



## An Analysis of Metaphor in Korean Song Lyrics by Bangtan Soyeondan (BTS)

Putu Ayu Krisna Wulandari, I Wayan Mawa

English Education Department, IKIP Saraswati

[krisnaputuayu@gmail.com](mailto:krisnaputuayu@gmail.com)

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**Corresponding Author:**

**Putu Ayu Krisna  
Wulandari**

Email:

[krisnaputuayu@gmail.com](mailto:krisnaputuayu@gmail.com)

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bentuk metafora yang digunakan dalam lirik lagu BTS. Subjek penelitian ini adalah BTS, dan objek penelitian ini adalah lirik lagu. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode penelitian kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara observasi dan mendokumentasikan catatan/catatan dengan mendengarkan, membaca lirik lagu dan mencatat bagian-bagian penting dari lirik lagu. Prosedur penelitian: Pertama, peneliti mengunduh lagu BTS dan liriknya di internet. Kedua, peneliti mendengarkan lagu tersebut. Ketiga, peneliti menerjemahkan lagu-lagu Korea ke dalam bahasa Inggris. Keempat, peneliti membaca lirik lagu, kemudian bentuk metafora yang ditemukan diberi tanda. Kemudian peneliti menemukan jenis-jenis metafora dan artinya. Terakhir, bentuk metafora yang digunakan dalam lirik lagu-lagu BTS dibahas dan dianalisis menggunakan teori Larson dan Lakoff & Johnson. Berdasarkan hasil analisis, terdapat 5 jenis bentuk metafora yang ditemukan dalam lirik lagu BTS: (1) Metafora mati (2) Metafora aktif (3) Metafora struktural (4) Metafora orientasi (5) Metafora ontologis. Metafora Aktif adalah yang paling banyak digunakan dalam lagu-lagu BTS. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa terdapat ekspresi metafora dalam beberapa lirik lagu BTS.

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the form of metaphor used in BTS song lyrics. The subject of this research is BTS, and the object of this research is song lyrics. The method used in this research was a qualitative research method. The data was collected by means of observation and document record/note by listening, reading song lyrics and noting important parts of song lyrics. Research procedures: First, the researcher downloaded BTS songs and their lyrics on the internet. Second, the researcher listened to the song. Three, researcher translated Korean songs into English. Fourth, the

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researcher read the lyrics of the song, then the metaphorical forms found were marked. Then the researcher found out the types of metaphors and their meanings. Finally, the metaphorical forms used in the lyrics of BTS's songs were discussed and analyzed using the theory of Larson and Lakoff & Johnson. Based on the results of the analysis, there are 5 types of metaphorical forms found in the lyrics of BTS songs: (1) Dead metaphor (2) Active metaphor (3) Structural metaphor (4) Orientational metaphor (5) Ontological

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## 1. Background

Literature is a very broad human thought, there are many types of literature in the world, especially English literature. According to Meyer (1997:1) in Arifah (2016:13), literature is a term used to describe written texts marked by careful use of language, including features such as creative metaphors, well-turned phrases, elegant syntax, rhyme, and alliteration, that are aesthetically read or intended by the author to be aesthetically read and are intentionally somewhat open in interpretation. Therefore from the opinion of experts, it can be concluded that literature is an expression of the work of the fruit of human thought which is very broad, both oral and written.

In addition to drama, poetry, novels or films, there are many types of literary works, one of which is song. According to Sharndama & Suleiman as cited in Akporobaro (2006) in Arifah (2016:37) song assume a variety of forms, some of the songs are rich, imaginative, and developed in the play of words, rhythm, and melody. In a song, of course, not just any writer writes a literary work, there is a figurative language and a language of choice therefore the lyrics of the song are interesting and more beautiful. According to Peter (2002:12) in Arifah (2016:22) Figurative language is a type of language that has figurative meaning and involves the speaker's desire to evoke

emotions, shock people, and encourage them to take action. There are many types of figurative language, And in this study, the researcher examined the presence of metaphors in a song.

There are so many types of songs and their genres, one of the songs that is on the rise right now is a K-pop genre song, namely a song from Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS). According to Suryani (2019:2) BTS is a boy group from South Korea, this boy group first debuted in 2013. They are boy group that very famous group almost all over the world. This group consists of seven members. In the BTS song there are lyrics that contain figure of speech, one of which is metaphorical figure of speech. Metaphor is the figurative speech, that directly compares one thing to another (Peter, (2002:12) in Arifah (2016:29)). In this study the researcher examined 5 types of metaphors contained in a song. The reason the author wants to examine the form and meaning of metaphor in BTS song lyrics; the first because the BTS song lyrics are filled with very poetic words that contain metaphors in it, the second because the author is inspired and interested in the BTS song in making a scientific work, and the third because the author is a fan boy of the boy group. BTS songs educate writers and provide many benefits about life, and songs from BTS provide a lot of advice or moral value in it for listeners. The author hopes that this



research can be useful for readers and can find the meaning and types of metaphorical figure of speech.

## 2. Research Method

The research design in this study uses qualitative methods. According to Cresswell (1998:24) in Rahmat (2009:2) qualitative research is a sort of study that yields results that cannot be obtained via statistical procedures or other quantitative methods (measurement). The research subject of this research is BTS, The object of research in this study were the song lyrics of BTS songs. The research instrument in this study was a laptop and observation checklist data. The data collection technique used in this research is observation and document records or notes. Technique of analyzing data using three steps, According to Miles and Huberman (1994:10) in Setyawati (2021:35) data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification are the three streams of activity in the analysis. Procedure to collecting data in this research are; downloading songs from BTS and their song lyrics from the internet, then translating Korean songs

into English with google translate and papago, then identifying by listening to the song and reading the translated song lyrics, knowing whether the types of metaphors in the song lyrics, then analyze the meaning of the metaphors.

## 3. Findings and Discussions

### 3.1. Research Findings

Researcher analyzed data from listening to songs, reading song lyrics, and translating song lyrics into English. After listening to and reading the song lyrics that have been translated into English, there are several forms of metaphor found in several BTS songs. In analyzing the 12 songs from BTS, there are 5 forms of metaphor found, which can be seen from the total table below.

*Table 4.2 Total type the form of metaphor used in BTS songs*

No.	Types of metaphor	Quantity
1.	Dead Metaphor	5
2.	Active Metaphor	13
3.	Structural Metaphor	9
4.	Oriental Metaphor	1
5.	Ontological Metaphor	3
<b>Quantity</b>		<b>31</b>



### 3.2. Discussion

From the tabulated data above, then the researcher tries to analyze the data were found. Based on the researcher classification the metaphor form, the researcher found five types of metaphor form that are used in BTS songs. There were 31 metaphor form found in BTS songs and the classification are 5 dead metaphors, 13 active metaphors, 9 structural metaphors, 1 orientational metaphor, and 3 ontological metaphors. The researcher then attempts to examine the data collected using the tabular data above.

#### 1) Dead Metaphor

From the explanation of the theoretical framework and after the researcher observed the data using google translate and papago, the researcher found 5 dead metaphors in the lyrics of BTS songs.

##### a. 'Countless grains of sand'

The metaphor "Countless grains of sand" found in "Sea" song in line 4.

Song lyric:

이 바다에서 나는 해변을 봐 (*i bada-eseo naneun haebyeon-eul bwa*)

"In this sea I see the beach"

무수한 모래알과 매섭고 거친 바람  
(*musuhan molaalgwa maeseobgo geochin balam*)

"Countless grains of sand and a fierce, harsh wind"

From the song lyric above the phrase "countless grains of sand" including dead metaphors. Because the meaning of the image conveyed does not exist, it loses its figurative meaning, and the meaning is clear that the number of grains of sand cannot be counted because there are many grains of sand. Therefore the meaning of the phrase is like the original phrase, namely very many grains of sand/dust and cannot be counted.

#### 2) Active Metaphor

From the explanation of the theoretical framework and after the researcher observed the data using google translate and papago, the researcher found 13 active metaphors in the lyrics of BTS songs.

##### a. 'I'm your filter'

The metaphor I'm your filter found in "Filter" song in line 12.



Song lyric:

너의 세상을 변화시킬 I'm your filter  
(*neoui sesang-eul byeonhwasikil I'm your filter*)

I'm your filter "to change your world"

From the song lyric above the phrase, I'm your filter is an active metaphor. Called a metaphor because it compares between the self and the filter. A filter is literally a medium that can filter or separate solids from liquids, or separate powders to obtain finer powders. The word 'filter' in this context has a deeper meaning. In speaking or acting we must also filter what we say and what we want to do to protect the feelings of others. The lyrics say that BTS becomes a filter, meaning that they will be a filter like a filter, but don't filter out solids or liquids that normally filter to get a smoother result, but remove or filter out bad things or words or thoughts so that other people just can hear and see good things. The meaning of the phrase is implicit and searched in depth is a new metaphor, therefore the phrase is an active type of metaphor.

### 3) Structural Metaphor

From the explanation of the theoretical framework and after the researcher observed the data using google translate and papago, the researcher found 9 structural metaphors in the lyrics of BTS songs.

#### a. 'One history per person, One star per person'

The metaphor "One history per person, One star per person" found in "Mikrokosmos" song in line 27 and 28

한 사람에게 하나의 역사 (*han salam-e hanau yeogsa*)

한 사람에게 하나의 별 (*han salam-e hanau byeol*)

"One history per person"

"One star per person"

From the song lyric above the phrase "One history per person, One star per person" belongs to the type of structural metaphor. It is called a metaphor because it compares between a "life story" and a "person". The source domain in the lyrics of the song is a life story, and the target domain for the lyrics is person. Therefore it



has been proven that the lyrics are included in structural metaphors because they are structured and interconnected, first one story per person and second one star per person. In the lyrics it says that one history per person, one star per person. The meaning of “One history per person, One star per person” is that everyone has their own history or life story and everyone has their own dream starlight or ambition. This meaning is an implicit meaning and is based on everyday experience.

#### 4) **Oriental Metaphor**

From the theoretical framework explanation and after the researcher observed the data using google translate and papago, the researcher found 1 orientational metaphors in BTS song lyrics.

##### a. **‘Sea or desert, hope or despair, Is it real or fake shit’**

The Metaphor “Sea or desert, hope or despair, Is it real or fake shit” found in “Sea” song in line 15 dan 16.

Song lyric:

바다인지 사막인지 희망인지  
절망인지, 진짜인지 가짜인지 shit.

*(badainji samag-inji huimang-inji  
jeolmang-inji, jinjjainji gajjainji shit)*

“Sea or desert, hope or despair, Is it real or fake shit”

From the song lyric above the phrase “Sea or desert, hope or despair, Is it real or fake shit” is an orientational metaphor. Called a metaphor because it compares with each other. The source domain in the lyrics of the song is an up-abstract orientation such as sea, hope and real. Meanwhile, the target domain for the lyrics is down orientation, such as desert, despair, and fake shit. Therefore it has been proven that the lyrics are included in orientational metaphors because they relate to spatial orientations such as up-down, and here it is explained that the up space or positive evaluation is in the source domain and the down space of negative evaluation is in the target domain. The comparison of these metaphors is opposite to each other and involves a spatial relationship therefore it is called an orientational metaphor. The meaning of that phrase is someone who is in doubt/anxiety sees the inverse difference between real and unreal, between good and bad it is hard to distinguish a state of doubt like the sea or a desert, hope or despair and real or fake.



## 5) Ontological Metaphor

From the explanation of the theoretical framework and after the researcher observed the data using google translate and papago, the researcher found 3 ontological metaphors in the lyrics of BTS songs.

### a. 'Love is a maze'

The metaphor Love is a maze found in "Love Maze" song in line 24.

Song lyric:

Love is a maze, damn

But you is amaze, yeah

From the song lyric above the phrase Love is a maze is included in the type of ontological metaphor. Called a metaphor because it compares between "love" and "maze". It is called an ontological metaphor because the substance of "love" is a set of emotions and behaviors characterized by intimacy, passion, and commitment. Love can vary in intensity and can change over time. It is associated with a variety of positive emotions, including happiness, joy, life satisfaction, and euphoria, but can also end in negative emotions such as jealousy and stress. Whereas literally "labyrinth" is a path that

is intricately made and has many branch paths that can lead a person astray, and a maze has many dead ends. Therefore emotion or something abstract, namely "love" as an object, so it is proven that the phrase is an ontological metaphor. The meaning of Love is a maze is that love is complicated, it is said to be complicated because it is like a maze that has twists and turns, some even find a dead end (break up) and some can find a way out because of mutual trust.

## 4. Conclusion

After the researcher analyzed the research findings, it can be concluded that there are metaphorical expressions in some BTS song lyrics. As the researcher proposed in the theoretical framework and research findings, the researcher concluded that the forms of metaphors used in the lyrics of BTS songs can be classified into 5, namely dead metaphors, active metaphors, structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. In this study, the researcher found 5 dead metaphors, 13 active metaphors, 9 structural metaphors, 1 orientational metaphor, and 3 ontological metaphors. This metaphor is found in 12



BTS songs, namely "Love Maze", "Filter", "Lights", "Epiphany", "Butter", "Dynamite", "Permission to Dance", "Mikrokosmos", "We Are Bulletproof", "Euphoria", "My Universe", and "Sea". Of all types of metaphorical forms, active metaphor is the most common and most frequently found metaphor in BTS song lyrics.

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