

## METAPHORS IN WHITNEY HOUSTON'S SELECTED SONG LYRICS

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the metaphors in Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics. There are three selected songs entitled Greatest Love of All, I Will Always Love You, and I Have Nothing. The Greatest Love of All is a mashup single, while the other two are produced for The Bodyguards album. The songs chosen are Whitney Houston's top chart songs on the Billboard Top 100. The research question is "What types of metaphors are found in Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics?" This study employed content analysis or document analysis. There were two sources used in this study to find out the types of metaphors in Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics. The primary object is three selected Whitney Houston's song lyrics. The secondary objects are the theories and information about metaphors and the structure of song lyrics. Theories used are from Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Gioia & Kennedy (1999). In addition, the data collected in this study was validated by the experts. The results show that there are three types of metaphors used in Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics. The metaphors were conventional metaphors, mixed metaphors, and new metaphors. Conventional and mixed metaphors were found in all selected song lyrics. They were respectively 13 conventional and 9 mixed metaphors found in the selected song lyrics. On the other hand, the new metaphor was not found in I Will Always Love You song lyrics.

**Keywords:** metaphors, Whitney Houston, song lyrics

### **Introduction**

Music is a part of our daily life. Music can be categorized into many genres such as classic, pop, jazz, country and western, rock-and-roll, and rock. Rublowsky (1967) states that the purpose of popular music is not to educate or influence. It is to offer a broad range of expression with something to please everyone. Popular music gives expression to small joys and sorrows that our lives are mostly made of (p. 12). In other words, popular music is an art that grasps and pictures the moment. It can be considered that pop is the music that is popular among people of all ages. Whitney Houston is chosen by the researcher since she is a pop music singer and her songs were famous among different ages including teenagers. Popular music helps teenagers learn English. It is used since teenagers are likely to be attracted by beautiful and poetic lyrics which are easy to be recited and remembered (Shen, 2009). Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics meet the beauty and poetic aspects which are very attractive for the listeners. Winning over 400 awards including six Grammys, two Emmys, 30 Billboard Music Awards, and 22 American Music Awards makes Whitney Houston the most awarded female musician of all time

(Editors, 2018). It shows that Whitney Houston is popular among the people in the world. Greatest Love of All, I Will Always Love You, and I Have Nothing, are chosen by the researcher to be the selected songs. Greatest Love of All was the single released on March 18th, 1986. I Will Always Love You was released on November 3rd, 1992 for The Bodyguard: Original Soundtrack Album movie. Then I Have Nothing single was also released for The Bodyguard: Original Soundtrack Album on February 20th, 1993. These three selected songs got on the top 100 Billboard in the year when they were released (Team, 2018). Poetic language is used by the songs' authors to convey their messages and meanings not only in linguistics but also in literary works (Jati, 2018). The use of this language will help the listeners or readers to get the sense of imagination that the authors want to express. Metaphor, as one of the figurative languages, was chosen by the researcher to be analyzed in the three Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics. The previous study which talks about metaphor is seen on Jati (2018) in the research entitled An Analysis of metaphors found in Bring Me the Horizon's selected song lyrics. A similar study also conducted in A Study of Figurative Language in The Script's Album No Sound Without Silence (Harmastuty, 2016).

### ***Types of metaphor***

Metaphor is a part of linguistics which is used as a tool to see something from other perspectives. Lakoff and Johnson state that metaphor is a device of the poetic imagination and a matter of extraordinary than ordinary language. Lakoff and Johnson later explained that metaphor is a matter of how the people perceive, think, and do something rather than literally understand the meaning of something. Metaphor is used not only in the literature works but also in the daily conversation (Jati, 2018). It is used by people consciously and unconsciously since it is pervasive in everyday life. The metaphor could be easily understood when knowing and understanding the concept of the metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson called metaphor as metaphorical concept (1980).

There are three main types of metaphor according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980). They are conventional metaphor, mixed metaphor, and new metaphor. Conventional metaphor is the type of metaphor that can be found in everyday language or in daily conversation because the conceptual system is already structured. To understand the concept, there should be an understanding of the concept first. The way of understanding the concept that is wanted to be delivered can be classified into three deeper ways: ontological, oriental and structural.

As stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), mixed metaphors are metaphors that occur in the same utterance, same sentence, and expressing the same concept. Based on the definition, Lakoff and Johnson found out that there is more than one kind of metaphor found in mixed metaphors. There is always a possibility where mixed metaphors create a conflict of concepts. Then, Lakoff and Johnson divide mixed metaphors into impermissible mixed metaphors and permissible mixed metaphors (p. 93).

New metaphor is a kind of metaphor that requires the creativity of a person's personal experience in building the concept of metaphor itself. Lakoff and Johnson state that new metaphor is not yet existed in the conceptual system of culture and everyday language (p. 139).

### ***Structure of song lyrics***

Song lyrics are used to express systems of thought statements of moral, states of mind, deeply felt emotion, and ethical or philosophical values (Myers & Simms, 1989). It can be derived from that statement that song lyrics are used to deliver something important to the listeners. The authors have purposes in making the song lyrics. They wanted to deliver a message to the audience. In delivering the messages, there are several structures of song lyrics that are usually used by authors. Kennedy and Gioia (1999) categorized the song lyrics into five structures (p. 69). They are Intro, Verse, Pre-chorus, Chorus, and Bridge.

The intro can be found in the beginning of the song. The function of the intro is to begin the song. Usually, intro contains just music or instrument. Some authors did not write the intro, so the songs just directly started with the verse.

A verse is a part where the lyrics start. It can be more than one verse in a song. It is located right after intro and usually after the first chorus. The function of verse itself is to catch the attention of the listener or the audience at the first hit. Pre-chorus is an optional part of song lyrics. It is put right before the chorus. The authors of the song may not put this part if they think it is not really important. Adding the pre-chorus part would make the atmosphere of the song different. When this part is included in the song lyrics, the song will have longer song lyrics. Chorus is an important part of the song. It has the whole idea of the song that wanted to be delivered by the song authors. Since chorus is the main idea of the song, usually authors made several repetitions of lyrics to stress the important point that they wanted to deliver. The metaphors often appeared here. Bridge is used as the transition for chorus to another chorus. The position of the bridge is usually right after the second chorus. It can change the song's atmosphere. When the bridge is over, the authors usually put the chorus again as the climax. Some of the authors prefer to choose over tunes on the second chorus.

## **Method**

This study was qualitative research, which is used to understand the subject's attitudes, behaviors, values, system, perception, and motivation. Qualitative research relies on the text or image data and usually, it has unique steps in analyzing the data (Creswell, 2014). This study described and explained the conceptual metaphors found in Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics. The technique that was used in the study was content analysis or document analysis. There were three selected songs from Whitney Houston used in this study: Greatest Love of All, I Will Always Love You, and I Have Nothing. These three songs contained metaphor that will be used as the data. The type of data in this study was the expressions or utterance of metaphors found in each song lyric. The three selected song lyrics were the source of data. This study was conducted from September 2018 until December 2018 at the English Language Education Study Program.

### ***Types of metaphor in Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics***

There are three types of the metaphor found in Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics. The first is conventional metaphor, the second is mixed metaphor and the last is new metaphor. Figure 4.1 is the chart that explains the whole type of metaphors found in the three selected song lyrics namely Greatest Love of All, I Will Always Love You, and I Have Nothing. There are twenty-five metaphors found in these song lyrics. They consist of thirteen conventional metaphors, nine mixed metaphors, and three new metaphors respectively.

**Types of Metaphors Found in the Selected Song Lyrics**

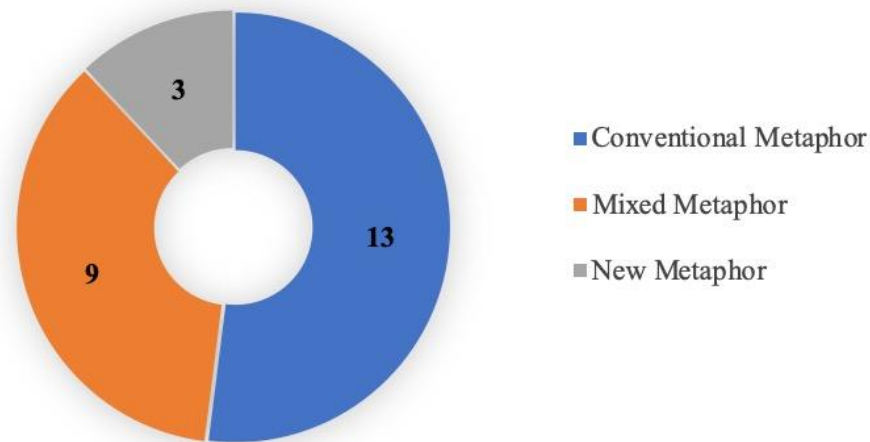


Figure 1. Types of Metaphors Found in the Selected Song Lyrics

***Conventional Metaphor***

Conventional metaphor is the type of metaphor that can be found in everyday language or in daily conversation because the conceptual system is already structured. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stated that to understand the concept, there should be an understanding of concept first. There are 13 conventional metaphors found on the three Whitney Houston’s selected song lyrics. In the Greatest Love of All song lyric, there are five conventional metaphors, then two conventional metaphors are found in I Will Always Love You, and the remaining six conventional metaphors are found in I Have Nothing song lyric. Table 4.1 is the list of conventional metaphors found in the selected song lyrics.

Table 1. List of Conventional Metaphor Found in The Song Lyrics

No.	Lyrics	Song
1.	<i>Give them a sense of pride</i>	Greatest Love of All
2.	Everybody <i>searching for a hero</i>	Greatest Love of All
3.	Never <i>found</i> anyone who fulfill my <i>needs</i>	Greatest Love of All
4.	Never to <i>walk</i> in anyone's <i>shadows</i>	Greatest Love of All
5.	I <i>found</i> the greatest <i>Love</i> of all <i>inside</i> of me	Greatest Love of All
6.	<i>Bittersweet memories</i> That is all I'm <i>taking</i> with me.	I Will Always Love You
7.	I hope <i>life treats</i> you kind	I Will Always Love You
8.	'Cause I'll never <i>change</i> All my <i>colors</i> for you	I Have Nothing
9.	I will <i>hold</i> it back again This <i>passion</i> inside	I Have Nothing
10.	Don't make me <i>close</i> one more <i>door</i>	I Have Nothing
11.	Don't <i>walk away</i> from me	I Have Nothing

12.	<i>You break down my walls</i>	I Have Nothing
13.	<i>Will a memory survive</i>	I Have Nothing

The first conventional metaphor that appears in Greatest Love of All song lyrics is found in the fourth line of the first verse. It is found in the line which sounds “Give them a sense of pride.” The terms give and pride here do not represent their literal meanings. The term pride is an abstract object, but it is viewed as a touchable or non-abstract object. The concept of pride here is viewed as the goal after someone gives the thing that is needed. The term pride here is used to state another concept. Hence, the concept of giving is viewed as an action to support or facilitate a person to get pride. In other words, the line “Give them a sense of pride” does not mean giving a thing called pride, but it is giving something that is represented by the term pride. It is classified as a conventional metaphor because the term pride is representing another concept as stated by Lakoff and Johnson. The similar concept also appears in the terms searching and hero found and needs, walk and shadows, as well as in found and inside which are found in this song lyric.

In the I Will Always Love You song lyric, the concept of memories is viewed as a thing that can be taken. The term taking shows the idea of bringing something with the person who carries the thing. In this line, the concept of memories is seen as a physical object which is taken or brought by someone. In other words, this line shares the idea of putting untouchable things into physical touchable things that can be felt by the sensory organ. Therefore, this line is classified into conventional metaphors because it fits the requirements to be labeled as conventional metaphors. This metaphor is found in the first line of the second verse. The line sounds “Bittersweet memories” followed by “That is all I'm taking with me.”

The next metaphor which is classified as conventional metaphor found in the line “I hope life treats you kind.” The term life and treats do not represent their literal meanings. The concept of life here is viewed as a person or a touchable object, not an abstract object. Life here is viewed as a person who can treat something. Therefore, this line shares the idea of representing an abstract object into a non-abstract object which can do an action. Similar to the above paragraph, it fits the requirements of conventional metaphor.

In I Have Nothing song lyric, the first conventional metaphor is found in the third line of the first verse. The line “Cause I'll never change” and followed by “All my colors for you.” The metaphor term that is found here is change and color. Both terms do not represent their literal meaning. The term colors here do not represent the object's property seen by the eye which is usually people called it red, green, blue, and so on. The concept of this term is viewed as something else which is the characteristics or personality of a person. When the term change is inserted here, the meaning becomes the action of making or becoming different in personality or characteristics of someone. This line is classified as a conventional metaphor because the terms used here are representing another concept. Another similar concept is found in the terms hold and passion, close and door, walk away and me, break down and walls, as well as memory and survive in this song lyric.

### ***Mixed Metaphor***

As stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), mixed metaphors are metaphors that occur in the same utterance, same sentence, and expressing the same concept. If both metaphors have a correlation, it can be classified into permissible metaphor.

On the other hand, when it has no correlation between the two metaphors but still expressing the same concept, it is classified into an impermissible metaphor. A total of nine mixed metaphors are found in these three Whitney Houston's selected song lyrics. There are two mixed metaphors found in Greatest Love of All song lyric, another two in I Will Always Love You song lyric, and the remaining five mixed metaphors found in I Have Nothing song lyric. The table below shows the detail about the mixed metaphor found in every selected song lyric.

Table 2. List of Mixed Metaphor Found in The Song Lyrics

No.	Lyrics	Song
1.	<i>Teach</i> them well and let them <i>lead</i> the way	Greatest Love of All
2.	Because the greatest <i>love</i> of all is <i>happening</i> to me	Greatest Love of All
3.	If I should <i>stay</i> I would only be in <i>your way</i>	I Will Always Love You
4.	I'll <i>think</i> of you every <i>step</i> of the way	I Will Always Love You
5.	I don't really need to <i>look</i> Very much <i>further</i>	I Have Nothing
6.	I don't want to have to <i>go</i> Where you don't <i>follow</i>	I Have Nothing
7.	Can't <i>run</i> from myself There's <i>nowhere</i> to hide	I Have Nothing
8.	<i>Stay</i> in my <i>arms</i> if you dare	I Have Nothing
9.	You <i>see</i> through Right to the <i>heart</i> of me	I Have Nothing

The first mixed metaphor found in this song lyric is “Teach them well and let them lead the way.” The words teach and lead do not represent their literal meanings. The term teach is viewed as giving instruction in a subject or skill. In the other hand, the term lead does not share the same concept as seen in the term teach. There is more than one metaphorical concept found in this line. The concept of teach and lead cause a conflict since they are not related. For that reason, this metaphor is classified as mixed metaphor, specifically impermissible mixed metaphor because both concepts do not have any correlation. This concept is also found in the terms love and happening in Greatest Love of All song lyrics. There are two mixed metaphors found in I Will Always Love You song lyric. The first mixed metaphor found in this song lyric is “If I should stay” followed by “I would only be on your way”. This line is located in line one of the first verse. The terms stay and your way simply do not represent their literal meanings. There is more than one metaphorical concept found in this line. The term stay shares the idea of not moving or remain in a specified state or position. While the term way does not share the same idea as in remain in a specified position. The term way shares the idea of the route or a track. Both terms, stay and your way, are classified as mixed metaphor, specifically impermissible mixed metaphor because the concepts of these two terms do not show any correlation with each other.

This situation also occurs on the second mixed metaphorical terms found in this song lyric. The terms think and step found in “I'll think of you every step of the way” line share the same idea with the terms stay and your way which are already explained previously. The terms found in these two different lines do not show any

correlation one each other respectively. Therefore, this mixed metaphor found in the different line in the song is specifically classified into impermissible mixed metaphor because they share the same purpose of metaphor but they do not show any correlation. There are five mixed metaphors found in I Have Nothing song lyrics. The first mixed metaphors found in the first line of the pre-chorus which is “I don't really need to look very much further.” The term look and further here do not represent their literal meanings. There are more than one metaphorical concept found in both terms. However, both look and further show a conceptual correlation. Both look and further serve the same purpose which is imagining or thinking about the future possibilities. There is a correlation related to the future. Since both terms show a correlation, this metaphor is specifically classified as permissible mixed metaphor. The same permissible mixed metaphor is also seen in go and follow terms as seen in the lyrics “I don't want to have to go” followed by “Where you don't follow.” Both terms show a conceptual correlation with each other. The term go is viewed as moving from one place to another. The term follow shares the idea of moving behind or traveling behind someone or something. Both terms share the same concept of moving. The term go and follow share the same purpose which talks about movement. Hence, both terms are classified as permissible mixed metaphor.

Meanwhile, the terms run and nowhere found in the seventh line of pre-chorus “Can't run from myself” followed by “there's nowhere to hide” are different. The terms run and nowhere found in this line have different metaphorical concept. The term run shares the concept of moving at a speed faster than the usual walk. This concept is not found in the term nowhere. The term nowhere here shares the concept of not to any place or about location. Since both terms do not have a correlation, this metaphor is classified as impermissible mixed metaphor. Other impermissible mixed metaphors are also seen in the terms see and heart. These two terms are found in the first line of the third verse “You see through” followed by “Right to the heart of me.” The term see shares the idea of perceiving something with the eyes. While the term heart shares the idea of the central or the vital part of something. It is classified as an impermissible mixed metaphor because both concepts do not show any correlation. A similar concept appears in the other terms in this song lyrics which are stay and arms in the chorus section.

***New Metaphor***

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that new metaphor is not yet existed in the conceptual system of culture and everyday language (p. 139). This metaphor is a kind of metaphor that requires a person’s creativity in personal experience in building the concept of metaphor itself. The authors of the song could define their own conceptual meaning. There are three new metaphors found in the three selected song lyrics by Whitney Houston. Two new metaphors are found in Greatest Love of All song lyric and the rest is found in I Have Nothing song lyric. There was no new metaphor found in I Will Always Love You song lyric. The table below shows the new metaphor type found in the three selected song lyrics.

Table 3. List of New Metaphor Found in The Song Lyrics

No.	Lyrics	Song
1.	The <i>children</i> are <i>our future</i>	Greatest Love of All
2.	A <i>lonely place</i> to be	Greatest Love of All

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	<i>I have nothing, nothing, nothing</i>	
3.	If I <i>don't have you, you, you, you,</i> you	I Have Nothing

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The first new metaphor found in Greatest Love of All song lyric is found in the first line at the beginning of the first verse: “The children are our future.” The terms children and future do not represent their literal meanings. Both of the terms represent a new concept made by the song’s author. The concept of the future can be seen as hope or fate of the children. The term children is also viewed as the next generation, not as in the family relationship. Lakoff defined this concept as written on “Argument is War” where the concept of argument is viewed as in the term war. A similar concept also appears in the term lonely place. It is not viewed literally as a quiet or silent place. The term place is viewed as a situation or moment where people can reflect on themselves.

Another new metaphor is found in I Have Nothing song lyric. The metaphor is found in the last section of the chorus: “I have nothing, nothing, nothing If I don't have you, you, you, you, you.” The terms nothing and you here do not represent their literal meanings. The terms found in this line have not existed in the conceptual system. The term you is viewed as the factor that affects the value or significance of someone. The line has a similar concept as stated in “I am happy if I have you. I am nothing if I do not have you.” The term you does not exist in the conceptual system. Hence, it is classified as new metaphor, because the author of the song wanted to define a new concept of the term you. This concept is also similar with the concept that appears in the line “I have you, I have love, I have world.” In this study, the researcher did not find any new metaphor in the I Will Always Love You song lyrics.

### Conclusion

There are three types of metaphor used in the Whitney Houston’s selected song lyrics. They are conventional metaphor, mixed metaphor, and new metaphor. There is a total of twenty-six metaphors found in the selected song lyrics. They consist of thirteen conventional metaphors, ten mixed metaphors, and three new metaphors. Each type of metaphor appears in every selected song lyric, except the new metaphor which is not found in I Will Always Love You song lyric.

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