

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Song lyrics often communicate experiences that cannot be expressed through literal language. To convey such experiences, songwriters frequently employ figurative language, which allows meanings to be expressed in more imaginative and indirect ways. Among the various forms of figurative language, metaphor is one of the most commonly used in song lyrics. As noted by Knowles and Moon (2006, as cited in (Trisnadi & Djuharie, 2025), metaphors in music can be used to construct meaning that connects with listeners' emotions and real-life experiences. Similarly, many singer-songwriters use metaphors to convey the narratives they wish to communicate (Johansenn, 2016). Song lyrics can express messages and emotions while creating imagery that encourages listeners to interpret meanings beyond the literal level by using metaphorical language (Nugraheny & Yuwita, 2023). These functions suggest that metaphor in song lyrics is more than just aesthetic expression and contributes to the construction of meaning.

Metaphor is usually viewed as a stylistic element of poetic language. However, metaphor is not limited to aesthetics. Human beings naturally understand abstract ideas through concrete experience, and this process forms both thought and language (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Everyday expressions such as falling in love, being close to someone, or holding on to a relationship reveal that metaphor structures how individuals perceive emotions. Metaphor is considered in cognitive linguistics to be *“not merely a linguistic phenomenon, but refers to the pattern of conceptual association underlying linguistic expressions”* (Yu, 2020). Therefore, metaphorical language reflects the conceptual system through which people

interpret abstract experience.

This cognitive understanding of metaphor is further explored by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 in their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). This theory defines metaphor as a systematic mapping between two conceptual domains, the source domain and the target domain. The source domain is the actual experience that can be physically experienced. On the other hand, the target domain is the abstract ideas of emotion, relationships, and identity. Abstract experiences cannot be accessed directly and are therefore understood through bodily and spatial interaction with the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Conceptual Metaphor Theory also classifies metaphors into structural, orientational, and ontological types (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), which describe different ways abstract concepts are organised through concrete experience.

As the metaphor reflects mental processes, its presence in artistic language becomes particularly significant. In music, metaphors may function not only as aesthetic elements but also as a way of constructing emotional meaning that resonates with listeners' experiences (Knowles & Moon, 2006, as cited in Trisnadi & Djuharie, 2025). This can be observed in the lyrics of Mitski, particularly in the album *Puberty 2*, where emotional experiences are repeatedly expressed through concrete situations and imagery. The recurrence of these expressions suggests consistent conceptual patterns that can be analysed through Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

The use of metaphor to express emotional experience can be found in the lyrics of Mitski Miyawaki, an American singer-songwriter whose songs often explore themes of desire, loneliness, attachment, and loss. These themes are closely

related to her personal experiences. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Mitski explained that she spent much of her childhood moving between countries because of her father's work. Reflecting on this experience, she stated that “*if I attached, it means I'd have to detach*” (Caramanica, 2016), saying that that experiences of separation influenced the way she viewed relationships. In a later interview with *The Guardian*, Mitski also reflected on the difficulties of continually losing places and people throughout her life. She explained that she learned to “*guard [her] heart*” in order to avoid experiencing loss repeatedly (Beaumont-Thomas, 2022). These experiences suggest that attachment and loss are important themes in her personal life and her songwriting.

These themes can be clearly seen in *Puberty 2*, Mitski's fourth studio album, released in 2016 under Dead Oceans. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Mitski described the album as less pessimistic than her previous work while also reflecting a greater emotional maturity (Caramanica, 2016). The album presents emotional experiences through concrete imagery and physical situations instead of direct explanations of feelings. Through the songs, attachment and loss are often represented through actions such as waiting, holding, belonging, breaking, and remaining with someone. These recurring expressions show connections between concrete experiences and abstract emotional states. Because such patterns appear throughout the album, *Puberty 2* provides a suitable corpus for examining how attachment and loss are expressed through metaphorical language. As Conceptual Metaphor Theory explains metaphor as a mapping between concrete and abstract domains, it offers an appropriate framework for analysing these metaphorical expressions in the lyrics.

Prior studies have utilised Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the analysis of song lyrics, indicating that metaphor in music pertains to cognition rather than merely stylistic expression. However, many studies primarily identify metaphorical expressions within individual songs and do not examine how metaphors mainly form a consistent emotional concept across multiple texts.

Nugraheny & Yuwita (2023) analyse conceptual metaphors in SZA's song lyrics through semantic analysis and conceptual mapping. The study identifies source and target domains in five selected songs and shows that abstract experiences such as love and emotional struggle are understood through concrete concepts. The findings indicate that conceptual metaphors function as a bridge between feeling and experience. Nevertheless, the analysis mainly focuses on locating individual metaphors and interpreting their meanings separately in each song. The research does not investigate whether recurring metaphors develop a larger conceptual pattern that structures emotional experience across songs.

Jannah and Istiqomah (2021) examine conceptual metaphors in Kahitna's song lyrics using Lakoff and Johnson's framework combined with image schema theory. The research identifies several mappings such as love as a journey, heart as a container, and longing as waves. The findings show that emotional experience is expressed through bodily and spatial experience and support the view that metaphor is part of human conceptualisation. However, the analysis emphasises the classification of metaphor types and image schemas. The discussion remains descriptive because metaphors are treated as examples of categories rather than as components of an integrated emotional system.

Trisnadi and Djuharie (2025) investigate conceptual metaphors in JVKE's

song “Golden Hour.” The study identifies dominant mappings, such as LOVE IS LIGHT, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, and EMOTION IS ELEVATION. By mapping movement, light, and natural phenomena to romantic feelings, the research demonstrates that song lyrics conceptualise emotion through sensory imagery. Although the study presents the relationship between source and target domains, it is limited to a single song and focuses on identifying individual metaphorical expressions. It does not analyse how similar maps work across multiple songs to construct a consistent representation of emotional attachment.

Previous studies therefore show that conceptual metaphor mapping can reveal emotional meaning in song lyrics, yet they generally analyse individual songs or focus on classifying metaphor types. Research that applies conceptual metaphor mapping across several songs within one album remains limited, particularly in studies of Mitski’s *Puberty 2*. Mitski’s lyrics repeatedly depict attachment, distance, waiting, and loss through bodily actions and spatial relations. These recurring metaphorical patterns suggest that attachment and loss experience is structured consistently rather than expressed randomly. Therefore, this study applies conceptual metaphor mapping to multiple songs in *Puberty 2* to examine how attachment and loss experience is constructed throughout the album.

1.2 Research Questions

This study focuses on identifying how emotional meaning in Mitski’s lyrics is structured through conceptual metaphor. The research concentrates on metaphorical mappings that connect concrete experience with abstract emotional states. The research questions are:

1. What conceptual metaphors of attachment and loss are found in Mitski’s

Puberty 2?

2. How do the mappings between source domains and target domains explain attachment and loss experience in the lyrics?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to analyse conceptual metaphors in Mitski's *Puberty 2* by identifying metaphorical expressions in the lyrics and examining their source and target domains. Through a corpus-based cognitive semantic approach, this research aims to discover recurring conceptual patterns and explain how these mappings structure the representation of abstract emotional experiences such as attachment and loss.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This research is limited to Mitski's 2016 album *Puberty 2*, focusing on the lyrics as textual data. The study examines metaphorical expressions and maps them into source domains and target domains. Musical arrangement, vocal performance, visual interpretation, and audience reception are not included in the analysis, as the research concentrates specifically on metaphor as a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it applies Conceptual Metaphor Theory to song lyrics and shows how emotional meaning is structured through systematic metaphorical mappings. The

research also expands the application of conceptual metaphor analysis from individual songs to multiple songs within a single album.

Practically, the study offers a structured analysis of Mitski's *Puberty 2*, which has rarely been examined using a cognitive linguistic approach. The findings may assist students and researchers in linguistics and literary studies in understanding how abstract experiences such as love, dependence, and loss are represented through concrete imagery in contemporary music. More broadly, the study shows how linguistic analysis can reveal patterns of meaning construction in artistic language.

1.6 State of the Art

This research addresses the gap by analysing Mitski's *Puberty 2* as a unified album and combining conceptual metaphor mapping with semantic recognition to identify repeated lexical and conceptual patterns. The novelty lies in examining metaphor at the album level and revealing a consistent conceptual system of emotional attachment, loss, and vulnerability across the album.