



Revealing the depth of *Nyidham Sari's* metaphor: A cultural and linguistics exploration with language teaching implications

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ABSTRACT

Tembang writers typically employ words that are not literal but rather words have figurative meanings. One of those is metaphor. This study aims to analyze metaphors in *Nyidham Sari* songs and reveal their role in conveying cultural values and moral messages in language learning, as well as understand how traditional Javanese songs can serve as an educational tool to transmit knowledge and cultural values to contemporary learners. The data of the research are metaphors within the *Nyidham Sari tembang*. To analyse the data the researcher identified metaphors to understand the metaphor meaning and the function in the context of the *tembang*. This study employs the basic theory of the Conceptual Metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson. This study shows that *Nyidham Sari tembang* uses natural metaphors, journey metaphors, and cultural value metaphors to describe abstract concepts and convey deep messages. The research results indicate that metaphors in *Nyidham Sari tembang* play an important role in conveying cultural values and moral messages. The result of this study also has implication on language teaching, namely, teaching metaphor, interpretation skill development, teaching material, and critical thinking development. Finally, this study is expected to inspire other researchers who interest to explore metaphors in different cultural.



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INTRODUCTION

A song is a form of art that contains meaning and expression. The song can be considered as works of art that combine music, lyrics, and vocals to convey messages or emotions to listeners (Wahyudin & Hermendra, 2024). Through lyrics and melodies, singers or songwriters can express their feelings, love, or ideas to others. In Javanese culture, songs are usually referred to as *tembang*. Traditional Javanese songs, known as *tembang*, have long been an important part of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. Among these songs is *Nyidham Sari*. When we talk about Javanese songs, many of them use metaphorical language to convey moral messages and the beauty of language. According to researchers, metaphors in the *Nyidham Sari* song play an important role in conveying cultural values and moral messages.

Metaphor is one of the important elements in language and literary communication, has a significant role in understanding and expressing meaning creatively (Astri et al., 2023; Rizzato, 2024). While Liwoso (2012: 15) explains that metaphor is a phenomenon with different comparisons between several intentions. This is a condensation of several parts, such as topics or markers with connotative meanings. Metaphors are often interpreted as mere figures of speech (styles of language) of comparison based on similarities. However, in reality metaphors have very broad meanings. Furthermore, Subroto (2011: 24) explains that there are two kinds of metaphors, namely living metaphors and dead metaphors. A living metaphor is the use of language that compares two different things, but has the same nature or quality, to provide a deeper meaning. While the dead metaphor in the song refers to the figurative meaning, not physical death. In the context of the song, the dead metaphor is used to describe feelings

of love that are very strong and burning, as if eliminating darkness or sadness. Dealing with function of metaphor in *tembang* is used to compared one thing to another thing. It is supported by Kövecses (2002) who explains that metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another by saying that one is the other.

What distinguishes the *Nyidham Sari* song from other songs is not only its beautiful melody but also its profound lyrics. In the context of traditional Javanese culture, which emphasizes indirect communication and symbolic representation (Geertz, 1973; Magnis-Suseno, 1997). This song uses metaphorical language to convey complex emotions, moral teachings, and philosophical reflections, making it an intriguing subject for linguistic and cultural analysis. The metaphors used in this song map abstract concepts onto concrete experiences, making it easier to understand and internalize these values. This metaphor also has great potential as a teaching material for literary appreciation, helping students understand literary concepts more deeply and contextually (Astri et al., 2023).

Related to this research, to analyze the metaphors in *Nyidham Sari* song, the theory of Conceptual Metaphor developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson is used, popularized through their book entitled “Metaphors We Live By” which was first published in 1981. This book is used as a foundation in the metaphor study conducted. This book introduces the concept that metaphors are not merely rhetorical devices but are fundamental to how we think and understand the world. In this theory, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain that metaphors are conceptual structures that map one domain of experience onto another, enabling us to understand abstract concepts through concrete experiences. The significance of traditional Javanese *tembang* in contemporary education has gained renewed attention as educational institutions seek to integrate cultural heritage into modern curricula. In addition, by understanding metaphorical expression assumes particular significance as a vehicle for conveying complex moral and philosophical teachings that can be effectively utilized in educational stings to promote cultural understanding and moral development.

Several previous studies have presented studies related to Javanese songs, such as the study conducted by Ardiasta (2013) entitled “Characteristics of Keroncong Songs by Kusbini,” which found that there are many characteristics and metaphorical meanings implied in keroncong songs. Furthermore, the study titled “Metaphors in the Songs *Nyidham Sari* and Yen Ing Tawang Ono Lintang” conducted by Ranabumi (2018), identified various types of metaphors in these two Javanese songs. Furthermore, research conducted by Purwanto (2017) entitled “Symbolism in the *Nyidham Sari* Melody” found that the use of natural symbols, such as the moon, stars, mountains, and the sea, was used to describe the beauty of love for the woman he loved, even though the distance between them was very far, but his love remained eternal. Furthermore, the researcher attended a study related to metaphors as teaching materials conducted by Astri et al. (2023), which stated that metaphors have great potential as teaching materials for literary appreciation and also for students to understand literary concepts more deeply and contextually.

Meanwhile, several previous studies related to the use of metaphors in objects other than songs, such as the study entitled “Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphors in Bild Newspapers”, conducted by Akbar & Yunanfathur (2016), show that metaphors are used as a tool to give readers a deeper impression. The study also found that in the Bild newspaper, the most frequently occurring type of metaphor is the structural metaphor. In addition, research conducted by Zain (2021), entitled “Understanding the Essence of Life Through the Lyrics of Banda Neira's Songs (Semantic Review: Metaphor)”, found that the lyrics of the song entitled *yang patah tumbuh yang hilang berganti* contain anthropomorphic metaphors and abstract-to-concrete metaphors. The lyrics of the song titled *bunga* contain abstract-to-concrete metaphors. The lyrics of the song *matahari pagi* contain abstract-to-concrete, anthropomorphic, and synthetic metaphors. He found that the most dominant type of metaphor is abstract-to-concrete.

However, if the writer refers to the song *Nyidham Sari*, the *tembang* still needs to be elaborated further because in the lyrics that, there are many metaphors contained in the song. The purpose of this study is to classify the types of metaphors found in the *Nyidham Sari* song and describe the cultural values and messages contained in the song and contribute to the song's timeless meaning by examining its potential application in an educational context. This research is conducted with the hope of

contributing to an understanding of the role of metaphors in Javanese culture in language teaching. Through a critical interpretation of the metaphors in this song, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of Javanese cultural values and the role of metaphors in traditional art forms, as well as their pedagogical value for contemporary education. By conducting research on the use of metaphors as a pedagogical tool, it will be possible to design more engaging and effective learning experiences that facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge, moral values, and linguistic competencies among students. Additionally, this research may also inspire other researchers to explore metaphors in other cultural contexts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with metaphor analysis based on the Conceptual Metaphor theory developed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980). The research data consist of words, phrases, clauses and sentences that identified as instance of metaphor in lyrics of *Nyidham Sari tembang*. The *tembang* is obtained from the Manthous CSGK *Nyidham Sari Album*. The data collection was conducted using reading and note taking technique like suggested by Allobua' et al. (2022). Meanwhile, the analysis steps carried out in the study include identifying the metaphors contained in the lyrics of *Nyidham Sari tembang*. Furthermore, the researcher analyzes the identified metaphors to understand the meaning and the function of the metaphor in the context of the *tembang*. The next step, the researcher interprets the results of the metaphor analysis to understand the cultural values and messages contained in the song. By understanding uncovering underlying meanings in the *tembang*, then the researcher expressed that metaphors can convey underlying meaning which are not directly visible. In other words by understanding these uncovering underlying meanings, the researcher can gain insight into the associated cultural value. This idea is supported by Mahanani & Setyanto (2024) explained that in understanding the meaning of metaphors, a deep study process is needed. This means that it cannot only be seen from the meaning of its formation, but it must also be connected to the comparison process. Finally, the researcher can classify the metaphors used by the author of *Nyidham Sari tembang*.

RESULTS

Based on Lakoff and Johnson's theory (1980), the researcher classifies the use of metaphors in *Nyidham Sari tembang* into three types. **Firstly**, is Metaphors in the context of nature. This metaphor is shown by the lyrics in the first verse such as *upama sliramu sekar melati* or blooming flowers, where these lyrics are to describe the beauty of love. Other metaphors which are found in the second verse, with the lyrics *sineksen lintange luku* or witnessed by the star of the plow that is a witness to love, give the impression of eternity and the breadth of love that is felt. Then there are also the lyrics *midera sak jagad raya* or going to wander around the world in the third verse as a symbol of an effort or endeavor to achieve love seriously. There are also lyrics *kalingana wukir lan samodra* or blocked by mountains and oceans, also found in the third verse where these lyrics symbolize the power and breadth of unlimited love possessed by someone who is in love. Natural metaphors in *Nyidham Sari tembang* not only beautify the language, but also provide depth of meaning to each line. The use of these natural symbols gives the impression that the love felt is as strong and eternal as the beauty of nature itself.

The second classification is the metaphor of the journey. In the *Nyidham Sari tembang* also uses the metaphor of the journey to describe the process of life and the search for meaning, such as the lyrics in the first verse, namely *upama sliramu margi* or a long road. This metaphor is used to describe patience and perseverance. The journey metaphor in this context represent the spiritual and emotional path that one must traverse in the pursuit of love and understanding. This idea is in line with Steen (2023) explained that metaphor is often interpreted as mere figurative of speech (style of language) of comparison based on similarities.

The third classification is the metaphor of cultural values. In *Nyidham Sari tembang* also contains cultural values, where the metaphor has an important role in conveying cultural values and moral messages. The metaphors used in conveying cultural values and moral messages are mapped in abstract concepts such as love, wisdom and patience into concrete experiences, so that the existence of the metaphor in the *Nyidham Sari tembang* makes it easier to understand and internalize these values. This approach resonates with Wahyudin & Hermendra (2024) who noted that metaphors in *Nyidham Sari tembang* effectively describe the expression of love and dedication. These metaphor of cultural

values specifically reflect traditional Javanese values including gender roles where men are expected to be persistent and devoted, religious concept of faithfulness and diving witness, and ethnic values of indirectness and symbolic communication. Then metaphor of cultural value covers three kinds concept abstract value, they are the abstract concepts that reflect feelings of love.

The kinds of methapor in *Nyidham Sari tembang* can be seen in the following excerpts from the lyrics in the first verse.

*Upama sliramu sekar melati
Aku kumbang Nyidham Sari
Upama sliramu margi, wong manis
Aku kang bakal ngliwati*

Based on the lyrics fragment in the first verse of the *Nyidham Sari tembang*, metaphorically, it can be interpreted that there is a man who is dreaming of a beautiful and pretty woman to be his life partner and enjoy the beauty of his love. Then, in the first verse, the metaphor of a beautiful woman is expressed using the lyrics *sekar melati* or blooming flowers and *margi* or road. While a man is metaphorized with *kumbang* or beetle animal. The use of metaphors in this first verse related to Kövecses (2002) explains that metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another by saying that one is the other. Beside that the use of *sekar melati* or blooming flowers and *margi* or road phrase is to create a comparison or analogy that highlight a particularly aspect or similarity, because the word or phrase is used to convey a meaning that is different from the literal meaning (Putri & Gusriani, 2024).

The next is the abstract concept related to wisdom. The kinds of metaphor in *Nyidham Sari tembang* can be found in the lyrics of the second verse as follows.

*Sineksen lintange luku, semana
Janji prasetyaning ati
Tansah kumanthil ning netra, rinasa
Kerasa rasaning driya*

In the second verse, metaphorically, it can be interpreted that a man who is in love has a concept of wisdom in responding to promises that have been made and tries to keep them. The metaphorical meaning of the concept of wisdom in the second verse of the *Nyidham Sari tembang* is expressed in the lyrics *sineksen lintange luku* or witnessed by the star of the plow. The deep metaphorical meaning of the lyrics is that the promise to be faithful to his future partner forever has been said witnessed by nature, namely *lintange luku* or the star of the plow. After the promise of loyalty is declared, the man feels that he always remembers his future partner, which is expressed in the lyrics *tansah kumanthil ning netra* or always imagined in the eyes. The last is an abstract concept regarding patience.

In *Nyidham Sari tembang*, is also found. this metaphor. It can be observed in the third verse as follows:

*Midera sak jagad raya
Kalingana wukir lan samodra
Nora ilang memanise, adhuh
Dadi ati selawase*

Based on the lyrics above, metaphorically, it can be interpreted that even though there are many obstacles and barriers that block, a man who loves a woman must continue to try and be patient to get her love. In the third verse, the lyrics *midera sak jagad raya* or wandering around the world describe a strong effort that requires a long journey and time to reach his love. While the obstacles and barriers are described by the lyrics *kalingana wukir lan samodra* or blocked by mountains and the vast ocean. Even though the journey of time and the obstacles are so great, he tries to maintain that his love must continue to grow and will not fade. In the third verse, the lyrics *nora ilang memanise adhuh* describe the man's determination that his love will not fade or disappear, so that he will continue to love the

woman of his dreams which is described by the lyrics *dadi ati selawase* or his love is always engraved in his heart forever.

DISCUSSION

Based on the result of this research that writer described above, there are three types of metaphor that found in this research, namely the first is natural metaphors. This metaphor is used to describe the process of finding love. The purpose of this metaphor is to describe the beauty of love. This findings align with Purwanto (2017) who emphasized that natural symbols such as flowers, stars, mountains, and oceans are used to describe the beauty of love that remains eternal despite distance. The second is metaphor of the journey. It is used to describe the process of life and the search for meaning. This metaphor is used with the aim of describing patience and perseverance. Similar to the findings of Allobua' et al. (2022) expressed that journey metaphors serve to bring abstract concepts to life by creating aesthetics value and more beautiful creative description. The third types of metaphor applied in *Nyidham Sari tembang* is metaphor of cultural values. The metaphors cultural value describes some human attitude such as patience, simplicity, and wisdom, which are still relevant in the context of modern life. The three types of metaphors, especially cultural value metaphors, cannot be separated from the cultural context of Javanese society, where Javanese people highly uphold the values of politeness and simplicity in language.

In Javanese culture, people usually do not say something directly or vulgarly, but they tend to hide the main purpose with another expression, for example to express patience Javanese people do not say *you must be patient*, but Javanese people will say with the expression *alon-alon asal kelakon*. This expression has the meaning that someone must be patient in facing the problems being faced. In the context of Javanese simplicity when mentioning *house* it would be more appropriate to use the word *gubug*. Like an expression of invitation to a friend to stop by his house, the expression conveyed is *let's stop by my hut*. The word *gubug* in Javanese actually means a small, rickety and ugly house located in the middle of a rice field. However, because of its simplicity, the word house is replaced with *gubug*, even though in reality the house is a big, nice and luxurious house. This finding proves that in song contexts, metaphors are used to compare one thing to another (Scharlau et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, related to wisdom, some examples of Javanese expressions such as *ngono yo ngono ning ojo ngono* or that's how it is but don't do that. This expression conveys a message to the person you're talking to to be wise, namely even though you do something bad but don't go overboard or overdo it. Other expressions such as *sing wis yo uwis ojo dibaleni maneh* or bad deeds that have been done in the past should not be repeated. This expression shows how wise Javanese people are, even though someone does something wrong, they are not immediately judged wrong, but they tend to forgive by saying as the previous expression. Furthermore, the discussion related to the *Nyidham Sari tembang*, in this study there are various lyrics that describe cultural values as stated in the research results above.

However, on the other hand, based on the analysis of the results that the writer conducted in this study, there are some differences with the research was conducted by Ranabumi (2018). In the research he conducted on the *Nyidham Sari tembang*, there were 13 types of metaphors, namely 4 nominative metaphors, 4 complementary metaphors, 4 predicative metaphors, and 1 sentence metaphor. From the various metaphors he found in the *Nyidhan Sari tembang*, there were no metaphors as the writer was found, that is three types of metaphors as previously mentioned. However, Ranabumi agreed that the metaphor used in the *Nyidham Sari tembang* is a linguistic expression to say something that is alive for something else that is alive, something that is alive for something that is dead, something that is dead for the living, and something that is dead for another dead. The results of this study also differ from the results of the investigation which conducted by Shafary (2023), in which there were 5 lyrics were obtained that used anthropomorphic metaphors, 3 lyrics that used metaphors from concrete to abstract, 8 lyrics that used synesthetic metaphors, and is there were no lyrics that used animal metaphors. While the analysis of this research finds three classification of metaphor as suggested by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), namely metaphors in the context of nature, metaphor of the journey, and metaphor of cultural values.

The results of this study indicate that metaphors in *Nyidham Sari tembang* have an important role in conveying cultural values and moral messages. The metaphors used in this *tembang* map abstract concepts into concrete experiences, making it easier for readers and listeners to understand and internalize these values. Thus, the results of this study agree with several previous researchers who

stated that the use of metaphors in *tembangs*, especially Javanese *tembang*, can provide a beautiful effect on the *tembangitself*. The result of this research also has implication on language teaching learning activities, especially regarding understanding metaphor in *Nyidham Sari tembang* include, firstly, teaching metaphor. Teachers can instruct students on metaphor as a crucial component of language that helps students to understand *tembang* meaning. Secondly, interpretation skill development. Teachers may help students develop their interpretation skill by analyzing the meaning of metaphor in *tembangs*. Then the third is using *tembang* as teaching material. Teachers can utilize *tembang* as teaching material to teach language, especially in the context of metaphors and figurative meaning. The last is critical thinking development. Teachers can help students develop their critical thinking skills by analyzing the meanings of metaphor in *tembang* and understanding the intended message. Thus by doing so, the research on metaphor in *tembang Nyidham Sari*. can contribute in developing of more effective language curricula and teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that metaphors in *Nyidham Sari tembang* are classified into three categories, namely natural metaphors, travel metaphors, and cultural values metaphors. The metaphors in the *tembangs* have an important role in conveying cultural values and moral messages. Through metaphor analysis, we can understand how these songs use metaphorical language to describe abstract concepts and convey profound messages. The results of this study can contribute to the understanding of the role of metaphors in Javanese culture and can be an inspiration for other researchers who explore metaphors in other cultural contexts. They can investigate specific cultural values more detail, including those related to gender, religion, or ethnicity. The result of this investigation also has implication on language teaching, namely teaching metaphor, interpretation skill development, using *tembang* as teaching material and critical thinking development. In addition, comparative investigations analysing metaphorical expression across different Indonesian traditional songs might provide broader insight into regional cultural variations.

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