

CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN THE LYRICS OF *AURORA* AND *REGULUS* BY ONEWE

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Abstrak

Lirik lagu ONEWE, *Aurora* dan *Regulus*, menggunakan metafora konseptual untuk menyampaikan tema emosional yang kompleks. Studi ini menggunakan kerangka teori Metafora Konseptual (CMT) untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengkategorikan ekspresi metafora. Metafora ontologis merupakan jenis yang paling dominan, mewakili cinta, kesedihan, kerinduan, harapan, dan perjuangan emosional. Metafora-metafora ini memperkaya keindahan lagu dan menyampaikan makna serta kedalaman emosional. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman bagaimana bahasa kiasan berfungsi dalam musik sebagai alat untuk mengekspresikan emosi dan keindahan seni.

Kata Kunci: *Metafora konseptual, lirik lagu, Aurora, Regulus, ONEWE.*

Abstract

The song lyrics of ONEWE, *Aurora* and *Regulus*, employ conceptual metaphors to convey complex emotional themes. The study used the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) framework to identify and categorize metaphorical expressions. Ontological metaphors were the most dominant type, representing love, sadness, longing, hope, and emotional struggle. These metaphors enhance the aesthetic appeal of the songs and convey meaning as well as emotional depth. The study contributes to understanding how figurative language functions in music as a tool for expressing emotion and artistry.

Keywords: *Conceptual metaphor, song lyrics, Aurora, Regulus, ONEWE.*

INTRODUCTION

Music, as an auditory art form, often employs lyrics to communicate emotions and cultural narratives. Song lyrics in particular, function as expressive linguistic devices that reflect personal and societal experiences. Among various figurative

tools, metaphor stands out as a powerful means to convey abstract feelings, as stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). According to Sinaga et al. (2024), songs are usually associated with vocals musical instruments, or a combination of both, used to convey a message, expression, or emotion. A fair amount of song lyrics uses

figurative words, especially using metaphors. Usually, songwriters use metaphors to show the emotions that the songwriters want to deliver but not explicitly, this can be done so that listeners can interpret song lyrics with many meanings and perspectives. Metaphors are not only used to show emotions through song lyrics, it also used to embellish songs through figurative language with words that are not the actual meaning.

Song lyrics often use metaphors to deliver meaning and feelings to the listener. Usually, song lyrics use light and simple metaphors, or they can use poetic metaphors and beautiful language. Studying the metaphors used in song lyrics can make listeners understand the meaning of the song, the feelings, and the mood that the researcher wants to deliver can reach the listeners. Charoenpong (2023) states that songs serve as a popular medium for delivering ideas, emotions, and personal expressions. Within song lyrics, there is a platform for creators to imbue their ideas and emotions into their compositions. In addition, Zahria & Wibowo (2024) stated that, in Niki Zefanya's lyric sample, metaphors and hyperbole show the profound aspects of meaning creation while evoking the listener's emotional

engagement. This supports the finding that many song lyrics use figurative language, especially metaphors, as a way to convey emotions indirectly, giving listeners space to interpret the lyrics from various perspectives. Yusri and Taqdir (2024) also state that in the songs that they were conduct also show that metaphors consistently create strong visual imagery, connecting abstract concepts with concrete objects and enhancing the emotional power of the lyrics. Therefore, the purpose of the metaphors used in the song lyrics to make the listeners feel the situation portrayed can be fulfilled.

This study is based on two main research questions: (1) What conceptual metaphors are used in the lyrics of ONEWE's songs, *Aurora* and *Regulus*? and (2) How can these conceptual metaphors be classified based on Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)? In answer to these questions, the objectives of this study are, first, to identify the conceptual metaphors embedded in the lyrics of *Aurora* and *Regulus*, and second, to classify the identified metaphors according to the types proposed in CMT, which includes structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors. Through this framework, this

study aims to explore how metaphors are used as a tool to express emotions and abstract ideas in the lyrics of K-pop songs.

To study the metaphors in ONEWE's songs, the researcher uses Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980). Lakoff and Johnson define the conceptual metaphor as understanding one domain of experience that is typically abstract in terms of another that is typically concrete, and the definition makes metaphor a conceptual framework. They also classified metaphors into three main types, which are structural, ontological and orientational.

Previous studies have examined metaphors in song lyrics from various artists and genres. The first is a study on metaphor titled "Metaphor Analysis in Mark Tuan's Songs" by Atcharapan Charoenpong (2023). Charoenpong explores the use of metaphors in the lyrics of Mark Tuan's songs, aiming to discover deeper meanings in the lyrics. The second study is titled "Conceptual Metaphor Analysis on 'The Greatest Showman' Soundtrack Album" by Melina Dewi Kartika, Rayvinsi Siuli, Candi Kris Zai, and Oey Leonardo (2024). In this study, the researchers also analyzed the use of conceptual metaphors in the lyrics of the

songs in "The Greatest Snowman" movie soundtrack album. And last, the study that also analyzes metaphors in song lyrics is a study entitled "Metaphor Found in Coldplay's Selected Songs" by Hanif Wahyuda, Eliwarti, and Dahnilsyah (2022). This study aims to identify the 26 types of metaphor found in Coldplay's selected songs.

ONEWE is an alternative rock band from South Korea. They are known as one of the few K-pop band that play instruments and write their own songs. They were debuted under RBW Entertainment in May 13, 2019, with their first single album "Reminisce About All." The band consists of Yonghoon as the vocalist, Kanghyun as the guitarist, Harin as the drummer, Dongmyeong as the keyboardist, and Giuk as the bassist. Also on January 28, 2023, ONEWE released their first English album "Gravitu" which included the songs *Aurora* and *Regulus*.

ONEWE's songs *Aurora* and *Regulus* have lyrics that use a lot of metaphors which is the main focus of this study. First, the song titled *Aurora* is a song that has a title that comes from the natural phenomenon of *Aurora Borealis*. The song *Aurora* uses many metaphors with celestial objects that express feelings about love,

belonging, and hope. Secondly, *Regulus* is a song named after one of the constellations where Regulus itself is the brightest star in the Leo constellation. In addition, Regulus is also taken from the Latin version of a novel entitled *Le Petite Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry which inspired the songwriter in writing the song *Regulus*.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design that focuses on identifying and describing conceptual metaphors in the lyrics of selected songs by ONEWE. Instead of using numerical data, this study employs text analysis guided by Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which highlights the mapping between the source domain and the target domain to understand how abstract concepts are represented through language. The data consists of selected lyrics from two English-language songs by ONEWE, namely *Aurora* and *Regulus*, with official lyrics collected from the music website Genius.com. Only specific lines containing metaphorical expressions relevant to the research objectives were analyzed, not the lyrics in their entirety. In this qualitative research design, the researcher serves as the main tool for data collection and analysis, supported by data sheets or coding tables used to identify and classify

metaphorical expressions. The data collection procedure consists of several steps: collecting the official lyrics of the songs, reading and rereading it to understand the overall meaning of the text, identifying metaphorical expressions in the lyrics, classifying it based on the CMT framework, and selecting the most relevant lines for analysis. The analysis is conducted systematically, begin with the identification of conceptual metaphors using concept mapping to visually organize the abstract concepts in the lyrics. Each metaphor identified is categorized into one of three main types of conceptual metaphors; structural, ontological, or orientational, as defined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This process aims to reveal the metaphorical framework embedded in the songs and how that framework reflects conceptual thinking patterns.

This study aims to explore the conceptual metaphors found in the lyrics of *Aurora* and *Regulus* by ONEWE, in order to fill the gap in research on metaphors in K-pop songs, especially those written in English. Although many studies have been conducted on metaphors in literature, film, and mainstream music, studies focusing on the use of metaphors in K-pop, especially

in K-pop band songs, remain few. This lack of study is mostly because of language barriers, since most K-pop songs are written in Korean, making it hard for non-Korean speakers to analyze the metaphors. But *Aurora* and *Regulus*, as K-pop songs that used English, give a good chance to learn how metaphors work to convey deeper emotional and conceptual meanings. Thus, this study not only improves the understanding of the figurative language used by songwriters to express complex ideas and emotions, but also encourages the appreciation of the artistic skill behind songwriting. Additionally, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the fields of language and music by providing insights into how metaphors enrich the lyrics and emotional depth of modern K-pop music.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores the use of conceptual metaphors in the lyrics of ONEWE's songs *Aurora* and *Regulus*. Through detailed text analysis and concept mapping, several metaphorical expressions were identified in both songs, revealing how figurative language is used to convey deep emotional and conceptual meanings.

The lyrics of *Aurora* are full of conceptual metaphors, which mainly focus on the themes of love, hope, and emotional struggle. A metaphor that stands out is “*Love is a journey*,” as seen in the lyrics “I’m on my way to you.” It describes a relationship as a structured physical journey, complete with a “traveler” as the singer, a “destination” as the loved one, and a “path” to follow. The song also frequently uses the metaphors “*Light is hope*” and “*Love is light*.” In the lyrics “The light still shines out bright at midnight,” “light” represents hope that still shines in the midst of difficulties or that described as midnight. This is strengthened by the lyrics “The aurora that you gave me always shines,” where love is likened to the eternal light and illuminating aurora. Another impressive metaphor is “*Emotional barriers are physical barriers*,” which uses the image of “clouds” in the lyrics “Will you clear the clouds that hide you” to symbolize the emotional barriers that block the feeling of closeness.

Here are the table that explain the identified metaphors found in the song *Aurora*.

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Lyrics Excerpt	Identified Metaphor
"I'm on my way to you, following this light"	Love is a journey
"The light still shines out bright at midnight"	Light is hope
"Aurora that you gave me always shines"	Love is light
"Will you clear the cloud that's hiding you"	Emotional barriers are physical barrier
"And remain longer as the light in the dark night"	Light is hope
"Fill up and fulfill the night sky with your glowing light"	Love is light

Table1. Identified Conceptual Metaphor in the Song Aurora

The next song *Regulus* used conceptual metaphors inspired by the universe and nature to explore feelings, memories, and self-identity. The metaphor "*The emotional state is a physical location*" is seen clearly in the lyrics "The name of the star I live in," which describes the emotional state as the physical place

describe as a star, in which the singer lives. The song also compares difficult feelings to physical conditions, as in the metaphor "*Difficult emotions are darkness*," which uses "darkness" to represent sadness or difficulty. In addition, relationships and emotional growth are often depicted through nature metaphors, such as "*A person is a flower*" in the lyrics "There is a flower similar to you" and "*Emotional growth is in bloom*" in the lyrics "After the rain has passed, we have fully bloomed". Hence, the lyric "living, breathing memories" effectively forms the metaphor "*Memories are living things*," which brings memories to life, making them feel real and everlasting.

Here are the table that explain the identified metaphors found in the song *Regulus*.

Lyrics Excerpt	Identified Metaphor
"The name of the star that I live on Often, they call it the regulus"	Emotional states are physical location
"Even though it may be dark all day I'm not lonely at all"	Difficult emotions are darkness

“There’s a flower that resembles you, it doesn’t wither or fade away”	A person is a flower
“The moment of the sound of your footsteps come scross the galaxy”	Emotional prsence is a physical movement through space
“After the rain goes, we have bloomed in full”	Emotional growth is in bloom
“This star is precious, a living and breathing memory”	Memories are living thing

Table 2. Identified Conceptual Metaphor in the Song Regulus

After identifying the lyrics of the song Aurora, the following is a description of the findings of classifying the song lyrics that have been identified into three types of conceptual metaphors based on Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The metaphors in *Aurora* are mostly ontological metaphors. This type of metaphor helps us to understand abstract concepts by thinking of them as concrete, physical objects. For such examples, “*Light is hope*,” “*Love is light*,” and “*Emotional barriers are physical*

barriers” all describe emotions like hope or love and problems like barriers as something that can be seen or touched, such as light or clouds. On the other hand, the song also uses one structural metaphor: “*Love is a journey*.” This metaphor takes the structure of a more concrete concept of “journey: and uses it to organize a more abstract experience “love”, complete with a clear purpose, barriers, and direction.

Here are the table that explain the classified metaphors found in the song *Aurora*.

Lyrics Excerpt	Identified Metaphor	Type of Conceptual Metaphor
“I’m on my way to you, following this light”	Love is a journey	Structural
“The light still shines out bright at midnight”	Light is hope	Ontological
“Aurora that you gave me always shines”	Love is light	Ontological

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“Will you clear the cloud that’s hiding you”	Emotional barriers are physical barrier	Ontological
“And remain longer as the light in the dark night”	Light is hope	Ontological
“Fill up and fulfill the night sky with your glowing light”	Love is light	Ontological

Table 3. Classified Conceptual Metaphors in the Song Aurora based on CMT by Lakoff and Johnson

In *Regulus*, most of the metaphors identified also belonged to the type of ontological metaphors. These metaphors transformed abstract concepts into concrete entities to make them easier for listeners to understand. Such as, “*Emotional states are physical locations*,” “*Difficult emotions are darkness*,” “*A person is a flower*,” “*Emotional growth is in bloom*,” and “*Memories are living things*” all gave physical form to feelings, relationships, and memories. There was one structural metaphor identified, which was

“*Emotional presence is physical movement through space*.” This metaphor organized the emotional impact of a person using the framework of physical movement across large distances, highlighted the incredible scale of the person’s impact.

Here are the table that explain the classified metaphors found in the song *Regulus*.

Lyrics Excerpt	Identified Metaphor	Type of Conceptual Metaphor
“The name of the star that I live on Often, they call it the regulus”	Emotional states are physical location	Ontological
“Even though it may be dark all day I’m not lonely at all”	Difficult emotions are darkness	Ontological
“There’s a flower that resembles you, it	A person is a flower	Ontological

doesn't wither or fade away"		
"The moment of the sound of your footsteps come scross the galaxy"	Emotional prsesence is a physical movement through space	Structural
"After the rain goes, we have bloomed in full"	Emotional growth is in bloom	Ontological
"This star is precious, a living and breathing memory"	Memories are living thing	Ontological

Table 4. Classified Conceptual Metaphors in the Song
 Regulus based on CMT by Lakoff and Johnson

CONCLUSSION

Based on an analyzed using Lakoff and Johnson (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), this study found that ontological metaphors are the dominant type of metaphor in the lyrics of the songs *Aurora* and *Regulus* by the band ONEWE.

In the song *Aurora*, metaphors such as "Love is a journey" and "Light is hope" are used to convey emotions and abstract concepts as concrete physical experiences. Similarly, in the song *Regulus*, metaphors such as "Emotional states are physical locations" and "A person is a flower" convey feelings like longing and memories into concrete imagery connected to nature. The frequent use of ontological metaphors shows that ONEWE effectively use metaphors related to nature and the cosmos, such as light, stars, and flowers, to convey deep emotions, making it easier for listeners to understand and feel the meaning of the lyrics more deeply. Thus, these metaphors play an important role in enriching the emotional and artistic expression in ONEWE's music.

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