

**THE USE OF METAPHORS IN THE ALBUM  
POEMS, PRAYERS AND PROMISES BY JOHN DENVER**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research, entitled “The Use of Metaphors in Album Poems, Prayers and Promises by John Denver” aims to identify, classify, and analysis the metaphorical expressions embedded in the lyrics. Guided by Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory—structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors—the research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, using twelve songs from the album as primary data. The findings reveal a consistent and meaningful application of metaphorical language that transforms abstract ideas including time, memory, and emotion into more tangible concepts, enhancing lyrical depth and emotional resonance. The study concludes that metaphor in Denver’s songwriting is not merely decorative, but serves as a cognitive tool that shapes understanding and strengthens the connection between artistic expression and human experience, thereby contributing to broader discussions in semantic and cognitive linguistic research.

**Kata kunci:** *Conceptual Metaphors, Cognitive Linguistics, Types of Metaphors, Song Lyric, John Denver*

**INTRODUCTION**

Language is not just a means of communication, but rather a fundamental system used by individuals to understand, construct, and interpret reality. Language plays an important role in our lives Bloomfield (1933: 3). According to O'grady & Dobrovolsky (1992: 1), language has many meanings, namely a communication system, a medium of thought, a vehicle for literary expression, a social institution, a source of political controversy, and a catalyst for national development. Dinneen (1967: 10) explains that language is a network of contrasts that are arbitrary and systematic, each language deserves to be seen as something unique. In language, a discipline called linguistics is studied as a basis for understanding the structure and meaning of language.

Linguistics serves as a scientific foundation for understanding how language functions, not only in its structure but also in its meaning, use, and social impact. Linguistics is defined as the study of language systems by Brinton (2000: 10). In its development, Brinton (2000: 4) states that linguistic signs involve sequences of

sounds that represent concrete and abstract objects and events. Lyons (1981: 37) explains that linguistics is usually defined as the science of language or, alternatively, as the scientific study of language.

Semantics plays a crucial role in understanding how meaning operates in language. Hurford and Heasley (2007: 1) define semantics broadly, namely as the study of meaning in language. Furthermore, Yule (2010: 112) provides a more detailed definition of semantics, namely as the study of the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. Based on the above definitions, the authors conclude that semantics, a linguistic discipline, investigates the meaning conveyed by words, phrases, and sentences. In this study, specifically regarding the meaning of words and phrases, there is an analytical approach that examines how figurative language can be translated or equated with literal language, with metaphor as a prominent illustrative example.

Metaphors serve more than just a decorative function in language; they also reflect how humans internalize and interpret their world. For most people, metaphors are a tool of poetic imagination and a remarkable development in rhetoric, not just ordinary language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 3). According to Kovecses (2010: 4), metaphor is defined as the understanding of one conceptual realm in relation to another. The study of metaphor in language reveals how humans naturally tend to construct abstract concepts in relation to more concrete experiences. Based on our understanding of metaphor in language, it is important to explore how metaphors manifest in songs and lyrics, which represent a unique form of linguistic and artistic expression.

John Denver is a singer and songwriter known for his ability to convey ideas and life experiences through lyrics that are poetic and rich in emotional and philosophical values. One of his works, the album *Poems, Prayers and Promises*, presents reflective themes about life, the relationship between humans and nature, and spirituality, expressed through simple yet meaningful diction. The uniqueness of the lyrics in this album lies in the use of metaphors that function not only as an aesthetic element, but also as a conceptual medium to convey abstract messages in a more concrete and imaginative way. The dominant use of metaphors in the album makes it relevant to study from a linguistic perspective, particularly in analysis how the metaphorical structures used are able to represent the outlook on life and the depth of emotion that John Denver wants to express to his listeners.

The writer examines the album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* with a focus on John Denver's use of metaphorical language to express complex emotions and ideas through simple yet meaningful lyrics. The album is significant for its consistent use of natural elements as metaphoric representations of emotion, spirituality, and existential reflection, which contribute to the poetic quality and emotional depth of the songs. The writer aims to identify and classify the types of metaphors present in the album and to analyze the deeper meanings they convey within Denver's artistic expression. Through the integration of these metaphor types, the album not only narrates personal experiences but also creates a strong emotional resonance with

listeners. This accessibility helps ensure the message or emotion conveyed reaches the audience effectively. After exploring the theoretical foundations of semantics, metaphor, and its role in song lyrics, this study focuses on examining these linguistic elements in the work of John Denver, a prominent figure in American folk and country music.

## **METHOD**

In this research a qualitative descriptive research method is applied. Qualitative research is also descriptive research, meaning that the result of data analysis is not in the form of numbers, but text words that function as descriptions. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018).

As preparation, the writer read books, journals, and previous scientific works that discuss conceptual metaphor theory and semantic analysis. This activity aimed to build a comprehensive theoretical framework and ensure the research had a strong academic foundation before entering the data collection stage. Furthermore, the writer emphasized the focus and limitations of the study to ensure the analysis process was systematic and aligned with the research objectives.

In the data collection process, the writer collected data through documentation procedures by collecting complete lyrics from all the songs in the album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* by John Denver. Lyrics were obtained from credible online sources and then verified through careful listening and reading of the lyrics to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. The collected data was then structurally organized by numbering each line, facilitating the identification of metaphorical elements during the analysis.

The data analysis was conducted using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, where each identified metaphor was examined in depth through interpretation of the lyrical context, literal meaning, and metaphorical meaning. The writer examined each line of the lyrics to identify metaphorical expressions, based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, and interpret the relationship between the source and target domains. Through this process, the analysis not only revealed the conceptual structure that builds these metaphors but also showed how metaphorical expressions in John Denver's lyrics represent abstract concepts through more concrete experiences. Thus, this analysis phase aims to describe the conceptual meaning, emotional depth, aesthetic value, and thematic ideas expressed through the use of metaphorical language in these songs.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Identification and Classification the Types of Metaphors in the Album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* by John Denver**

#### **a. Classification the Types of Metaphors in the Album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* by John Denver**

The identification and classification of metaphors found in the twelve songs on the album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* by John Denver. Based on the analysis

of the entire lyrics, 50 metaphorical data were identified, which were then categorized based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory framework. The classification was carried out into three types of metaphors: ontological metaphors, structural metaphors, and orientational metaphors. From the classification process, 37 ontological metaphors, 9 structural metaphors, and 4 orientational metaphors were obtained. These results indicate that ontological metaphors are the category that appears most frequently in the album. These findings indicate that the understanding of abstract concepts in John Denver's song lyrics is predominantly realized through the depiction of concrete objects or experiences as representations of meaning.

1) **“Poems, Prayers and Promises”**

There are 7 metaphors, consisting of 2 structural metaphors, 1 orientational metaphor, and 4 ontological metaphors.

a) **Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *And dance across the mountains on the moon* (V3/L41)

b) **Orientation Metaphor**

Data 1 *The days they pass so quickly now* (V3/L30)

c) **Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *And things that we believe in*  
(Chorus/L23)

2) **“Let It Be”**

There are 5 metaphors, consisting of 2 structural metaphors and 3 ontological metaphors.

a) **Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *There will be an answer*  
(Chorus/L15)

b) **Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Mother Mary comes to me* (V1/L2)

3) **“My Sweet Lady”**

There are 2 metaphors, both of which are ontological metaphors.

a) **Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Lady, are you happy? Do you feel the way I do?* (V1/L8)

4) **“Wooden Indian”**

There are 3 metaphors, consisting of 1 ontological metaphor and 2 orientational metaphors.

a) **Orientation Metaphor**

Data 1 *And you drove me in the ground* (V2/L13)

d) **Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Painted dreams inside my head* (V1/L6)

5) **“Junk”**

There are 2 metaphors, consisting of 1 ontological metaphor and 1 structural metaphor.

- a) **Structural Metaphor**  
Data 1 *Why, why says the junk in the yard* (V1/L7)
- b) **Ontological Metaphor**  
Data 1 *Memories for you and me* (V2/L13)
- 6) **“Gospel Changes”**  
There are 3 metaphors, consisting of 2 structural metaphors and 1 ontological metaphor.
- a) **Structural Metaphor**  
Data 1 *He was workin’ his way back home now* (V1/L2)
- b) **Ontological Metaphor**  
Data 1 *Now we got new names and faces* (V1/L11)
- 7) **“Take Me Home, Country Roads”**  
There are 6 metaphors, all of which are ontological metaphors.
- a) **Ontological Metaphor**  
Data 1 *West Virginia, mountain mama* (V1/L7)  
Data 2 *Life is old there, older than the trees* (V1/L3)
- 8) **“I Guess He’d Rather Be in Colorado”**  
There is 3 metaphor, all including ontological metaphor.
- a) **Ontological Metaphor**  
Data 1 *The sky looks like a pearl after the rain* (V1/L2)  
Data 2 *To the stars he makes and askin’ them the bus fare*  
(V1/L4)
- 9) **“Sunshine on My Shoulders”**  
There are 5 metaphors, consisting of 4 ontological metaphors and 1 orientational metaphor.
- a) **Orientation Metaphor**  
Data 1 *Sunshine almost always makes me high* (V1/L7–8)
- b) **Ontological Metaphor**  
Data 1 *Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy* (V1/L1–2)
- 10) **“Around and Around”**  
There is 5 metaphor, consists of 4 ontological metaphors and 1 structural metaphor.
- a) **Structural Metaphor**  
Data 1 *Doesn’t take much time to pass by me* (V1/L2)
- b) **Ontological Metaphor**  
Data 1 *Dreams full of promises* (V1/L7)
- 11) **“Fire and Rain”**  
There are 5 metaphors, consisting of 3 ontological metaphors and 2 structural metaphors.
- a) **Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *I walked out this morning and I wrote down this song* (V1/L3)

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *I've seen fire and I've seen rain* (V1/L5)

**12) "The Box"**

There are 4 metaphors, all of which are ontological metaphors.

**a) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *For opening up that deadly box of war* (V2/L22)

**2. Analysis of Metaphorical Meaning in Album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* by John Denver**

In order to analysis of the metaphorical meaning found in the song lyrics on the album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* by John Denver. Based on a study of the mapping of the relationship between the source and target domains in each metaphor, it was found that the use of metaphors in this album generally projects concrete concepts, such as nature, travel, and physical space, to represent abstract concepts related to human experience, including hope, time, growth, and emotional relationships. The connotative meanings revealed through the analysis indicate that these metaphors do not merely function as linguistic sweeteners, but act as cognitive instruments that facilitate the construction of meaning about life. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate a tendency towards the representation of aesthetic values, spirituality, and personal reflection that demonstrates human closeness to nature and a philosophical perspective on the journey of life. Thus, the analysis of metaphorical meaning in this chapter confirms the contribution of metaphors in enriching the artistic and emotional messages contained in John Denver's musical works.

**1) "*Poems, Prayers and Promises*"**

There are 7 metaphors, consisting of 2 structural metaphors, 1 orientational metaphor, and 4 ontological metaphors.

**a) Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *And **dance** across the mountains on the moon* (V3/L41)

Metaphorical Words: *dance*

Target: Life adventure

Source: Dance (free movement full of expression)

This lyric has a literal meaning: humans cannot dance on mountains or on the moon. However, metaphorically, life's adventure is depicted as a free, expressive dance that traverses impossible challenges and possibilities. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears as an imaginative passage that emphasizes optimism, creativity, and enthusiasm for life. The song is about enjoying life's journey, overcoming obstacles, and expressing oneself freely. Within the conceptual framework, *life is a dance*, life is understood as a series of beautiful, creative, and vibrant movements. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes that even though life is full of challenges, experiences can be enjoyed with grace and optimism.

**b) Orientation Metaphor**

Data 1 *The days they pass so quickly now* (V3/L30)

Metaphorical Words: *days, pass*

Target: Time (days)

Source: Forward motion

The lyrics have a literal meaning: the days do indeed go by, but metaphorically, time is understood as something that moves past us, making it feel fleeting and unstoppable. Within the context of the song, this line emerged as the author reflected on life's journey, mortality, and the realization that every moment is precious. The song explores the importance of appreciating time, memories, and the fleeting experiences of life. Within this conceptual framework, *time is motion*, time is understood as a continuous flow that passes through humans, emphasizing the transience and inevitability of change. Connotatively, this metaphor encourages listeners to appreciate every moment and recognize the brevity of life.

### c) Ontological Metaphor

Data 1 *And things that we believe in*

(Chorus/L23)

Metaphorical Words: *believe*

Target: Believe

Source: Concrete objects that can be owned

This lyric has a literal meaning, *believe* is not a tangible object that can be owned. However, metaphorically, faith is treated as something that can be owned, guarded, and held onto. In the context of the song *Poems, Prayers and Promises*. This excerpt appears in a reflective section that discusses life's journey and the things that provide meaning and inner peace. The song is about reflecting on everyday life, appreciating simple moments, and finding peace through prayer, hope, and personal reflection. Within the conceptual framework *believe is a possession* faith is understood as a life principle that provides direction and inner stability. Connotatively, this song emphasizes that faith is an important foundation that supports humans in facing life's journey, change, and the transience of time.

## 2) "Let It Be"

There are 5 metaphors, consisting of 2 structural metaphors and 3 ontological metaphors.

### a) Structural Metaphor

Data 1 *There will be an answer*

(Chorus/L15)

Metaphorical Words: *answer*

Target: Answer (answer, solution)

Source: Destination / Goal (purpose of the trip)

This lyric has a literal meaning; the answer is a response to a question, but metaphorically, the answer represents enlightenment, an inner solution, or the peace that humans can achieve in facing problems. In the context of the

song, this fragment appears as a promise or hope that despite difficulties, there is a way out or a calming understanding. This song tells of optimism, faith, and belief that every challenge has meaning and an answer. Within the conceptual framework *solution is a thing to be found*, the answer is understood as something that can be found through reflection and prayer. In connotation, this metaphor offers hope and comfort, emphasizing that calm and understanding can be achieved even when problems seem difficult.

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Mother Mary comes to me*

(V1/L2)

Metaphor words: *comes*

Target: Inspiration / inner peace

Source: Humanly driven spiritual figures

This lyric has a literal meaning, it refers to the physical arrival of Mother Mary, but metaphorically *Mother Mary* represents inspiration, spiritual guidance, and inner peace that “comes” in the form of emotional experiences. Within the context of the song, this passage emerges as an internal response to the difficulties the singer faces, emphasizing that in difficult times there is a source of calm and guidance that can be accessed spiritually. The song is about accepting life with equanimity and letting go of worries through trust. Within the conceptual framework *guidance is a visitor*, inner guidance is understood as an entity that comes to us. This metaphor emphasizes that inspiration and inner peace often come from a higher or external source when we need them.

**3) “My Sweet Lady”**

There are 2 metaphors, both of which are ontological metaphors.

**a) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Lady, are you happy? Do you feel the way I do?*

(V1/L8)

Metaphorical Words: *feel the way*

Target: *Feeling* (feeling)

Source: *Path* / passable road

This lyric has a literal meaning: feelings are not a path to be traveled. Metaphorically, this phrase represents emotional experience as a shared path, emphasizing the harmony of feelings between two individuals. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears when the singer conveys a desire to understand and connect emotionally with her partner. The song tells of inner closeness, intimacy, and deep emotional communication between two people in a romantic relationship. Within the conceptual framework *emotion is a path*, inner experience is understood as a shared path. This metaphor emphasizes the importance of sharing feelings and harmonizing emotions in building closeness and harmony in relationships.

**4) “Wooden Indian”**

There are 3 metaphors, consisting of 1 ontological metaphor and 2 orientational metaphors.

**a) Orientation Metaphor**

Data 1 *And you drove me in the ground* (V2/L13)

Metaphorical Words: *in the ground*

Target: *Defeat* / defeat, setback

Source: *Downward movement*/ downward movement

This lyric has a literal meaning; one cannot truly be buried by another, symbolically. Metaphorically, defeat or decline is understood as a downward movement until "buried," emphasizing a sense of devastation and emotional distress. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears as an expression of suffering due to a bitter experience or betrayal. The song tells of pain, disappointment, and emotionally stressful experiences. Within the conceptual framework, *defeat is down*, adversity is understood as a symbolically lower position. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes the profound impact of sadness and defeat, as well as feelings of helplessness in the face of oppressive circumstances

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Painted dreams inside my head* (V1/L6)

Metaphorical Words: *painted dreams*

Target: *Dream* (dream)

Source: *Painting* / visual image

This lyric has a literal meaning: dreams cannot be painted. Metaphorically, dreams are treated like images that can be created and stored in the mind, emphasizing the visual and concrete nature of inner aspirations. Within the context of the song, this line appears as the singer's reflection on the personal hopes and imaginations that shape her outlook on life. The song tells the story of inner experiences, aspirations, and memories that shape her identity and worldview. Within the conceptual framework *dream is a painting*, dreams are understood as visual forms that stick in the mind and give direction to life. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes the power of creativity and imagination in shaping one's life and hopes.

**5) "Junk"**

There are 2 metaphors, consisting of 1 ontological metaphor and 1 structural metaphor.

**a) Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *Why, why says the junk in the yard* (V1/L7)

Metaphorical Words: *junk*

Target: *Past* / useless past

Source: *Junk* / trash, obsolete objects

This lyric has a literal meaning: junk can't speak. Metaphorically, the past is treated like a pile of obsolete objects piled up without value, emphasizing the aspect of burden or things that are no longer useful. In the context of the song, this line appears as a critique of experiences or memories that only burden life without bringing any benefit. The song tells the story of reflection

on the past, letting go of burdensome memories, and the effort to move on with life with lightness. Within the conceptual framework *the past is junk*, past experiences are understood as garbage that can accumulate and become a burden. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes the importance of letting go of useless things in order to live a new life without emotional burden.

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Memories for you and me* (V2/L13)

Metaphorical Words: *memories*

Target: *Memories* / memories

Source: *Objects* / things that can be owned

This lyric has a literal meaning; memories cannot be given physically. Metaphorically, memories are treated like tangible objects that can be owned, shared, and inherited. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears as the singer's reflection on the past and the relationships that give life meaning. The song tells of past experiences, emotional memories, and the values that can be passed down through human relationships. Within the conceptual framework *memories are objects*, past experiences are understood as tangible and shareable. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes the importance of memories as emotional legacies that strengthen relationships and personal identity.

**6) "Gospel Changes"**

There are 3 metaphors, consisting of 2 structural metaphors and 1 ontological metaphor.

**a) Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *He was workin' his way back home now* (V1/L2)

Metaphorical Words: *way back home*

Target: Spiritual life / search for faith

Source: The journey home

This lyric has a literal meaning, meaning returning home physically, but metaphorically, "going home" is understood as a symbol of a spiritual journey toward inner peace and the meaning of life. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears at the beginning of the story as a description of a person's journey seeking to return to faith or find their true identity. The song tells of inner transformation, the search for spiritual meaning, and efforts to improve one's relationship with God or moral values. Within the conceptual framework *spiritual life is a journey*, the journey of life and the search for faith are understood as processes that must be undertaken consciously. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes that the spiritual quest is an active journey, requiring patience, reflection, and determination to achieve inner peace.

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Now we got new names and faces* (V1/L11)

Metaphorical Words: *names, faces*

Target: Human social identity

Source: Objects that can be replaced or updated

The lyric has a literal meaning; names and faces are physical identifiers, but metaphorically, identity is understood as an object that can be renewed or changed according to circumstances. In the context of the song, this passage appears as a symbol of inner transformation and social change, where individuals can change themselves to adapt to a new life or new environment. The song tells the story of the human ability to develop, improve themselves, and adapt social identities to the experiences they have experienced. Within the conceptual framework *identity is an object*, identity is understood as flexible, adaptable, and dynamic. This metaphor emphasizes the ability of humans to adapt and discover new versions of themselves as part of personal and spiritual growth.

7) **“Take Me Home, Country Roads”**

There are 6 metaphors, all of which are ontological metaphors.

a) **Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *West Virginia, mountain mama* (V1/L7)

Metaphorical Words: *mountain mama*

Target: Residence / nature (mountains)

Source: The figure of a mother who protects and cares for

This lyric has a literal meaning: the mountain is not a mother, but metaphorically, nature is understood as a mother figure who protects, cares for, and provides comfort. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears as a depiction of the singer's emotional connection to her homeland, which feels warm, safe, and loving. The song tells of longing for her hometown, the beauty of nature, and a deep spiritual attachment to her place of origin. Within the conceptual framework *nature is a mother*, nature is understood as a protective figure that provides a sense of security and identity. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes humans' emotional closeness to their natural environment, which provides serenity, inspiration, and a sense of home.

Data 2 *Life is old there, older than the trees* (V1/L3)

Metaphorical Words: *life is old*

Target: Rural life

Source: Human age / aging

This lyric has a literal meaning: life doesn't have a lifespan like humans, but metaphorically, rural life is treated as if it has a long lifespan and is full of experiences. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears as a reflection of the traditions, cultural values, and history inherent in one's homeland. The song tells of respect for cultural roots, the eternity of nature, and the stability of rural life. Within the conceptual framework *life is a person*, life is understood to have a history and wisdom, as if “life” itself has a long lifespan. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes respect for ancient wisdom

that lives on and guides future generations.

8) **“I Guess He’d Rather Be in Colorado”**

There is 3 metaphor, all including ontological metaphor.

a) **Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *He’d rather spend his time out where the sky looks like a pearl after the rain*

(V1/L2)

Metaphorical Words: *sky, pearl*

Target: Sky

Source: Beautiful and precious things (pearls)

This lyric has a literal meaning: the sky cannot physically become a pearl. Deeply, the sky is treated like a precious object that radiates beauty and serenity. Within the context of the song, this lyric appears in a section describing the character's choice to enjoy the natural beauty of Colorado. The song tells the story of the search for inner peace and tranquility through the beauty of the surrounding nature. Within the conceptual framework *the sky is a precious object*, nature is understood as a highly valuable entity capable of evoking awe and deep longing. Consequently, Colorado's nature is perceived as an alluring gift, providing individuals with valuable emotional experiences.

Data 2 *To the stars he makes and askin’ them the bus fare*

(V1/L4)

Metaphorical Words: *stars, askin’*

Target: Star

Source: Friends or people you can talk to

This lyric has a literal meaning: stars cannot be spoken to or asked for anything. Metaphorically, stars are treated as friends or companions capable of interacting with humans. Within the context of the song, this fragment appears when the character feels lonely and seeks solace or inner escape. The song tells of loneliness, longing, and inner interaction with the universe as a form of solace. Within the conceptual framework *stars are companions*, humanity's relationship with the cosmos is depicted as intimate, as if the stars were a faithful listener. The connotation is that lonely humans find a way to overcome their feelings of loneliness through the fantasy of interacting with the universe.

9) **“Sunshine on My Shoulders”**

There are 5 metaphors, consisting of 4 ontological metaphors and 1 orientational metaphor.

a) **Orientation Metaphor**

Data 1 *Sunshine almost always makes me high*

(V1/L7–

8)

Metaphorical Words: *sunshine, high*

Target: Happiness

Source: Altitude / hovering conditions

The lyric has a literal meaning, sunlight cannot lift a person, but metaphorically, happiness is treated as a state of floating high in the air. In the context of the song, this line appears to emphasize the pleasant effect of sunlight on the human psyche, marking the transition from simple feelings of happiness to an experience of emotional euphoria. The song tells the story of humankind's relationship with nature, where sunlight becomes a symbol of freedom, joy, and deep positive feelings. Within the conceptual framework *happiness is up*, happiness is understood as a feeling that uplifts humans emotionally. Connotatively, this metaphor emphasizes the feeling of lightness and inner freedom that arises from a harmonious relationship with the environment and nature.

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy* (V1/L1–  
2)

Metaphorical Words: *sunshine, makes me happy*

Target: Sun / sunlight

Source: Causes of positive emotions (happiness)

The lyric fragment has a literal meaning, sunlight only provides light and heat, but metaphorically, sunlight is treated as an agent capable of awakening happiness in humans. In the context of the song, this fragment appears as an opening that describes an emotional attachment to nature and the simplicity of life, emphasizing that happiness can arise from small, tangible things around humans. This song tells the story of gratitude and simple happiness, where nature and sunlight become symbols of inner calm and happiness. In the conceptual framework *sunshine is an agent of joy*, sunlight is understood as a source of true happiness. This metaphor emphasizes that happiness can be sparked by sensory experiences and a harmonious relationship with nature.

**10) “Around and Around”**

There is 5 metaphor, consists of 4 ontological metaphors and 1 structural metaphor.

**a) Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *Doesn't take much time to pass by me* (V1/L2)

Metaphorical Words: *pass, time*

Target: Time

Source: Fast moving entity

The lyric has a literal meaning, time is an abstract concept that cannot "pass" humans, but metaphorically, time is treated as a moving object and can pass around humans. In the context of the song, this passage appears as an observation about the speed of time passing, emphasizing the human experience of realizing the transience and inevitability of change. The song tells the story of a dynamic life, full of change, and the importance of being aware of every moment. Within the conceptual framework *time is a moving*

*object*, time is understood as a constant flow that moves through humans. This metaphor emphasizes the urgency of appreciating every second and moment in life, as time waits for no one.

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *Dreams full of promises* (V1/L7)

Metaphorical Words: *dreams*

Target: Dream

Source: A container filled with hope

The lyric has a literal meaning; dreams are simply inner experiences during sleep, but metaphorically, dreams are treated as vessels that can be filled with promises and hopes. In the context of the song, this excerpt appears as an expression of optimism and human potential for the future, emphasizing the importance of maintaining hope and aspirations. This song tells the story of the human journey of life filled with ambition, desire, and opportunity, and how dreams become motivation to keep moving forward. Within the conceptual framework *dreams are containers*, dreams are understood as places that hold potential for the future. This metaphor emphasizes that dreams provide direction, hope, and motivation to achieve life goals.

**11) "Fire and Rain"**

There are 5 metaphors, consisting of 3 ontological metaphors and 2 structural metaphors.

**a) Structural Metaphor**

Data 1 *I walked out this morning and I wrote down this song* (V1/L3)

Metaphor words: *walked out*

Target: Search for inspiration

Source: Physical journey

The lyric fragment has a literal meaning; "walking out" is merely a physical act, but metaphorically, this act is treated as an inner journey to discover ideas, inspiration, and self-reflection. In the context of the song, this fragment appears as a description of the creative process, where personal experiences, travels, and observations of everyday life spark the birth of a musical work. The song tells the story of how hardships, feelings, and life experiences can be transformed into creative expression. Within the conceptual framework *creativity is a journey*, the creative process is understood as a journey that must be undertaken with awareness and interaction with the surrounding world. This metaphor emphasizes that inspiration often arises from concrete experiences and interactions with life, not simply abstract ideas.

**b) Ontological Metaphor**

Data 1 *I've seen fire and I've seen rain* (V1/L5)

Metaphorical Words: *fire, rain*

Target: Suffering and sadness

Source: Natural elements (fire and rain)

The lyrics has a literal meaning, fire and rain are natural phenomena, but metaphorically they are treated as symbols of human emotions, where fire symbolizes burning suffering and rain symbolizes sorrow that befalls. In the context of the song, this line appears as a reflection of John Denver's life experiences, recalling difficult times, losses, and emotional pain he has experienced. The song tells of personal struggles, loneliness, and how to face life's inevitable challenges. Within the conceptual framework *emotions are natural forces*, emotional experiences are understood as forces of nature that affect humans. In connotation, this metaphor emphasizes that suffering and sadness are a natural part of life, powerful and unavoidable, and that humans must learn to accept and cope with them.

## 12) "The Box"

There are 4 metaphors, all of which are ontological metaphors.

### a) Ontological Metaphor

Data 1 *For opening up that deadly box of war* (V2/L22)

Metaphorical Words: *box of war*

Target: War

Source: Objects that can be stored in containers

The lyric has a literal meaning, the box is simply a physical container for storing objects, but metaphorically, the box is treated as a symbol of storing violence and war that can be unleashed at any time. In the context of the song, this fragment appears as a critique of war and human conflict that are often unleashed without consideration, causing widespread destruction. The song tells the story of the destructive consequences of violence, war, and human indifference to the consequences of their actions. Within the conceptual framework *war is a container*, war is understood as something that can be contained, opened, and released, thus possessing the potential for latent danger. This metaphor emphasizes that violence is not a spontaneous phenomenon, but something that can be controlled or contained, and that any release carries serious consequences

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been done, it can be concluded that this study shows the use of significant conceptual metaphors in the lyrics of the album *Poems, Prayers and Promises* by John Denver, which is in accordance with the aim of identifying the types of metaphors and analyzing the meaning contained therein. A total of 50 metaphor data were found, consisting of 29 ontological metaphors, 13 structural metaphors, and 8 orientational metaphors. This proves that ontological metaphors are the most dominant type of metaphor, showing John Denver's tendency to convey abstract ideas such as feelings, memories, time, and hopes through a concrete and visualizable approach.

The types of metaphors found include ontological metaphors that represent

abstract entities as real objects, structural metaphors that map life concepts and emotional journeys as concrete activities or processes, and orientational metaphors that use spatial directions to describe psychological and emotional states. Thus, it can be concluded that metaphors in John Denver's song lyrics function not only as linguistic ornaments, but also as conceptual means to shape meaning, strengthen emotional expression, and build connectedness between the singer and the listener.

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