Metaphors in Japanese Songs with the Theme of Hope

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the types of metaphors and determine the most frequently used metaphors in Japanese songs themed around "hope". This research employs a descriptive qualitative method using the metaphor theory proposed by Stephen Ullman. The data were collected using the simak catat technique and analyzed using a descriptive method. The results of the study show that from five Japanese songs used as the research objects, 13 metaphorical expressions were found, consisting of 7 anthropomorphic metaphors, 1 animal metaphor, 4 abstraction metaphors, and 1 synesthetic metaphor. Among these, anthropomorphic metaphors were the most frequently used type.

Keywords: *Hope, Japanese songs, Metaphor*

1. Introduction

Music is believed to have existed since prehistoric times, when humans had not yet developed the use of language as a means of communication. One of the oldest written pieces of evidence demonstrating that humans had been familiar with music for a long time is the *"Hurrian Hymn."* This hymn was written on a clay tablet and is estimated to date back to the 13th century BCE. It was discovered along the coast of Syria (Circle through New York, 2017). In general, humans can distinguish ordinary sounds from music based on pitch and rhythm; therefore, sounds that possess particular pitches and rhythmic patterns can generally be considered music. Nevertheless, ethnomusicologists have formulated the idea that the definition of music varies from one individual to another, depending on cultural conditioning, personal characteristics, and group identity (Herndon & McLeod, 1982).

As time has passed, music has developed into a vast and diverse form of expression. Music combined with sung lyrics is then referred to as a song. Nowadays, songs are considered a universal and powerful medium or means of conveying messages and emotions (Izen, Cassano-Coleman, & Piazza, 2023). Music or songs are capable of eliciting different responses from each individual at the psychological level, depending on their cultural background and personality. Furthermore, phenomena and cultural aspects within a country can also influence the common themes found in songs from that country.

This research is being inspired by a previous similar study with the title of *Metaphor Analysis in Japanese Songs with the Theme of Suicide* by Pambudi and others (2021). In this study, the writer stated that many suicide cases happened in Japan especially in the age of teenager. Some of the main contributing factors include high levels of depression resulting from demanding life pressures and the widespread occurrence of *cyberbullying*. This phenomenon has subsequently been adopted as a theme in songs by many Japanese musicians. Compared to other countries, Japan produces the largest number of songs centered on suicide-related themes. Researchers have therefore selected Japanese songs with suicide-related themes

as the object of their study.

The metaphor theory used in this study is Stephen Ullman's metaphor theory. According to Ullman (as cited in Widiyantari, 2012), metaphors can be classified into four types: **1) anthropomorphic metaphor**, a type of metaphor derived from human body parts or human characteristics that are attributed to inanimate objects; **2) zoomorphic metaphor**, a type of metaphor derived from animals; **3) abstracting metaphor**, a type of metaphor that involves transferring a concrete experience to an abstract experience or vice versa; and **4) synesthetic metaphor**, a type of metaphor that involves transferring a human sensory concept or sense to something else.

This study will use five Japanese songs: *Hakujitsu* by King Gnu, *Mirai* by GARNiDELiA, *Now or Never* by nano, *Gurenge* by LiSA, and *Kizuna no Kiseki* by MAN WITH A MISSION × milet. The songs will be selected using the *purposive sampling* method, ensuring that the selected songs meet the requirements of the study. Data will be collected in the form of excerpts from the song lyrics that contain one of Ullman's types of metaphor, using the listening-and-note-taking method. The data will be analyzed using a descriptive method.

2. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method because the data used are not numerical but rather in the form of song lyrics. The data are analyzed using a descriptive method. The object of this study is Japanese songs themed around hope. The smallest unit of analysis serving as the data in this study is the lyrics of the Japanese songs selected for the research. The data sources for this study consist of five Japanese songs themed around hope. The songs were selected using the purposive sampling method based on the title and message conveyed by each song. The five songs were selected based on personal research on Japanese songs with the theme of hope.

The data in this study consist of excerpts from the lyrics of the five songs selected by the researcher. The data were collected using the *listening-and-note-taking technique*, in which the researcher carefully listened to and examined the lyrics of each song. The song lyrics were then translated into Indonesian using the *Japanese–Indonesian Dictionary* (Matsuura, 2005), along with the researcher's Japanese–Indonesian translation skills. Lyrics containing or employing one of the four types of metaphors proposed by Stephen Ullman were then selected as the targets of analysis. *Rei Kai Gakushū Kokugo Jiten* sixth edition (1990) is also used to ensure the meaning of every Japanese word being used in the metaphorical analysis stay in its true meaning.

Stephen Ullmann's metaphor theory is the base theory for categorizing and analyzing in this study. According to Ullmann (1962), metaphors can be classified into four types. First, anthropomorphic metaphor. This type of metaphor uses parts of the human body or human characteristics, such as actions or behaviors that can be performed by humans. These body parts or characteristics are then transferred to inanimate objects. An example is "the leg of a table." The table leg is a part of the table that supports it and keeps it standing, similar to how human legs enable a person to stand. Another example is "a singing bell." A bell is an inanimate object that cannot sing like a human; however, because the sound produced by a bell has a particular pitch and rhythm, it is metaphorically likened to the sound of a person singing. Second, zoomorphic metaphor. A metaphor can be classified as a zoomorphic metaphor when it is related to animals or animal characteristics. An example is, "The dancer moves as nimbly as a monkey." Because monkeys are capable of moving nimbly and agilely, a person who can move freely and quickly is metaphorically likened to a monkey in motion.

Third, abstracting metaphor. This type of metaphor involves transferring a concrete

experience to an abstract experience and vice versa, from something abstract to something concrete. An example of this metaphor is "high blood pressure." *High* represents an abstract concept because it does not have a physical form, while *blood* is a red fluid found in the bodies of humans and animals that functions to transport oxygen and other substances throughout the body. Fourth, synesthetic metaphor. This type of metaphor involves transferring a concept or sensation perceived by the human senses to something else. For example, transferring sensations perceived through the human senses of hearing, touch, and taste can produce metaphors such as "his voice is pleasant to listen to" or "this music sounds soothing to the heart."

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Anthropomorphic metaphor

1. 世界がキミを弾き出しても
   *Sekai ga kimi o **hajikidashite** mo*
   Even if the world **rejects** you

   (*Mirai* - GARNiDELiA)

   The lyrics above use an anthropomorphic metaphor because *rejects* is an action that can only be performed by humans; however, in these lyrics, the world, which is an inanimate entity, is portrayed as being capable of rejecting someone.

2. 数えきれないこの傷だけが僕の昨日を残像として語る
   *Kazoekirenai kono kizu dake ga boku no kinou wo zanzou to shite **kataru***
   Only these countless wounds **speak** of my past as a lingering image

   (*Now or Never* - Nano)

   The lyrics above use an anthropomorphic metaphor because *speaking* is an action that can only be performed by humans; however, in these lyrics, wounds, which are inanimate objects, are portrayed as being capable of speaking.

3. *All the words go around in my head*

   (*Now or Never* - Nano)

   The lyrics above use an anthropomorphic metaphor because *spinning* is an action that words should not be capable of performing; however, in these lyrics, words are portrayed as being capable of spinning.

4. *I can see a truth that **hides** beyond your eyes*

   (*Now or Never* - Nano)

   The lyrics above use an anthropomorphic metaphor because *hiding* is an action that can only be performed by living beings, such as humans and animals. However, in these lyrics, truth, which is an abstract concept, is portrayed as being capable of hiding.

5. 世界に打ちのめされて
   Sekai ni ***uchinomesarete***
   Beaten down by the world

   (*Gurenge* - LiSA)

   The lyrics above use an anthropomorphic metaphor because *beating* is an action that can only be performed by humans; however, in these lyrics, the world is portrayed as being capable of beating someone down.

6. 戸惑う心
   Tomadou *kokoro*
   A **confused** heart

   (*Gurenge* - LiSA)

   The lyrics above use an anthropomorphic metaphor because confusion is a cognitive state that is characteristic of humans; however, in these lyrics, the heart, which is an organ of the body, is portrayed as being capable of experiencing confusion.

7. 絆が紡いで生まれた奇跡を
   Kizuna ga tsumuide ***umareta*** *kiseki wo*
   The miracle **born** from the bonds we have woven

   (*Kizuna no Kiseki* - MAN WITH A MISSION x milet)

   The lyrics above use an anthropomorphic metaphor because *giving birth* is an action that can only be performed by humans or animals; however, in these lyrics, bonds, which are an abstract concept, are portrayed as being capable of giving birth to a miracle.

3.2. Zoomorphic metaphor

1. 蛇の道数多の罪
   Ja *no michi amata no tsumi*
   A **serpent's** path, countless sins

   (*Kizuna no Kiseki* - MAN WITH A MISSION x milet)

   The lyrics above use a zoomorphic metaphor through the use of the word *snake*. The concept of a snake is used metaphorically to represent a particular path or way associated with countless sins. The use of the word *snake* draws upon the characteristics and associations of an animal and transfers them to an abstract concept of a path or way of life.

3.3. Abstracting metaphor

1. 真っ白に全てさよなら
   Masshiro *ni subete sayonara*
   A **pure white** farewell to everything

   (*Hakujitsu* - King Gnu)

   The lyrics above use an abstracting metaphor because *pure white* is a concrete concept that is used to represent an abstract state of erasing or leaving behind the speaker's past experiences. In the context of King Gnu's *Hakujitsu*, the expression *pure white* refers to the falling snow, which is portrayed as being capable of covering and hiding everything. Therefore, the pure white snow symbolizes the speaker's desire to conceal painful memories and say farewell to everything associated with the past.

2. 光のようにキミを包み込めるように
   Hikari *no you ni kimi o tsutsumikomeru you ni*
   So that I can envelop you like **light**

   (*Mirai* - GARNiDELiA)

   The lyrics above use an abstracting metaphor because *light* is a concrete phenomenon that is used to represent the abstract concepts of hope, guidance, and emotional support. In these lyrics, the speaker wishes to envelop and protect the listener like light. The use of *light* suggests the speaker's desire to guide and support the person when they are lost or facing difficulties.

3. 運命が解けても今
   Unmei *ga hodokete mo ima*
   Even if fate **unravels** now

   (*Now or Never* - Nano)

   The lyrics above use an abstracting metaphor because *unraveling* is a concrete action that is transferred to the abstract concept of fate. Fate is an abstract concept that cannot literally be tied or unraveled; however, in these lyrics, fate is portrayed as something that can be unraveled. This metaphor suggests that the speaker is willing to continue following his own path even if his predetermined fate falls apart.

4. 痛みも悲しみも拭いきれず
   Itami *mo* ***kanashimi*** *mo nugui-kirezu*
   Unable to wipe away the **pain** and **sadness**

   (*Kizuna no Kiseki* - MAN WITH A MISSION x milet)

   The lyrics above use an abstracting metaphor because *wiping away* is a concrete action that is transferred to the abstract concepts of *pain* and *sadness*. *Pain* and *sadness* are abstract emotions that cannot literally be wiped away; however, in these lyrics, they are portrayed as something that can be physically removed. This metaphor illustrates the speaker's inability to completely overcome the pain and sadness they have experienced, while the following lyrics emphasize their determination to keep moving forward despite these emotions.

3.4. Synesthetic metaphor

1. **夜の匂いに**
   *Yoru no **nioi** ni*
   In the **scent** of the night

   (*Gurenge* - LiSA)

   The lyrics above use a synesthetic metaphor because *scent* is a sensation perceived through the sense of smell, but in these lyrics, it is associated with *night*, which cannot literally possess a scent. The expression *the scent of the night* transfers a sensory experience from the sense of smell to the concept of night. In the context of LiSA's *Gurenge*, this expression creates an image of the dark and uncertain atmosphere surrounding the speaker as they face their struggles and recognize that they must change through their own efforts.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, the following research findings were obtained. The song *Hakujitsu* by King Gnu contains one metaphor, namely an abstracting metaphor. The song *Mirai* by GARNiDELiA contains two metaphors, namely one anthropomorphic metaphor and one abstracting metaphor. The song *Now or Never* by Nano contains four metaphors, namely three anthropomorphic metaphors and one abstracting metaphor. The song *Gurenge* by LiSA contains three metaphors, namely two anthropomorphic metaphors and one synesthetic metaphor. The song *Kizuna no Kiseki* by MAN WITH A MISSION × milet contains three metaphors, namely one anthropomorphic metaphor, one zoomorphic metaphor, and one abstracting metaphor. Of the five songs analyzed, seven anthropomorphic metaphors, one zoomorphic metaphor, four abstracting metaphors, and one synesthetic metaphor were identified. Based on the research findings, anthropomorphic metaphors were the most frequently used type of metaphor.

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