

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In contemporary American popular culture, song lyrics are increasingly viewed not merely as a form of entertainment but as a modern manifestation of lyric poetry and literary expression. Song lyrics share essential characteristics with traditional poetry, particularly in their use of condensed language, rhythm, emotional expression, and figurative devices to convey meaning. Studies in literary and linguistic fields have shown that song lyrics can be analyzed in the same way as poems because they employ poetic and semantic elements such as metaphor, symbolism, imagery, and sound patterns to represent complex human experiences (Fadzillah et al., 2022).

This perspective positions song lyrics as legitimate literary texts that reflect emotional, psychological, and social realities, making them appropriate objects of analysis within literary and linguistic studies.

Frith (1996) explains that popular music lyrics function as personal narratives through which artists communicate lived experiences and emotions to listeners. In the Indonesian academic context, song lyrics are also recognized as legitimate literary texts. Sari and Wahyudi (2021) argue that song lyrics constitute a modern literary genre that employs poetic structures to express complex human experiences, functioning in a way comparable to traditional poetry. Therefore, song

lyrics can be positioned as literary artifacts suitable for academic analysis within literary and linguistic studies.

Figurative language plays a crucial role in shaping meaning in song lyrics because it allows songwriters to convey ideas and emotions indirectly. Figurative language refers to the use of non-literal expressions to create imaginative and expressive meanings. Among various types of figurative language, metaphor is considered one of the most significant. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a cognitive mechanism through which people understand abstract concepts in terms of more concrete experiences.

In the context of song lyrics, metaphors enable abstract emotions such as love, pain, and emotional conflict to be expressed vividly and meaningfully. Studies in English language and literary analysis confirm that metaphors in song lyrics are central to the construction of emotional and conceptual meaning rather than merely decorative elements. For example, Apriliyanti and Ariyaningsih (2025) demonstrate how concrete-to-abstract metaphors in Ariana Grande's song lyrics function to express complex personal emotions and deepen the interpretative understanding of the lyrics.

Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album is chosen as the object of this study because it presents emotionally rich and autobiographical lyrics that heavily rely on metaphorical expressions. Released in 2024, the album explores themes of heartbreak, memory, emotional vulnerability, and personal healing within romantic relationships. These themes are often conveyed implicitly through metaphor, allowing listeners to interpret emotional experiences beyond literal meanings.

Research on contemporary song lyrics shows that albums with cohesive themes provide valuable insight into how metaphors construct emotional narratives across multiple texts (Apriliyanti & Ariyaningsih, 2025). Moreover, *Eternal Sunshine* has received significant commercial success and critical recognition, indicating its cultural relevance and reinforcing its suitability as an object of academic literary analysis.

Several previous studies have examined metaphor in song lyrics using qualitative and cognitive approaches. Inayah and Amalia (2024) analyzed conceptual metaphors in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album and found that metaphors play a key role in expressing emotional depth and personal experiences. Similarly, Rahmat and Dianita (2024) investigated metaphors in Lana Del Rey's *Born to Die* album and identified structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors that represent emotional conflict and identity. Although these studies provide important insights into metaphor analysis in song lyrics, research focusing specifically on metaphor use in Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album remains limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this research gap by analyzing metaphors in selected songs from *Eternal Sunshine* to contribute to contemporary English literary and linguistic studies.

1.2 Research problem

1. How are metaphors found in *Ariana Grande's* album?
2. How do the metaphors express emotional experiences in the romantic relationship portrayed in the album?

1.3 Objective of the study

1. To identify the types of metaphors used in the lyrics of *Ariana Grande's Eternal Sunshine Album* based on conceptual metaphor theory.
2. To analyze the meaning conveyed by the metaphors found in the lyrics of the *Eternal Sunshine Album*.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of study

This study is limited in scope to the analysis of metaphorical expressions found in selected song lyrics from Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album (2024). The primary focus of the research is the identification and interpretation of metaphors as a dominant type of figurative language used to convey emotional experiences within romantic relationships. The study specifically examines how metaphors are employed to represent themes such as emotional conflict, vulnerability, psychological imbalance, memory, and personal healing, particularly in relationships that appear affectionate on the surface but reveal emotional tension and toxicity beneath.

The analysis is grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, which views metaphor not merely as a stylistic ornament, but as a cognitive mechanism through which abstract emotional experiences are understood and structured. To support an in-depth interpretation of meaning, this study applies Gabrielle Griffin's textual analysis method, enabling close reading of the lyrics to uncover implicit meanings, emotional contradictions, and recurring thematic patterns embedded in the language of the songs.

Due to practical and analytical limitations, this research does not analyze all songs in the album. Instead, it focuses on selected songs that contain a high frequency of figurative language, particularly metaphors, and that strongly reflect the album's central themes of romantic struggle and emotional self-awareness. The selected songs include "Eternal Sunshine," "Don't Wanna Break Up Again," "We Can't Be Friends (Wait for Your Love)," "True Story," and "Imperfect for You." These songs are chosen because they prominently utilize metaphorical expressions to depict emotional distance, inner conflict, memory, and healing, making them highly relevant to the objectives of this study.

This study is limited to textual analysis of song lyrics and does not incorporate musical elements such as melody, rhythm, or vocal performance, nor does it analyze audience reception or biographical interpretations beyond what is reflected linguistically in the lyrics. By narrowing the scope to metaphor analysis in selected lyrics, this research aims to provide a focused and systematic understanding of how metaphor functions as an expressive tool to communicate emotional complexity and relational tension in Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album.

1.5 Significance of study

This study is significant in contributing to literary studies by enhancing the understanding of metaphor use in contemporary song lyrics. It also provides practical benefits for students and researchers as a reference for analyzing metaphor and interpreting emotional meaning in popular music.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech through which one concept is understood and expressed in terms of another, allowing meanings to extend beyond their literal interpretation. In the context of this study, metaphor refers to linguistic expressions found in song lyrics that represent abstract emotions and experiences—such as love, pain, emotional conflict, and healing—through more concrete and familiar images. This study adopts Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, which views metaphor not merely as a stylistic device, but as a cognitive mechanism that shapes how individuals conceptualize and understand abstract phenomena. Conceptual metaphor involves the mapping of a target domain, which is typically abstract (e.g., emotions or relationships), onto a more concrete source domain (e.g., physical objects, movement, or light). Within Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album, conceptual metaphors function as an essential tool for structuring emotional narratives and conveying complex romantic experiences, particularly those related to vulnerability, emotional imbalance, and personal growth, making them highly relevant to literary and linguistic analysis.

2. Song Lyrics

Song lyrics are written texts that form the verbal component of a song and function as a medium to convey messages, emotions, and thematic ideas. In literary studies, song lyrics can be understood as a form of modern lyric poetry because they emphasize personal expression, emotional depth, and subjective experience, similar to traditional poetry. In this study, song lyrics refer to the textual content of

selected songs from Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album, which are analyzed as literary texts rather than merely musical elements. By treating song lyrics as lyric poetry, this research focuses on how language—particularly metaphor—is used to express emotional experiences, romantic relationships, and inner conflicts. Therefore, the analysis of song lyrics in this study is closely connected to literary and linguistic approaches that explore meaning beyond literal interpretation.

3. Romantic Relationship

A romantic relationship refers to an emotional connection between individuals that is characterized by affection, intimacy, and emotional attachment. In the context of this study, romantic relationship is understood as the way romantic experiences are portrayed in the song lyrics of Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album. The lyrics reflect various aspects of romantic relationships, including emotional closeness, *vulnerability*, conflict, imbalance, and personal growth. These experiences are often conveyed implicitly through metaphorical expressions, allowing complex emotional situations to be expressed beyond literal meanings. Therefore, the concept of romantic relationship in this study is closely related to how emotional struggle, healing, and self-reflection within intimate relationships are represented linguistically in the lyrics.

4. Emotional Experience

Emotional experience in a romantic relationship refers to the range of feelings and psychological states that individuals experience within an intimate connection, including love, happiness, vulnerability, conflict, disappointment, and emotional healing. In the context of this study, emotional experience is reflected in the song

lyrics of Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album, where romantic relationships are portrayed as emotionally complex and dynamic. These experiences are often not expressed directly but are conveyed through metaphorical language, allowing abstract emotions such as emotional pain, inner struggle, and personal growth to be represented symbolically. Through metaphor, the lyrics illustrate how romantic relationships can involve both affection and emotional tension, particularly in relationships that appear loving on the surface but are emotionally challenging beneath. Therefore, analyzing emotional experience through metaphor enables a deeper understanding of how romantic relationships are linguistically and emotionally constructed in the selected song lyrics.