

METAPHORS IN SELENA GOMEZ'S SONG *KILL 'EM WITH KINDNESS*: A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Feisy Mokoagouw¹, Nitha V. F. Liando², Tirza A. Kumayas³

English Education Department, Faculty of Language and Arts,
Universitas Negeri Manado, Tondano, Indonesia

Email: feymokoagouw98@gmail.com

Abstract : This research is descriptive qualitative research that analyzes the metaphors in the song lyric *Kill 'Em With Kindness* by Selena Gomez. The purposes of the study are to identify the types of metaphors and to find the theme of the lyrics in the song *Kill 'Em With Kindness*. The metaphor theory is used to categorize metaphorical expressions into several types. The findings show that there are 3 metaphorical expressions with 9 metaphors found within Gomez's song. These metaphors are categorized into three types of metaphors: 3 nominal metaphors, 4 predicative metaphors, and 2 sentential metaphors. Predicative metaphors are the most common of the three types of metaphors. The song's theme is revealed by elaborating on the metaphorical meanings and shared concepts. From the shared concepts in some metaphorical expressions such as [+violence], [+painful], [+against], [-worthy], [+point], [+destroyed], [+quarrel], [+disgrace], [+anger] the probable theme that can be drawn is "nothing is better than kindness". The theme is derived from an understanding of the song's overall plot as depicted by the lyrics. Overall, the lyrics depict a situation of how humans more concerned about commenting on other's importance with cruelty, violence and bullying while the best way to treat people is through kindness. Finally, all the negativities are not ensured all the piece, just from kindness all the things will come good and peace itself.

Keywords : *Song Lyrics, Metaphorical Expressions, Semantic Analysis, Selena Gomez*

INTRODUCTION

Songs' messages are most effectively communicated to listeners through their lyrics, which act as a vehicle for expressing feelings, ideas, and experiences. According to Maukar (2011:3), they embody the essence of human expression and are frequently entwined with different aspects of daily life. Songs with deep lyrics have the ability to connect with listeners and arouse a variety of feelings. Young people in Indonesia have recently become interested in the songs by international performers that are becoming increasingly famous. Selena Gomez's *Kill 'em with Kindness* stands out among these tracks for its considerable appeal. American singer, actress, and producer Selena Marie Gomez inspired this song from her experiences with fat-shaming by media outlets and

internet users. The authors of this song realize the significance of going deeper into its meaning to help listeners understand the metaphorical depth of the song.

Comparing one thought to another is a key component of metaphor, a potent figure of speech (Sudarsono, *et al.*, 2018; Sumigar, *et al.*, 2021). According to Ortony's (1993) theory, there are three primary categories of metaphors: nominal, predicative, and sentential. A noun phrase is used in a nominal metaphor, but a verb, verb phrase, or predicate adjective is used in a predicative metaphor to communicate the metaphorical referent. Sentential metaphor, however, implies that the reference is not present in the text because the referent is not expressly preserved in the metaphor. These various metaphors

offer various means of meaningful communication and enliven the language.

This study enriches the study of meaning in the linguistic field because this study is about meanings and the messages of the song delivered through the metaphorical expressions are analyzed and discovered to attain the theme of the song. The theme does not convey the story's message; rather, it elucidates its meaning because the theme is "a conception of human experience suggested by concrete details" (Barnet *et al.*, 2008). The significance of the metaphorical language employed in song lyrics aids our understanding of the song's plot. The entire meaning of the song may be comprehended by comprehending the meaning of the metaphorical language employed. The theme may be sketched when the meaning of the music becomes clear. Metaphor is the figurative language utilized in this study.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a descriptive design using a qualitative research so that the data generated are in the form of words and sentences. Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), takes an interpretive and naturalistic approach: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". The object of this research is song lyric. The main focus of this study is on the usage of metaphors in song lyrics and how they contribute to the overall theme of the song. The writers used a song by Selena Gomez, entitled *Kill 'Em With Kindness*.

In this study, a semantic approach was chosen to uncover the subject using metaphorical expressions. The writers were able to discern between the literal and transferred meanings of the material using a semantic approach. The writers then utilized the interpretation of the

song's meaning to determine the song's theme. In collecting the data, the writers started by downloading the song and its lyrics. After that, the writers listened to the song while reading the lyrics and then identified and mark each lyric that contain metaphors. The writers used a data analysis technique based on Miles and Huberman's theory. There are three steps used; they are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

1. Data Reduction. Data from field notes or transcriptions must be chosen, concentrated, reduced, abstracted, and transformed. Using metaphor theory, the metaphorical utterances are gathered and categorized into three different categories (nominal metaphor, predicative metaphor, and sentential metaphor).
2. Data Display. The term "data display" describes the systematic presentation of information that makes it easier to make decisions and take action. In order to infer both literal and metaphorical interpretations, it entails developing metaphorical terms using a semantic approach. Dictionary use is used to determine literal meanings, while contextual understanding and cognitive comprehension are used to interpret metaphorical meanings.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification. In order to improve comprehension of the song's concept, data drawing and verification include weaving the discovered metaphorical expressions into a narrative. By evaluating the semantic qualities resulting from the literal word and understanding the whole meaning of the story in the song, shared themes are located, and the theme is then concluded.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data collection, the data reduction is carried out. The result is described in the following table.

Table 1. Metaphorical Expressions in Selena Gomez’s *Kill ‘em with Kindness* and its Type.

No	Metaphorical Expressions	Types of metaphor
1.	“The world can be a <i>nasty</i> place”	Predicative
2.	“We don’t have to fall from grace”	Sentential
3.	“Put down the <i>weapons</i> you fight with”	Nominal
4.	“ <i>Kill ‘em with Kindness</i> ”	Predicative
5.	“Everyday a small piece of you <i>dies</i> ”	Predicative
6.	“Your lies are <i>bullets</i> ”	Nominal
7.	“Your mouth’s a <i>gun</i> ”	Nominal
8.	“No war and anger was ever won”	Predicative
9.	“Put out the fire before igniting”	Sentential

The obtained data is categorized based on the types of metaphor: Nominal, Sentential, and Predicative.

Nominal Metaphor

A noun phrase used metaphorically to express the referent is known as a nominal metaphor (Oo & Thida, 2020). It entails changing a word or phrase to another noun with a metaphorical connotation. This kind of metaphor enables comparison between two ideas or concepts while emphasizing a connection or similarity between them (Jensen, *et al.*, 2021).

Nominal metaphor allows for the representation of abstract or intangible ideas through physical and palpable nouns, resulting in vivid and emotive descriptions (Freeman, 2020). By bringing a new perspective and enhancing the range of expression, it enriches and deepens language. Literature, poetry, and daily language all contain nominal metaphors that heighten the impact and originality of the content being communicated. In the song *Kill ‘em with Kindness*, there are 3 nominal metaphors:

Put down the weapons you fight with

The spelling of weapons could be read as /'wepən/ and pronounced /'wepən/Which then the spelling can be transmitted into weapons. “OALD defines weapons as a plural which means an object such as a knife, gun, bomb, etc. that is used for fighting or attacking somebody, something such as knowledge, words, actions, etc. That can be used to attack or fight against somebody/something and in idioms it could be a double-edged/two-edged sword/weapon which means that to be something that has both advantages and disadvantages.”

The meaning of the sentence, especially the word weapons, refers to all ways that are not good, evil and anarchic that injure the goodness itself to every human being. Weapons do not only refer to tools or weapons used by soldiers when carrying out war or defending a truth, but negatively this can be a drawbacks or drawbacks for everyone who comes to seek interests and destroy the harmony of a person, group of people or a community or country. In addition, as the acknowledgement of its lyric in metaphorical expression, weapons stand for a ‘violence’ which is the activity of injured somebody/groups in the song. Since the concept of weapons refers to the topic of [+violence] which is explained that these weapons are not a proper/certain solution to creating a peace or solidarity.

Your lies are bullets

The spelling of bullets could be read as bul·let and pronounced /'bʊlɪt/ Which then the spelling can be transmitted into bullets. OALD defines weapons as a a small metal object that is fired from a gun, in idiom means bite the bullet which is to start to deal with an unpleasant or difficult situation which cannot be avoided.

The fourth stanza states "Your lie is a bullet." This line means that when someone lies, it hurts more than you can imagine. This phenomenon can be

generalized in various conditions and situations as well as different contexts according to human interpretation. Lies that exist are the same as bullets as fire bullets in a weapon, before they seem ordinary and small, but when they have passed the heat of fire (known to many people) then many people will be harmed, hurt and even experience deep disappointment just because of a lie that is done without thinking other people's hearts.

A metaphorical expression, bullet means 'painful', i.e. consciously or unconsciously injuring and hurting people's hearts because of lies. Because the concept of these bullets refers to the topic [+painful] which explains that the impact of lying that occurs is pain, disappointment and sadness.

Your mouth's a gun

The spelling of gun could be read as /gʌn/ and pronounced /gʌn/ Which then the spelling can be transmitted into gun. "OALD defines gun as a weapon that is used for firing bullets or shells, a tool that uses pressure to send out a substance or an object, the signal to begin a race, that is made by firing a special gun, called a starting pistol, into the air or a person who is paid to shoot somebody."

The fourth line "Your mouth's a gun". The gun means the power that strikes back at the person who issued the bullet, the bullet in this lyric has a meaning as a decision that is detrimental not only to others who feel the loss but are felt by the impact themselves. A metaphorical expression, gun means 'problem', clearly gives the meaning that gun is a problem that is how the problem arises from the mouth of someone who makes a wrong decision. Therefore, the concept of this gun refers to the topic [+against] which explains that the source of problem come from your mouth.

Predicative Metaphor

A predicative metaphor is a sort of metaphor in which a predicative phrase, such as a verb, verb phrase, or predicate adjective, expresses the referent (Carston & Yan, 2023). Predicative metaphor, as opposed to nominal metaphor, which substitutes nouns, emphasizes the characteristics, activities, or qualities of the subject. By employing figurative language to describe or ascribe traits to the subject, it gives language depth and subtlety (Bastien, 2022).

Predicative metaphor aids in making abstract thoughts or feelings more concrete and approachable through the use of colorful and inventive language (Brannon, 2022). Speakers and authors can generate strong imagery, stimulate the senses, and leave a lasting impression on the audience by using this kind of metaphor. Predicative metaphors are used to enliven language and promote a deeper comprehension of difficult ideas in a variety of literary, poetic, rhetorical, and daily contexts (Kalck, 2021). In the song *Kill 'em with Kindness*, there are 4 predicative metaphors:

The world can be a nasty place

The spelling of nasty could be read as nas·ty and pronounced /'næsti/ Which then the spelling can be transmitted into nasty. OALD defines nasty as a very bad or unpleasant, unkind; unpleasant, dangerous or serious and to start making threats or become violent. The line "The world can be a nasty place", nasty gives the meaning that the world or the place that humans live in can become a dirty and disgusting place, a place that has many dark sides, injustice, enlightenment and something that happens that harms many parties. A metaphorical expression, nasty means 'unworthy', clearly gives the meaning that nasty is a condition when a place contains many criminals things and giving drawback to everyone who lived in that place. Thus, the concept of this unworthy refers to the topic [-worthy] which

explains that the bad or unpleasant condition in a place.

Kill 'em with kindness

The spelling of kill could be read as kill1 and pronounced /kɪl/ which then the spelling can be transmitted into kill. OALD defines kill as an act to make somebody/something die, kill something to destroy something or make it less good; to make something stop, to switch off a light or engine; to stop a computer program or process or it kills somebody to do something.

The line “Kill ‘em with kindness” means that to solve a crime or achieve a goal do it with kindness with wisdom, it is better to educate, direct and advise everyone to get a second chance to correct their mistakes, because evil will not heal a person's heart, even the opposite. A metaphorical expression, kill means ‘point’, clearly gives the meaning that point is an act to guide everyone with wisdom and make them more valuable than ever. So, the concept of this point refers to the topic [+point] which explains that the act to direct everyone into a good or peace.

Every day a small peace of you dies

The spelling of die could be read as die1 and pronounced /daɪ/ which then the spelling can be transmitted into die. OALD defines dies as the situation to stop living, to stop existing; to disappear, to stop working or if you think something is to die for, you really want it, and would do anything to get it.

The line “Every day a small peace you dies” means Meaning that every day if we continue to maintain lies or negative things then slowly the peace within us will die one by one, joy will be replaced with sorrow, blessings will be replaced with regret and good will be replaced with evil. A metaphorical expression, kill means ‘destroyed’, clearly gives the meaning that destroyed is destroyed means that a small speck of evil that we make will destroy the

various hopes of good that we have made. So, the concept of this destroyed refers to the topic [+destroyed] which explains that the condition of something broken and never shown again.

No war and anger was ever won

The spelling of war could be read as war and pronounced /wɔːr/ which then the spelling can be transmitted into war. “OALD defines war as a situation in which two or more countries or groups of people fight against each other over a period of time, a situation in which there is aggressive competition between groups, companies, countries, etc and a fight or an effort over a long period of time to get rid of or stop something unpleasant.”

The line “No war and anger was ever won” means war will not give good to anyone, war will never win for everything that happens, war only gives badness, damage rather than goodness itself which should be prioritized as a way to unite different things and direct the wrong things. A metaphorical expression, war means ‘quarrel’, clearly gives the meaning that quarrels will never win to get the best solution. Thus, the concept of this quarrel refers to the topic [+quarrel] which explains that means a situation of quarrels, disputes that will never end.

Sentential Metaphor

Sentential metaphor is a sort of metaphor that encompasses the complete sentence or expression rather than just a few words or phrases (Horvat, *et al.*, 2021). Sentential metaphor is an expression when the entire sentence serves as a metaphor and the literal meaning is not maintained (Ifantidou & Hatzidaki, 2019). Instead, the context and interpretation of the sentence as a whole determine the metaphorical meaning. Sentential metaphors sometimes rely on the use of symbolic language, analogy, or figurative language to communicate abstract ideas or conjure up vivid imagery (Jiang & Wei, 2020).

Speakers and writers can elicit deeper levels of interpretation from their audiences by playing with a sentence's structure, grammar, or semantics. Sentential metaphors are frequently used in literature, poetry, and rhetoric because they promote original thought and enrich the language by eluding literal interpretations of words and phrases (Ismail, 2021). Sentential metaphors are a potent tool that writers can employ to arouse strong feelings, subvert preconceived notions, and encourage introspection. In the song *Kill 'em with Kindness*, there are 2 sentential metaphors:

See, we don't have to fall from grace

The spelling of fall could be read as fall and pronounced /fɔ:l/ which then the spelling can be transmitted into fall. "OALD defines fall as an act to drop down from a higher level to a lower level, to suddenly stop standing, to decrease in amount, number or strength, to pass into a particular state; to begin to be something."

The line "See, we don't have to fall from grace" means humans don't have to be dirty to fight for something, don't have to sacrifice the basic things in our lives, only with kindness and peace can we stand up and still get the gifts and blessings given from the almighty. A metaphorical expression, war means 'disgrace', clearly gives the meaning that Humans don't need to be despicable, there are still many better things to fight for than these negative things. Thus, the concept of this disgrace refers to the topic [+disgrace] which explains that means a situation full of blasphemy and bring down various parties in the world.

Put out fire before igniting

The spelling of fire could be read as /'fɪ(ə)r/ and pronounced /'faɪər/ which then the spelling can be transmitted into fire. "OALD defines fire as the flames, light and heat, and often smoke, that are produced when something burns, flames that are out of control and destroy

buildings, trees, etc or a pile of burning fuel, such as wood or coal, used for cooking food or heating a room and a piece of equipment for heating a room."

The line "Put our fire before igniting" means the fire that exists is revenge, envy and anxiety that will trigger a war or quarrel, the fire symbolizes the seeds of evil which if not overcome will become a big problem. A metaphorical expression, war means 'anger', clearly gives the meaning that emotional anger which if not overcome it will be the beginning of a fight or dispute. Thus, the concept of this anger refers to the topic [+anger] which explains that means a situation when anger fills everyone's heart and must be quelled or given a solution before it escalates and results in something fatal.

Data Drawing and Verification

The metaphorical expressions found throughout the song are explored in this section, along with their metaphorical meaning and shared concepts, in order to uncover the song's whole meaning. The theme can be drawn once the song's entire meaning is known. There are nine metaphorical expressions in the song, according to the discussion from before. Three categories of metaphorical expressions are used to classify these expressions. Three nominal metaphors, four predicative metaphors, and two sentential metaphors are the results. Predictive metaphor has the most metaphors, with nine in total.

In nominal metaphors, the noun serves as the major focus, whereas in predicative metaphors, the verb serves as the main focus. Nouns and verbs are two fundamental components needed when structuring any form of phrase. Verbs serve as the action or predicate that connects the nouns together to produce a sentence, while nouns often serve as the subject or entity. "The use of nouns makes texts abstract as they propose no time description" (Hellspong & Ledin,1997),

and “verbs can make a text easier to read and more interesting because of the dynamic and idea-flows the verbs give to the text” (Koskela, 1998). The song's metaphors indicate that verbs are used more frequently than nouns.

From the discussion, it can be seen that the story depicted in the songs showing an true fact from people's view. Where there is a best way to treat people with good not with evil or crime, giving a moral message to everyone that hate speech is not the best way to give positive suggestions but the opposite.

CONCLUSION

There are 3 metaphors in this research found by the writers within Selena Gomez's song; namely nominal, predicative and sentential metaphor. There are 3 nominal metaphors, 4 predicative metaphors and 2 sentential metaphors, in which from the total of 9 makes predicative metaphor to be the most dominant one. The song's theme is revealed through the elaboration of shared concepts and metaphorical meanings. From the shared concepts in some metaphorical expressions such as [+violence], [+painful], [+against], [-worthy], [+point], [+destroyed], [+quarrel], [+disgrace], [+anger] the probable theme that can be drawn is “nothing is better than kindness”. The theme is created by grasping the song's plot as presented in the song's lyrics. Overall, the lyrics depict a situation of how humans more concerned in commenting other's importance with cruelty, violence and bullying while the best way to treat people is through kindness. Finally, all the negativities are not ensured all the piece, just from kindness all the things will come good and peace itself.

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