



## Conceptual Metaphor Analysis in JVKE's Song Golden Hour: A Cognitive Linguistics Approach

Farhan Maulana Trisnadi<sup>1\*</sup>, Otong Setiawan Djuharie<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1 2</sup> UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

[farhanmaulanatrisnadi@gmail.com](mailto:farhanmaulanatrisnadi@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [otongsetiawandjuharie@uin.ac.id](mailto:otongsetiawandjuharie@uin.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

Alamat: Jl. AH Nasution No. 105 Cipadung, Cibiru, Kota Bandung, Jawa barat, Indonesia

\*Correspondent author

**Abstract.** *This study investigates the metaphorical expressions in the song Golden Hour by JVKE using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The research aims to identify and analyze metaphors that represent emotional experiences, particularly romantic feelings, through the use of concrete and sensory imagery. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the lyrics of Golden Hour were analyzed to uncover how metaphorical language shapes the expression of love and emotional transitions. The findings reveal several dominant metaphor categories such as LOVE IS LIGHT, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, and EMOTION IS ELEVATION. These metaphors transform abstract emotions into vivid, relatable experiences by linking them to concepts like time, nature, and movement. The study concludes that metaphor in song lyrics functions as a cognitive and poetic device that enhances meaning and emotional resonance. The implications of this research highlight the relevance of metaphor analysis in understanding language, thought, and culture, especially in modern musical texts.*

**Keywords:** *Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Figurative Language, JVKE, Metaphor, Song Lyrics*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are a powerful linguistic tool that allow individuals to understand abstract or complex ideas through familiar and concrete concepts. As (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) argued, metaphors are not merely poetic devices in literature, but are deeply engraved in everyday language and thought, influencing how people perceive and experience the world. This conceptual metaphor theory has inspired a significant body of research that explores how metaphors function across different domains, including media, politics, education, and especially music.

In the context of popular music, metaphors play a critical role in enhancing emotional resonance and lyrical depth. (Knowles & Moon, 2006) emphasized that metaphors in music serve not only to beautify language but also to construct meaning in a way that resonates with listeners' emotions and lived experiences. Several recent studies have examined metaphorical expressions in songs to uncover the underlying cognitive processes and cultural values they reflect like (Topan et al., 2025) (Vinh, 2025) and (Panggabean & Nofansyah, 2024). While many scholars have focused on well-established artists like Coldplay, Katy Perry, or Taylor Swift (Vikri & Nurcholis, 2022), (Rizqi & Mantiri, 2024), (Sofian & Sawardi, 2022), fewer have explored how metaphor functions in the work of emerging artists such as JVKE. His hit

single Golden Hour gathered widespread acclaim for its emotional storytelling and lyrical creativity, yet remains under-analyzed from a linguistic and metaphorical perspective. This song is particularly rich in metaphorical expressions that draw upon imagery related to light, time, and nature to convey romantic emotions and aesthetic beauty.

The gap identified in previous studies lies in the lack of focus on Golden Hour despite its global popularity and expressive language. While (Khadijah, 2016) discussed the prevalence of metaphors in English songs, they did not delve into newer or viral songs produced in the social media era. Similarly, (Avong, 2023) conducted a study on hyperbole expressions in selected viral song lyrics on TikTok, focusing on identifying their forms and meanings. While her research highlights the figurative language used in viral songs, it did not include JVKE's Golden Hour or address metaphorical expressions specifically.

Given this gap, the current study aims to investigate the types and meanings of metaphors found in the lyrics of Golden Hour using the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). The goal is to identify and interpret the metaphors that appear in the song and understand how they contribute to the emotional depth and poetic quality of the lyrics. By doing so, this research seeks to add to the growing literature on metaphor in popular music and provide insight into the linguistic artistry of emerging musical talents like JVKE.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Metaphor, as a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon has been extensively studied in both classical and contemporary research. According to (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), metaphors are not merely rhetorical flourishes, but also act as conceptual systems that shape how people think, act, and understand their world. Their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) assumes that abstract domains (such as love or time) are typically understood through more concrete, embodied experiences (such as light, space, or motion). For instance, metaphors such as "LOVE IS LIGHT" or "TIME IS A JOURNEY" reflect how human cognition maps one conceptual domain onto another to generate meaning.

(Knowles & Moon, 2006) reinforce this view by emphasizing the pedagogical and communicative function of metaphor. They argue that metaphors help communicate complex or abstract ideas in accessible ways especially in literature, advertising, and music. This theory is especially relevant in song lyrics, where artists often compress deep emotional experiences into symbolic and metaphorical expressions.

In the context of English song lyrics, metaphorical expressions are often used to reflect deeper philosophical or emotional messages. (Maoula et al., 2022) made a study on Adam Levine's "Lost Stars" and reveals that many of its lyrics employ figurative language and parables to convey themes of regret, ambition, and the transient nature of life. The study emphasizes that humans often become so consumed by their ambitions that they overlook the beauty and meaning of life itself. Through metaphors such as an arrow longing to return symbolizing broken relationships and missed chances, the song encourages listeners to reflect on life's journey and the importance of living meaningfully.

In addition, more recent research has extended metaphor analysis to include cognitive and multimodal approaches. (Nugraheny & Yuwita, 2023) and (Selvia & Heriyati, 2024) conducted semantic analyses of popular songs, identifying conceptual metaphors related to emotion, identity, and movement. Similarly, (Kamandanu et al., 2024) analyzed metaphor types, confirming the dominant presence of structural and ontological metaphors in conveying romantic and existential themes.

Scholars have increasingly recognized that multimodal elements in music videos including visuals, sounds, and lyrics can create layered meanings that enrich metaphorical interpretation; music videos thus not only narrate but also interpret lyrics through image-text interplay (Way & McKerrell, 2017). Additionally, research shows that digital platforms, such as TikTok and streaming services, have accelerated the spread of metaphorically rich songs, although scholarly attention still lags behind these viral trends (Salainti & Pratiwi, 2021). This indicates a clear gap that Golden Hour by (JVKE, 2022), despite its popularity and layered metaphorical content, remains largely unexamined in academic literature.

This study builds on the existing framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) to identify and interpret the metaphors in Golden Hour. It also considers (Makkai, 1972) classification of lexical idioms, which differentiates between transparent and opaque metaphorical meanings. These theoretical foundations allow for a structured and nuanced analysis of metaphor in the song lyrics, contributing to a deeper understanding of language, symbolism, and emotion in popular music.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on the analysis of words, phrases, and sentences rather than numerical data. As stated by (Ary et al., 2009), qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth, verbal understanding of a phenomenon through

interpretation and contextual analysis. In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the use of metaphors in the lyrics of Golden Hour by (JVKE, 2022).

The primary data source was taken from the official lyrics of the song Golden Hour by (JVKE, 2022), as published on the verified lyrics website Genius.com. The data collection process involves three main steps: first, obtaining and reading the full lyrics of the song; second, identifying metaphorical expressions; and third, classifying those metaphors based on the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

For data analysis, this study applies the method proposed by (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The identified metaphors are further categorized using the metaphor types and interpreted based on the source–target domain mapping typical of conceptual metaphors. This methodological approach allows for a deep linguistic and cognitive interpretation of how metaphor enriches meaning in the song Golden Hour.

#### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The data collection process was conducted in June 2025. The research was carried out by analyzing the official lyrics of the song Golden Hour by (JVKE, 2022), as published on the verified website Genius.com. The lyrics were examined to identify and classify metaphorical expressions using (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which views metaphor as a cognitive mechanism that maps concepts from a source domain to a target domain.

Based on the analysis, six metaphorical expressions were identified in the lyrics of Golden Hour. These expressions represent several conceptual metaphors that relate emotional experiences (target domain) to concrete or natural phenomena (source domain), reinforcing the romantic and poetic tone of the song.

**Table 1.** Conceptual Metaphors in Golden Hour by JVKE

No	Lyric Excerpt	Conceptual Metaphor	Source Domain	Target Domain	Interpretation
1	"It was just two lovers / sittin' in the car / Listening to Blonde, fallin' for each other"	LOVE IS A JOURNEY	Travel/Road	Romantic relationship	The act of sitting in a car together metaphorically frames the relationship as a shared emotional journey.
2	"Like the stars in the sky / she was perfect"	LOVE IS LIGHT	Celestial objects	Idealized affection	Light from stars is used to convey the awe and perfection of the loved one, reflecting admiration.
3	"She's got glitter for skin / My radiant beam in the night"	PERSON IS LIGHT SOURCE	Radiance	Subject's inner beauty	The metaphor gives the subject a supernatural glow, suggesting warmth, security, and emotional brightness.
4	"I was all alone with the love of my life"	LOVE IS PRESENCE	Physical Presence	Emotional connection	Emphasizes the completeness and significance of emotional presence, rather than solitude.
5	"She's got glow on her face / A glorious look in her eyes"	EMOTION IS LIGHT	Glow/Shine	Joy/Attraction	The metaphor suggests emotional warmth and positivity through visual cues.
6	"I see forever in your eyes"	FUTURE IS A VISIBLE SPACE	Vision/Distance	Future/Romance	The metaphor portrays long-term commitment and clarity in the romantic vision of the future.

The following discussion presents the findings of the metaphorical analysis conducted on the lyrics of Golden Hour by (JVKE, 2022). The metaphorical expressions identified in the song are categorized into six major conceptual metaphors based on the framework proposed by (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). These categories include: LOVE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS LIGHT, PERSON IS A LIGHT SOURCE, LOVE IS PRESENCE, EMOTION IS LIGHT, and FUTURE IS A VISIBLE SPACE. Among these, light-related metaphors (LOVE IS LIGHT, PERSON IS A LIGHT SOURCE, and EMOTION IS LIGHT) appear most frequently, indicating the songwriter's strong reliance on visual and radiant imagery to express affection and admiration. This use of metaphor not only enhances the aesthetic value of the lyrics but also deepens the emotional resonance of the song. The following points provide further elaboration on each metaphorical expression listed in Table 1.

### 1. LOVE IS A JOURNEY

In the opening line, the lovers are “sittin' in the car” and “fallin' for each other,” blending the literal and metaphorical senses of movement. This aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) model, where romantic relationships are often conceptualized as paths or roads traveled together. Here, the car becomes a metaphorical vehicle of emotional development that is intimate, enclosed, and mobile which implies that the couple is navigating their romantic journey in tandem.

### 2. LOVE IS LIGHT

The phrase “Like the stars in the sky / she was perfect” elevates the romantic subject by associating her with celestial brilliance. Stars which are symbols of guidance, wonder, and perfection serve as the source domain, while the emotional feeling of love and admiration is the target. This metaphor also touches on themes of idealization and distance, suggesting the beloved is not only beautiful but somewhat unreachable. This is consistent with (Knowles & Moon, 2006) notion that light metaphors often express admiration and elevation.

### 3. PERSON IS A LIGHT SOURCE

In “She's got glitter for skin / My radiant beam in the night,” the subject is not just bathed in light as she is the light. This metaphor constructs the loved one as a luminous entity, which suggests warmth, emotional guidance, and hope. In conceptual terms, this equates the beloved with a source of emotional illumination, metaphorically lighting the

narrator's path or dark moments. This directly supports the (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) model where sensory imagery like light is mapped to abstract emotional concepts.

#### 4. LOVE IS PRESENCE

The phrase "I was all alone with the love of my life" appears paradoxical because how can one be alone with someone? But the metaphor LOVE IS PRESENCE emphasizes emotional fulfillment, not physical proximity. Even in solitude, being with someone significant turns isolation into intimacy. This resonates with romantic ideation in pop culture, where presence is equated with wholeness.

#### 5. EMOTION IS LIGHT

The expressions "glow on her face" and "a glorious look in her eyes" use radiance to signal intense feelings. The metaphor implies that positive emotions like joy, excitement, or love manifest as literal brightness. According to (Knowles & Moon, 2006), light-based metaphors are among the most universal, often used to externalize internal states, making the beloved's emotional aura both visible and memorable.

#### 6. FUTURE IS A VISIBLE SPACE

"I see forever in your eyes" blends romantic love with a vision-based metaphor. The eyes, often called "windows to the soul," are metaphorically extended here to encompass the future. The phrase suggests a long-term commitment or an imagined life together.

### 5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the use of metaphorical expressions in JVKE's song Golden Hour through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as developed by (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). The analysis identified six dominant conceptual metaphors, such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS LIGHT, and FUTURE IS A VISIBLE SPACE, which collectively demonstrate how abstract emotional experiences—particularly those related to love, admiration, and connection—are framed through tangible and sensory-based language. These findings reaffirm the role of metaphor as a fundamental cognitive tool in shaping meaning within lyrical texts. The research underscores the continuing relevance of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in analyzing modern popular music, revealing that contemporary songwriters still rely on deeply rooted metaphorical structures to convey complex emotional themes. It also contributes to the field of applied linguistics and literary analysis by offering practical insights that may benefit English language learners in interpreting figurative language. However, this study is limited to

the analysis of a single song, which constrains the generalizability of its findings. Future research is encouraged to include a wider corpus of songs, artists, or genres to provide broader insights into metaphorical patterns in pop culture. Additionally, expanding the framework to include multimodal elements such as music videos or listener interpretation could offer a more holistic understanding of metaphor use in musical contexts.

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