Research Article

Broken Relationship Metaphors Portrayed in Taylor Swift's *Exile* (2020): A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective

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Abstract

Exile is a song written by Taylor Swift that describes a relationship that is no longer working on two people. This song describes a broken relationship through metaphors. This study aims to examine broken relationship metaphors in Taylor Swift's Exile through a cognitive linguistic perspective. The method used for this research is the non-participant observation and identity referential method. The result shows that there are several metaphors that indicate a broken relationship in that song, namely [RELATIONSHIP IS A FILM], [PARTNER IS A HOMELAND], [MOVING ON IS EXILE], [OPINION IS A BREAKING BRANCH], [MOVING ON IS A SIDE DOOR], and [UNCERTAINTY IS A THIN LINE]. In conclusion, this song describes a situation of a broken relationship that is expressed in a metaphorical way to set a scene of breaking up, misunderstanding, and showing different opinions from one to another.

Keywords: metaphor; exile; Taylor Swift

1. Background of the Study

Song, one of the arts that people are familiar with, has become one of the most crucial things in life. Through song, people can express their feeling without any hesitation. For instance, when someone tries to express her feeling about a certain condition but she cannot do it despite a certain reason, writing a song can help. She can write anything she wants without people judging her. One of the songwriters that tend to pour her feelings out is Taylor Swift. Taylor Swift, a singer-songwriter, has a magnificent way to express her feeling through her song. It is shown by one of her songs called Exile that describes a broken relationship that happens to a couple who tried their best to make things work, but it did not.

Creating a song can be a challenge for some people. Most of the people struggle with writing the lyric since it is an important aspect to look up to in finding a good song. When

people look for a meaningful song, they will see the lyrics and decide whether it is a good song or not. Writing song lyric is better when someone has the ability to write creatively. By writing creatively, it can attract more audience and will be such satisfaction for everyone who listens to it.

Writing creatively can be started by using figurative language since it can give variety in writing. One of the figurative languages that are commonly used to make the writing more colorful is metaphor. Metaphor is a cognitive capability for comprehending one concept to another [1]. In understanding and creating metaphor, it is crucial to have an experience that is stored in the mind, an understanding of the metaphor in the unconscious mind, and an interpretation from source-domain to target-domain [2].

There are several studies that talk about metaphors in the songs. The first study found that metaphor could be found in Valentine Taarab songs according to Ntabo [3]. He believed that different people see and interpret metaphor in different ways. It implied how he saw the metaphor in those songs and interpreted it according to his experience in life. Meanwhile, Lestari [4] found that the most used metaphor in Green Day's songs is ontological. She also believed the same thing as Ntabo that different people would interpret different metaphors as well. Meanwhile, in Yusuf and Amelia [5], they found that the metaphor theory could be integrated with the theory of meaning from Leech and Chaer. In Pradikta [6] he found the concept of love through metaphors in Ed Sheeran's songs. He used conceptual metaphors by Lakoff and Johnson to analyze the songs. In Maulana [7] he analyzed the metaphors using Crystal, Beckson, and Ganz's theory in selected lyrics of The Script, Katy Perry. and Michael Bublé. He found that the poetic metaphor is the metaphor that is not commonly used in his object of study. In Ntabo et. al [8], they investigate the metaphor meaning from EkeGusii's songs with Conceptual Metaphor Theory and folk conception of the generic Great Chain of Being Metaphor. They found that the meaning of the songs can be classified into three classifications from three kinds of metaphors: the benefit of education (animal metaphors), the challenge of education (plant metaphors), and the person who is educated (object metaphors). Septiyana [9] conducted metaphor research on Owl City's songs using the theory of Conceptual Metaphor by George Lakoff. She found that there are thirty conceptual metaphors in Owl City's songs. She also found that the most commonly used metaphor is [ANIMAL AS OBJECT] and [PEOPLE ARE OBJECT]. In Prakas [10], she conducted research about metaphor and mis-devotion in John Donne's Songs and Sonnets. She found that metaphorical expression in Donne's works somehow led to misinterpretation for people who read his work since the self-metaphorization came from the roots of the speakers themselves.

The most used figurative language in Taylor Swift's song is hyperbole. It is also found that her songs mostly describe a wounded heart and severe betrayal. In Kemuning and Sakinah [11], they analyze Sal Priadi's song called *Ikat Aku Di Tulang Belikatmu* with Pierce theory that includes a sign, object, and interpretant. They conclude that with a comprehensible symbol shown in the song, the listeners can understand the symbol easily.

The study of metaphor is not only coming from the song but also coming from other objects of the study such as a novel. In Ningrum [12], she discovered that conventional

metaphor and new metaphor were found in Colson's The Underground Railroad, using the theory of conceptual metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson. She found that conventional metaphors and new metaphors were used in her study. According to Mácha [13], he discovered that metaphor is an open-ended concept with the interpretation evolves continuously and has no clear end. In Guo [14], he investigated a metaphor translation in the Republic of Wine novel that was translated from Chinese to English. He concluded that translating metaphor from one language to another needs an understanding of the cognitive language environment of the target language. In addition, the preservation of the original metaphor is needed to create the best correlation effect for the new one.

From all of those previous studies mentioned above, those are discussing the metaphors and its application on songs and novels. This study aims to analyze the metaphors in a song. The novelty of this study is coming from the object that has not been used by others. The object was released in the middle of 2020, while the research itself was conducted in the early 2021. There are many studies regarding to Taylor Swift's work, however, this object has not been studied by anyone. The novelty from this theory is coming from the way metaphors are explained. When conducted a research, most people only use metaphor and its explanation in a paragraph. However, this study uses arrow to explain the mapping of the primary metaphors. This technique makes the reader comprehend about the complex metaphor shown easier. The theory for this study is using Lakoff and Johnson's theory of complex metaphor.

In examining complex metaphor, it is important to break down the primary metaphor first with the arrow that shows source domain and target domain. Moreover, since this study uses that technique, it is needed to have an example of analysis to conduct this research. According to Lakoff and Johnson [15], a complex metaphor consists of some primary metaphors. To create a complex metaphor, the cultural model, folk theories, understanding, or faith that is appropriate in a civilization, builds it. It is important to break down the complex metaphor into primary metaphor to be understood clearly, as in:

[A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY]

Journey   → Purposeful life
Traveller   → Person living a life
Destinations   → Life goals
Itinerary   → Life plan [2]

These mappings show that source domain and target domain have the similarity. It shows that a traveler should have an itinerary to help to reach its goal; so do the people, they need to prepare their itinerary to continue their life [2]. These mappings are comprehensible to the people since they have background knowledge about the journey and life.

According to Tannen in Garini (2020), there is one aspect differing between men and women regarding the way they speak called genderlect. Genderlect theory believes that a

speech uttered by people is always associated with their gender. There are six styles of
genderlect:

1. Status and connection
    Men tend to communicate to reach a status; meanwhile, women tend to
    communicate to establish a connection to others.
2. Report and rapport
    Men tend to establish a relationship by doing things together; instead, women
    preserve their relationship with others by conversation to reach intimacy since they
    are relationship-oriented type.
3. Public and private speaking
    Men talk more publicly than women do to achieve a better social status and share
    information, while women talk more privately since they talk to connect people
    intimately.
4. Interrupting and listening
    Men tend to interrupt rather than to listen since they think the act of listening is an
    act of subservient. On the other hand, women tend to listen without interrupting
    and ask questions to show support and clarify something.
5. Jokes and stories
    Men use jokes to bring others down and to put themselves in a higher position,
    while women use jokes to put themselves as the victims to enhance the sympathetic
    connection.
6. Conflicts
    Men use conflict for establishing their status and make them less inclined to turn
    away, while women perceive conflict as a danger that has to be avoided.

In using language, women face linguistic prejudice in two different ways: how they
are trained to use language and how general language usage regards them. Women tend to
be told how they should talk. It leads to the impact of 'women's language' that submerges
a woman's character by limiting her self-expression strongly. In addition, they denied
access to control the authority since the linguistic behaviour shows of their incapability of
doing so [16].

As mentioned above, Taylor Swift can write a beautiful work of art in the form of
song lyrics. She frequently uses metaphors to make her songs aesthetically pleasing. Thus,
this study aims to examine broken relationship metaphors in Taylor Swift's song using the
theory of complex metaphor with the perspective of cognitive linguistics. This study will
explain two main points: the broken relationship metaphors portrayed in Taylor Swift's
Exile and its value conveyed from the song.

2. Methods

This research is counted as descriptive-qualitative research. The writers employed a
descriptive manner to clarify the data adequately while describing it. The writers chose
metaphors in the song to break down from complex metaphor to primary metaphor and to

dig the value inside it. The writer used an album called Folklore that consists of 17 songs. However, since the needed datum is only a song that contains broken relationship metaphors, the writer only used a song called Exile. In collecting the data, the writer used non-participant observation.

To collect the data, the writer listened to the song while checking the lyric through a trusted lyric generator website called *genius.com.* For analyzing the data, the writer used the identity referential method. The writer began to analyze the data by examining each song on the album. Then, the writer decided which song had broken relationship metaphors. Finally, the metaphors were analyzed using Lakoff's theory of embodied metaphor and complex metaphors.

3. Results and Discussion

This part will explain two main points: the broken relationship metaphors portrayed in Taylor Swift's *Exile* and its value conveyed from the song. This article will examine how broken relationship metaphors are constructed through the embodiment of human experiences in seeing a relationship. This article will show several things that commonly found in a broken relationship such as the relationship itself, a partner, an act of moving on, an opinion, and an uncertainty. These aspects will conceptualize the broken relationship portrayed in the song. Since there is a man and a woman involved in this song, there will be a point of view about the relationship from each of them

3.1 Broken Relationship Metaphor

This part will examine how broken relationship metaphors are explained by primary metaphor and complex metaphor. There are six kinds of metaphors namely [RELATIONSHIP IS A FILM], [PARTNER IS A HOMELAND], [EXILE IS MOVING ON], [OPINION IS THE BREAKING BRANCH], [MOVING ON IS A SIDE DOOR], and [UNCERTAINTY IS A THIN LINE]

3.1.1 [RELATIONSHIP IS A FILM]

I think I've seen this film before
And I didn't like the ending
Primary metaphors:
Film → relationship
Complex metaphors:
According to Ungerer and Schmid (2006), there are three kinds of aspects in seeing a metaphor: source domain, target domain, and mapping scope. Source domain is a domain that explains the explained element, while a target domain is a domain that is being explained by the source domain. These two domains are interrelating with each other. To connect those two, it is needed a component that draws between them, which is called mapping scope. Mapping scope is a reflection of how we see the world regarding our conceptual experience.

Since this metaphor sees a relationship as a film, we need to understand a film in general. In general, a film has three components: actors, a plot, and an ending. Since the term of a film applies in a relationship, we can see that the source domain and target domain are explained as the actors are the ex-couples, the plot is how the situation going and the ending of a film is how the relationship ends. To appreciate and understand the film's plot completely, it is crucial to watch the film until it reaches the finale. The finale itself varies from a good one to the bad one. In this case, the narrator said that she did not like the finale, which indicates that the finale was not good as she expected. If we correlate the film with the relationship, it means the relationship did not end well. They are no longer share life as partners; in other words, they broke up.

3.1.2. [PARTNER IS A HOMELAND]

You're not my homeland anymore
So what am I defendin' now?
Primary metaphors:
Homeland → partner
Complex metaphors:

Homeland is one of the important places in someone's life. It is a place where someone grows and makes memories with his beloved ones. Defending one's homeland is a form of reciprocation for the land itself as the land has provided someone with safety, memoirs, and lessons. Since metaphor is coming from our everyday experience which is later stored in our unconscious mind, we can think in a metaphorical way instantly (Lakoff, 1999). If we correlate the word homeland with a partner with our everyday life, there is a similarity between those two: both of them are giving the same comfort to someone. Since this metaphor portrayed a partner as a homeland, the lyrics you're not my homeland anymore imply that the partners are already broken up. If someone who is in a relationship broke up, they will not be taking care of each other anymore. If one of them is in trouble, the other will not defend one anymore. Things changed when they broke up. Hence, this metaphor implies that they will not defend each other as partners.

According to Tannen in Garini (2020) regarding to the genderlect theory, men tend to communicate to reach a status. Since this metaphor was said by a man, it implies that the man wanted to own his status in a relationship. On the other hand, the man had broke up with his partner and it caused him to question his position to his ex partner.

3.1.3. [MOVING ON IS EXILE]

You were my town
Now I'm in exile seein' you out
Primary metaphor:
Exile → move on
Complex metaphors:

According to the theory of experiential view by Ungerer and Schmid (2006), the experiential view is created by a shared experience of the world. If we see the word exile in this metaphor, we know that exile is an activity of being compelled to leave one's homeland and forbidden to return. Our mind perceives exile as something hurtful since it causes us to be far away from something or someone we love. The metaphor Moving On Is Exile implies that the partner had to move on since they already broke up and no longer together. They were no longer taking care of each other and fell out of love from one to another. For this reason, they became strangers. As the matter of fact, they had to move on by forgetting all the memories they had and moved forward with their life.

3.1.4. [OPINION IS A BREAKING BRANCH]

Second, third, and hundredth chances
Balancin' on breaking branches
Primary metaphors:
Branch → opinion
Complex metaphors:

According to the theory of the Idealized Cognitive Model by Ungerer and Schmid (2006), the action of conceptualizing something is coming from the experience that is connected to the mind. Since it is coming from our experience, our sensorimotor system also plays role in shaping the concept (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). One of the sensorimotor systems includes in this metaphor is see and feel. Branch, if we perceive it with a sensorimotor system, is a fragile object that can be broken easily. If we see branch and opinion in terms of metaphorical point of view, both branch and opinion have a similarity: both of them are fragile. Since the opinion is fragile, it may cause a different perception from people who are arguing from one to another. In this case, the people who are arguing are the partner that has turned into an ex-partner. They tried to balance their opinion (as in balancing on breaking branches) too many times, but they failed. This failure caused the relationship to become delicate and did not work out as they hoped. In addition, it is difficult to mend what has already been broken. Branches are fragile, and so does the relationship.

If we look closer to the opinion that is easily broken, we can perceive that the opinion thrown was not as strong as it should be. Since the person who spoke this metaphor is a woman, we can correlate this metaphor with the theory by Lakoff (1973) that says, "Women tend to limit her self-expression as what the society told them." Hence, this situation makes the woman to limit her self-expression, which leads her giving a weak opinion on her relationship.

3.1.5. [MOVING ON IS A SIDE DOOR]

So I'm leavin' out the side door
So step right out there is no amount of crying I can do for you

Primary metaphors:
Side door   → moving on
Complex metaphors:
According to the theory of experiential view by Ungerer and Schmid (2006), a concept can be constructed from an experiential element that is commonly found in everyday experience. The element itself can be grasped and proceed to communicate the thought. A familiar object can be used to understand something in terms of another. If we look at the metaphor Moving On Is A Side Door and focus on a side door, a side door is as an escape route replacing the main entrance. It is not the primary door, but it might be functional for individuals who need to enter or exit the building. If we correlate a door with a phrase moving on, the side door might refer to something new in the narrator's life. It can be in the form of a new partner, a new relationship, or a new life. Therefore, moving on is portrayed as a side door. This metaphor implies that the narrator wishes to move on since she had enough crying over her partner. Leaving through the side door may also refer to the act of leaving it all behind without doubt. When someone has had enough of the relationship, she will leave both her lover and her past behind.

3.1.6. [UNCERTAINTY IS A THIN LINE]

We always walked a very thin line
You didn't even hear me out
You never gave a warning sign (I gave so many signs)
Primary metaphors:
Thin line → uncertainty
Complex metaphors:
According to the theory of attentional view by Ungerer and Schmid (2006), we tend to focus reading on what draws our attention the most. Here, the attention goes firstly to *a thin line*. Walking on a thin line is an idiom for maintaining balance on two opposing sides. When two opposing sides come together, there must be a line to separate them. In this metaphor, it is obvious that these partners were attempting to maintain the balance of their opposing viewpoints. The woman was attempting to offer an implicit clue of their tumultuous relationship, but the man could not comprehend what she was saying since the clue was not clear enough. In this situation, a thin line may also show an attempt of a woman who was trying to warn their relationship. She warned it with an implicit clue because she wanted to avoid conflicts with him. This situation goes along with the genderlect theory by Tannen in Garini (2020) that women tend to avoid conflict in their relationship, so that they only give a warning sign instead of a clear sign.

3.2. Values of the Song

People tend to have a vision of having a beautiful relationship with their partners. However, not all of the things they wished for are granted. Some people tried to work on a relationship by doing many ways. Still, it did not work out as they expected.

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Here, *Exile* describes a relationship that did not work out and turned partners into ex-partners. This song describes how a broken relationship happened in a sequence of a film.

The first scene was about ex-partners –a man and a woman– who were accidentally in the same room. The first verse was coming from the man's point of view in seeing his ex-partner with someone else. He was jealous as he saw his ex-partner was doing well and happy with her new partner.

The second scene was about how the woman reflects her old relationship with her ex-partner that did not work out for both of them. Still, in the same place, she was aware that the ex-partner was staring at her with a new man. She knew that he was jealous of seeing this view. In her monologue, she said that she used to warn about their relationship with signs, but the man did not get it. Tired of giving signs that are not understood by the man, she decided to break up and move on from her old relationship (as in *leaving at the side door*).

The third scene was a conversation that would not happen in real life: two individuals arguing with each other about their relationship, yet they were no longer together as partners. The man believed that he did not receive any sign regarding to their relationship, yet he did not try to understand what the woman wanted. On the other hand, the woman believed that she already told the man with many signs which clearly the man did not get.

From this song, we can conclude that good communication is essential for people in a relationship. Since the way men and women communicate differently, Lakoff believes that women's speech is designed to restrict them from making bold comments and tend to prevent chaos in their connection (1973). Here, this theory aligns with the application: woman uses signs to halt the chaos. However, if one person in a relationship feels like something wrong, she has to say it clearly without being afraid of ruining the relationship. It is also believed that men tend to interrupt rather than to listen [16]. In this song, it shows that the man did not get the sign since he did not listen to the woman carefully (as in *you didn't even hear me out, I gave so many signs*). It becomes apparent that the way they communicate did not synchronize from one to another. They have to fix their communication to understand each other. The value that can be grasped from the song is: if you want your relationship to work well, you have to fix your communication skill. As a man, you need to learn to listen instead of talking too much to fulfill your ego. As a woman, you have to say what you want as comprehensible as it is even if it causes chaos. Being in a chaotic relationship for some time is natural: you do not have to be in a perfect relationship for all time. The fights will give luminous colors to your relationship and becoming a medium for you to understand each other. In addition, partners must recognize the needs of each other so that the relationship will work smoothly. An understanding can help to prevent chaos in the future.

4. Conclusion

This part will discuss the conclusion of the article. From this article, it is clear that metaphors can implicitly deliver something to people who read them. It also shows that Exile contains various metaphors describing broken relationships: breaking up,

misunderstanding, and differing in seeing opinions. It also shows that women and men tend to communicate differently regarding to their gender. Men tend to speak more bluntly than women do. Men are also fine with conflict when women see conflict as something threatening. This song tells those criteria clearly: when the man feels like there is nothing happened, the women perceive it differently according to their point of view. It concludes that men and women perceive things differently regarding the broken relationship.

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