence" and "favorite sound" inform the listener about the speaker's complex feelings toward silence and possibly the person they are addressing.

- Data 4 : "I should know, but it's cold, and I don't wanna be lonely, so show me the way home"
Track : Ilomilo (S 2, L 1, 2 & 3)

This line describes the speaker's feelings of confusion, loneliness, and the need for guidance. The coldness symbolizes emotional isolation, and "show me the way home" conveys a desire for comfort and belonging.

Directive

- Data 5 : "Don't give me a xanny now or ever"
Track : Xanny (S 2, L 6)

This metaphor serves to advise or instructing the listener. The speaker clearly states a preference and boundary regarding the use of "xanny" (slang for Xanax, a medication used to treat anxiety), emphasizing a rejection of the drug and the lifestyle it represents.

Aesthetic

- Data 6 : "My Lucifer is lonely"
Track : All The Good Girls Go To Hell (S 1, L 1)

This metaphor is aesthetic because it creates a vivid and imaginative image. It combines the concept of "Lucifer" (a symbol of rebellion or evil) with the emotion of loneliness, evoking a striking and thought-provoking visual that enhances the artistic quality of the song.

Phatic

- Data 6 : "You are my strange addiction, my doctors can't explain my symptoms or my pain."
Track : Strange Addiction (S 4, L 2 & 3)

The lyrics serve a phatic function by establishing a connection with the listener. The phrase "strange addiction" creates a conversational tone, sharing the speaker's personal experience in a way that invites empathy and understanding from the audience.

- Data 6 : "Sorry, can't save me now, sorry, I don't know how, sorry, there's no way out (sorry) but down, mm down."
Track : I Love You (S 3, L 1,2,3 & 4)

The line emphasizes communication and emotional expression. The repeated “sorry” highlights the speaker's attempt to convey regret and helplessness, fostering a sense of shared emotional experience with the listener.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusions of the study should be presented in a short Conclusions section. Do not repeat earlier sections. Billie Eilish's album "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" is filled with metaphors, which are comparisons that make her lyrics more interesting. These metaphors serve different purposes in her songs. Some express her feelings, like when she says *"I'm only good at being bad."* Others provide information or describe situations, such as *"I can't afford to love someone who isn't dying by mistake in Silver Lake."* Additionally, Eilish's metaphors instruct listeners, create emotional connections, and add a cool vibe to her music, like in Ls such as *"Don't give me a xanny now or ever"* and *"Bite my glass, set myself on fire."*

The metaphors in Billie Eilish's songs play various roles, from expressing her emotions to guiding listeners. These comparisons help her communicate complex ideas in a creative and engaging way. Whether she's expressing her feelings, giving instructions, or creating an aesthetic vibe, Eilish's use of metaphors adds depth and richness to her music, inviting listeners to connect with her on a deeper level.

In addition to expressing personal emotions, Eilish uses metaphors to communicate deeper meanings about relationships and societal issues. For example, in *"I can't afford to love someone who isn't dying by mistake in Silver Lake,"* the metaphor portrays the exhaustion and emotional strain of engaging in toxic or shallow connections. The imagery of *"dying by mistake in Silver Lake"* is surreal yet poignant, symbolizing the consequences of investing in relationships that are ultimately harmful. This metaphor not only enriches the narrative but also adds a layer of depth to Eilish's commentary on human connections.

Eilish's metaphors also engage listeners by addressing broader cultural critiques. The line *"Don't give me a xanny now or ever"* serves as a metaphor for rejecting societal pressures to numb emotions or escape reality through substance use. Here, Eilish critiques a culture that promotes detachment as a coping mechanism, reinforcing the importance of staying grounded and authentic. The metaphor of *"xanny"* as a symbol for avoidance and emotional suppression resonates with many listeners, making the song both personal and socially relevant.

Moreover, Eilish uses metaphors to evoke powerful imagery that enhances the album's atmospheric quality. In lines like *"Bite my glass, set myself on fire,"* the metaphors convey intense emotions such as self-destruction and turmoil. These images are vivid and almost surreal, creating a sensory experience that amplifies the song's emotional impact. The metaphors in these lyrics aren't just figurative language; they contribute to the overall aesthetic of the album, blending sound and imagery into a cohesive artistic expression.

In conclusion, the metaphors in *"When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?"* are essential to Billie Eilish's lyrical and musical approach. By skillfully combining metaphor with narrative, she creates songs that explore both personal and societal issues while maintaining a distinctive, haunting atmosphere. Her metaphors serve as more than just creative expressions—they are key to the album's storytelling, allowing listeners to engage with the music on multiple levels and appreciate the depth of her artistic vision.

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