



## A METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF JENNIE KIM'S "RUBY" ALBUM USING GOATLY'S THEORY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Accepted :

8 December 2025

Published :

8 December 2025

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates the types of metaphors present in Jennie Kim's Ruby album through the lens of Goatly's (1997) metaphor classification system. While much of the extant research on figurative language in song lyrics predominantly focuses on Western artists or utilizes frameworks like those of Lakoff and Johnson or Parera, there is a scarcity of studies that apply Goatly's six metaphor categories active, inactive, subjective, asymmetrical, mimetic, and dead to K-pop albums. This study seeks to fill this gap by identifying the most dominant metaphor types in Jennie Kim's songs and analyzing their role in meaning construction. A descriptive qualitative methodology was employed, analyzing fourteen songs from Ruby and collecting data through documentation. In total, 228 metaphorical expressions were identified, following the analytical framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The findings revealed that active metaphors were the most prevalent (25%), followed by inactive (15.8%), asymmetrical (15.8%), subjective (15.4%), mimetic (14.5%), and dead metaphors (13.6%). From a pedagogical standpoint, this study offers significant insights for English educators, illustrating how metaphors in contemporary music can serve as a dynamic and contextualized resource for enriching students' comprehension of figurative language.

**Keywords:** Metaphor, Figurative language, Goatly, Jennie Kim, Song lyrics, Semantics.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Figurative language serves as a powerful tool in song lyrics, enhancing their meaning and emotional depth (Adika & Budiarsana, 2023; Jaya et al., 2025). It allows songwriters to go beyond the literal meaning of words, creating a rich layer of expression that engages listeners on a deeper level. According to Panjaitan and Herman (2020), figurative language offers a means of indirect communication, where the emotions, experiences, and messages conveyed in the lyrics are often expressed through creative means such as metaphors, similes, and hyperbole. This approach makes the lyrics more evocative and relatable, allowing listeners to connect with the song in a personal way (Delwer, 2023; Vinh, 2025). As a result, figurative language not only enhances the aesthetic quality of songs but

also facilitates the communication of complex ideas and emotions in a way that is both artistic and impactful (Xu et al., 2022; Sulystio, 2024; Sapari, 2024).

Among the various forms of figurative language, metaphor stands out as one of the most essential (Obenza & Silah, 2024). It plays a pivotal role in shaping the meaning of song lyrics, as it allows songwriters to map one domain of experience onto another in a creative and imaginative manner (Lesiana et al., 2023). Categorizes metaphors into six distinct types: active, inactive, subjective, asymmetrical, mimetic, and dead (Elia et al., 2024; Sinambela, 2020). These categories are crucial for understanding how metaphors function in song lyrics and how they contribute to the depth and complexity of the songs. Active metaphors, for example, involve a direct and dynamic connection between two concepts, while inactive

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metaphors may be more implicit and familiar to the listener. By identifying these different types, researchers can gain insights into the ways in which metaphors help convey meaning and evoke emotional responses from the audience.

The study of metaphors in song lyrics is particularly relevant in the context of modern pop music, especially as genres like K-pop continue to expand and gain global recognition (Adawiah et al., 2023). Song lyrics in this genre often merge linguistic creativity with emotional expression, functioning in a manner similar to poetry (Irfan et al., 2023; Song et al., 2024). As Sri Hartati (2023) notes, song lyrics, especially in the realm of pop music, possess the capacity to blend artistic language with emotional resonance, allowing them to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers. K-pop, in particular, with its vibrant and eclectic style, has become a global phenomenon, attracting a diverse and international audience (Parc, 2025). As the genre continues to grow, the linguistic features of K-pop songs, including the use of figurative language, offer an intriguing area of study for linguists and scholars of popular culture alike (Kuk, 2021; Suh & Park, 2025).

Jennie Kim's Ruby album, as one of the prominent works in the K-pop industry, provides an ideal case for examining the role of metaphor in contemporary song lyrics. With its blend of diverse musical styles, emotional depth, and impactful lyrics, Ruby has resonated with audiences worldwide, making it a valuable subject for linguistic analysis. This album, in particular, is well-suited for exploring the use of metaphorical devices, as its lyrics often employ figurative language to convey complex emotions and personal narratives. By analyzing the metaphors in Ruby, this study aims to uncover how these metaphorical expressions contribute to the overall meaning of the songs and how they enhance the listener's experience.

The exploration of metaphor in Ruby is not only important from a linguistic standpoint but also offers pedagogical value. Understanding how metaphors function in popular music can provide English language teachers with valuable insights into how figurative language can be taught in a dynamic and engaging way. By using

contemporary songs as teaching tools, educators can introduce students to the complexities of metaphor and figurative language in a context that is both familiar and enjoyable. This approach not only makes learning more accessible but also helps students connect with the material on a personal level, fostering a deeper understanding of language and its expressive potential. Thus, the study of metaphors in Ruby holds promise for both linguistic research and language education, demonstrating the continued relevance of figurative language in shaping meaning in modern music.

**2. LITERATURE METHOD**

The first previous research was Ramadhika (2022), which reviewed the types of metaphors in Adele's songs based on Lakoff and Jhonson's theory. The second, a research by Pardede (2023), reviewed the metaphor of Charlie Puth's song lyrics: a case on semantics. The third, Vikri and Nurcholis (2022), examined the types of metaphors in Coldplay song lyrics based on Parera's theory. Fourth, Irawati et al. (2024) this research analyzes relationships and love in Wave to Earth's song lyrics. However:

1. Most use different theories (Lakoff & Johnson or Parera).
2. Few analyze K-pop artists using categories.
3. No study specifically investigates the Ruby album.

Thus, this research contributes by applying Goatly's framework to Jennie Kim's Ruby album, filling a theoretical and object-based gap.

**Research Questions**

1. What types of metaphors are found in Jennie Kim's Ruby album according to classification?
2. Which type of metaphor is most dominant?
3. How do the metaphors contribute to meaning construction in the lyrics?

In addition to previous studies, other scholars have also investigated metaphorical expressions in song lyrics, albeit with different focal points and analytical approaches. Dewi and Santoso (2021) examined the role of metaphors in enhancing the emotional impact of song lyrics, while

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Sinaga et al. (2024) focused on metaphors in the songs of James Arthur, emphasizing the influence of diction on the creation of figurative meanings. These studies indicate an increasing interest in figurative language within music; however, most of the research continues to center on Western artists, leaving a gap in studies specifically focused on K-pop releases.

Furthermore, a study by Salsabila and Setyowati (2024) on Lany's album revealed that the context of an album and the stylistic choices of the songwriter play a significant role in determining the types of metaphors used. Their findings highlight that each artist develops a distinct metaphorical pattern, suggesting that in-depth analyses of specific albums or artists provide a richer understanding of how figurative language functions within their work. However, such focused analyses remain scarce, especially in the realm of K-pop, particularly when applying categories in a systematic manner.

The existing literature illustrates that while many studies have explored metaphors in music, a significant gap remains, particularly in research that applies Goatly's framework to K-pop lyrics (Manninen, 2021; Kim, 2024). K-pop songs, with their blend of diverse linguistic elements and creative expressions, present a unique yet underexplored area for semantic analysis. This research seeks to address this gap by focusing on the metaphors in Jennie Kim's Ruby album, aiming to explore how these metaphors contribute to the construction of meaning across the songs. By doing so, the study intends to offer valuable insights into the application of Goatly's metaphor categories within the context of K-pop, an area that has yet to be thoroughly examined.

**3. METHODS**

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design to categorize the metaphors present in Jennie Kim's Ruby album (Wolff, 2019; Neuman, 2019). The data comprised the lyrics from fourteen tracks sourced from official and credible platforms. Documentation techniques were employed to collect the data, focusing on identifying metaphorical expressions within the lyrics (Dabi, 2014). The analytical approach was grounded in Goatly (2022) classification, which includes active, inactive, subjective, asymmetrical, mimetic, and dead metaphors. For data analysis, the study utilized the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (2019), which encompasses several stages:

1. Data condensation (selecting and simplifying relevant clauses).
2. Data display (categorizing metaphors).
3. Conclusion drawing.

To determine the dominant metaphor type, percentage formula (as cited in Sondang et al., 2023) was applied:

$$P = (F/N) \times 100\%$$

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****4.1 Types of Metaphors Identified**

This study uses Goatly (2022) framework, which identifies six categories of metaphors: active, inactive, subjective, asymmetrical, dead, and mimetic. This section describes the data analysis of the types of metaphors, based on the previous examination. The researcher identified 228 clauses containing metaphorical language relevant to this study in 14 songs by Jennie Kim.

**Table 1. Metaphors Identify**

| Type         | Frequency (F) | Percentage (P) |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Active       | 57            | 25%            |
| Inactive     | 36            | 15.8%          |
| Asymmetrical | 36            | 15.8%          |
| Subjective   | 35            | 15.4%          |
| Dead         | 31            | 13.6%          |
| Mimetic      | 31            | 14.5%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>228</b>    | <b>100%.</b>   |

**Discussion****A. Active Metaphor**

This type of metaphor is dynamic and clearly describes a person, object, or action, emphasizing their active role. Active metaphor is one that is fresh, novel, and not yet conventionalized in everyday language. It requires the reader or listener to actively interpret the comparison, rather than immediately understanding it as a fixed expression.

[1] *I got the whole room spinning like it's tipsy.* The room "spinning" like it is "tipsy" (drunk) serves as a non-literal description which does not function as an idiom that people commonly use in everyday language. "Spinning" serves as the main metaphorical verb because rooms do not physically spin when someone enters or performs. The phrase "Like it's tipsy" continues the metaphor because being "tipsy" describes a human condition which the author applies to the room in this context. The active metaphor exists in the entire phrase "spinning like it's tipsy" but "spinning" functions as the main element which activates the metaphorical meaning with support from "tipsy."

[2] *I start a war.* The phrase "Start a war" functions as a non-literal expression because it does not describe actual military conflict. Through this metaphorical expression people describe starting a major battle or making a strong push to defend someone or something they value deeply. The audience needs to figure out the specific meaning of this creative language because it does not follow established idiomatic patterns in this case.

[3] *Over the handlebars / Hitting the ground so hard.* An active metaphor emerges through this lyrics because it employs new and powerful pictures which make people see a physical crash as a symbol for an unexpected life-changing event. The phrase "over the handlebars" serves as the main metaphorical expression which combines with "hitting the ground so hard" to form an active metaphor.

[4] *Just like a Tuesday drunk.* An active metaphor emerges through this expression because it generates an original

mental image which requires readers to understand its deeper meaning. The phrase "Tuesday drunk" forms the active metaphor which describes sudden intoxication to show a distinct emotional or situational experience.

[5] *I'm a little too buzzed on your love to play it cute.* The phrase "buzzed on your love" is not a conventional or dead metaphor; it creatively equates the feeling of being slightly intoxicated ("buzzed") with the emotional effect of someone's love. The speaker uses a non-standard phrase which requires the listener to understand its symbolic meaning. The word "buzzed" serves as a metaphor in this context to describe the emotional impact of love instead of its usual connection to alcohol or drug use, not not not know now.

**B. Inactive Metaphor**

Inactive metaphors have lost their original imaginative or new effects and have grown so prevalent in everyday speech that their meanings have become literal and generalised. These metaphors have become so commonplace in language usage that they no longer evoke strong feelings in the reader or listener.

[18] *Money can't buy sixth sense.* The phrase "money can't buy" is a very common expression in English, used for countless intangible qualities (e.g., "money can't buy happiness", "money can't buy love," "money can't buy respect"). The metaphorical use of "buy" for "obtain" has become fully conventionalized. The specific inactive metaphor is "money can't buy". Here, "buy" is used metaphorically to mean "obtain" or "acquire," not the literal act of purchasing with currency. The rest of the phrase ("sixth sense") is literal; it refers to intuition or extrasensory perception.

[19] *Come to my senses.* is an inactive metaphor because it has become a conventional expression whose figurative meaning is immediately understood. The whole phrase, especially the metaphorical use of "come" and "senses," constitutes the inactive metaphor. The specific inactive metaphor is "come to my senses." The word "come" is used metaphorically to indicate a return or arrival (not a physical movement),

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and “senses” metaphorically stands for reason or awareness rather than just the five physical senses.

[20] *Anything I want is in my reach.* Is an inactive metaphor because “in my reach” is a conventional metaphorical phrase, instantly understood and no longer interpreted in a literal, physical sense. The phrase “in my reach,” especially the word “reach,” is the specific inactive metaphor.

[21] *Out of control.* Is an inactive metaphor because it is a well-established, conventional expression whose metaphorical meaning is instantly understood. The phrase “out of control” is extremely common in English. It is metaphorically used to describe situations, emotions, or behavior that cannot be managed or regulated, not just physical objects.

[22] *Give you life.* is an inactive metaphor because it is a familiar, conventional phrase with a metaphorical meaning that is instantly understood. The entire phrase “give you life” is the inactive metaphor, with “give” and “life” both used metaphorically. This expression has become common in everyday language, especially in artistic or emotional contexts (e.g., “That song gives me life”), so people understand the figurative meaning immediately and don’t visualize the literal act of giving life.

**C. Subjective Metaphor**

Subjective metaphors are metaphors that express or mirror an individual's own feelings, experiences, or viewpoints. Subjective metaphors emphasize how an individual perceives or feels about something in their own setting, as opposed to more generic or general metaphors.

[31] *I love me more with no filter.* Is a subjective metaphor because it uses metaphorical language (“with no filter”) to describe an internal, emotional state (self-love and authenticity). The metaphor conveys how the speaker feels about themselves when they are authentic. It frames self-love as something that increases when one is genuine and unfiltered, which is a subjective, internal experience. The phrase “with no filter,” and specifically the word “filter,” is the subjective metaphor,

representing the idea of presenting oneself genuinely rather than hiding behind masks or pretenses.

[32] *Undress me on the way to perfection.* Is a subjective metaphor because it describes an internal, emotional process of becoming vulnerable or authentic while striving for an ideal. In this context, “undress” metaphorically means to strip away emotional or psychological layers, revealing the true self during the pursuit of personal growth or “perfection.” The phrase “undress me” is the subjective metaphor, as it figuratively represents self-disclosure or transformation rather than literal undressing.

[33] *I could be your prize.* Calling oneself a “prize” is not literal; it metaphorically means being someone valuable or desirable to another person. This conceptualizes the self as something to be won or cherished, which is an internal, personal perspective. “prize” is metaphorically used to represent the speaker as something highly valued or sought after in a relationship, rather than a literal award.

**D. Asymmetric Metaphor**

Asymmetrical metaphors are those in which the source and the object of the metaphor are out of balance or inconsistent. Put differently, it is a metaphor in which there is some inconsistency or equivalency between the two ideas being contrasted. An impression or quality that is not entirely applicable to the other side (target) of the metaphor is conveyed by the source side.

[46] *I see your soul.* Is an asymmetric metaphor because it uses the concrete concept of vision (“see”) to describe understanding or perceiving an abstract entity (“soul”). The metaphor transfers the concrete experience of seeing (source domain) to the abstract understanding or deep recognition of another’s inner being (target domain). The verb “see” refers to physical vision—something concrete and perceptible. “Soul,” however, is an abstract concept that cannot be literally seen with one’s eyes. The phrase “see your soul,” specifically the use of “see” applied to “soul,” is the asymmetric metaphor.

[47] *Draw me in.* Is an asymmetric metaphor because it uses the concrete action of drawing (pulling) to describe an abstract

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feeling of attraction or engagement. The mapping is not reversible; we do not use the abstract idea of attraction or emotional involvement to describe physical pulling in the same way. The metaphor flows from the concrete (physically drawing in) to the abstract (feeling attracted or involved). The phrase “draw me in,” specifically the verb “draw,” is the asymmetric metaphor.

[48] *What about the black mystery?*

Is an asymmetric metaphor because it uses the concrete quality of color (“black”) to describe the abstract concept of a “mystery.” This metaphorical mapping is one-way: we use the physical attribute (“black”) to describe the abstract idea of a “mystery” (meaning something unknown, hidden, or unknowable), but we do not use “mystery” to describe a color in the same way. The phrase “black mystery,” especially the word “black” as applied to “mystery,” is the specific asymmetric metaphor.

**E. Mimetic Metaphor**

Mimetic metaphor is one that draws on physical action, bodily experience, or concrete processes to represent or structure abstract concepts. Mimetic metaphors often use verbs or expressions that imitate (mimic) real, physical actions to describe non-physical, mental, or emotional processes.

[56] *Ease your mind.* Is a mimetic metaphor because it uses the physical action of “easing” (making something less tense) to represent the abstract process of calming one’s thoughts or emotions. The phrase “ease your mind,” specifically the verb “ease,” is the mimetic metaphor.

[57] *Strike a match ... warm my hands up in the flame.* is a mimetic metaphor because it uses the embodied, physical actions of striking a match and warming hands to metaphorically describe internal experiences like igniting hope or finding comfort. The phrases “strike a match” and “warm my hands up in the flame” are the specific mimetic metaphors.

[58] *Whip my hair in the wind.* Is a mimetic metaphor because it uses a direct, physical action to metaphorically express an abstract feeling—typically freedom, confidence, or emotional release. The phrase “whip my hair in the wind,” especially the action “whip my hair,” is the specific mimetic metaphor.

[59] *Playing hopscotch but she landed a square.* Is a mimetic metaphor because it uses the concrete, embodied action of playing a children’s game to metaphorically express an abstract experience, such as navigating life’s path or facing results of choices. The phrases “playing hopscotch” and “landed a square” are the specific mimetic metaphors.

[60] *Put her legs in the air.* Is a mimetic metaphor because it uses a concrete, physical action to metaphorically express an abstract or emotional state, such as freedom, celebration, or release. The entire phrase “put her legs in the air” is the specific mimetic metaphor.

**F. Dead Metaphor**

Dead metaphor is a metaphorical expression that has become so common in everyday language that its figurative meaning is immediately understood and speakers no longer recognize its original metaphorical imagery.

[67] *Laughing ‘bout your stroke in a chat.* Is a dead metaphor because “stroke” is a conventional metaphor for an action or keystroke, and its figurative meaning is instantly understood. In this context, the word “stroke” refers to typing or making keystrokes (as on a keyboard or touch screen) during a chat. The use of “stroke” to mean a single movement or action—such as a pen stroke, brush stroke, or keystroke—has become so established that most people do not think about the original physical motion when they hear it in digital contexts. The word “stroke,” as used here, is the specific dead metaphor.

[68] *She pop a red balloon and now he kickin’ the rocks.* Contains a dead metaphor in the phrase “kickin’ the rocks,” because it is a conventional expression whose metaphorical meaning (feeling dejected) is instantly understood. The phrase “kickin’ the rocks” is the specific dead metaphor. The expression “kickin’ the rocks” (or more commonly “kicking rocks” or “kicking stones”) is a well-established idiom in English. It metaphorically means wandering aimlessly, feeling downcast, disappointed, or dejected—often after experiencing bad news or a setback.

[69] *Wake up with this love hangover*. Is a dead metaphor because “hangover” is now a conventional metaphor for the lingering effects after any strong experience, not just drinking. The word “hangover” originally refers to the physical symptoms felt after consuming too much alcohol. Over time, it has become a conventional metaphor for lingering effects of any strong experience (e.g., “emotional hangover,” “vacation hangover,” “love hangover”). The metaphorical usage has become so common that the figurative meaning is instantly recognized, and speakers do not reflect on the original reference to alcohol. The word “hangover” is the specific dead metaphor in this lyric.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study identified a total of 228 metaphorical expressions across fourteen songs in Jennie Kim’s Ruby album, utilizing Goatly’s framework to classify the metaphors. Among these, active metaphors were the most prevalent, making up 25% of the total, reflecting Jennie’s distinctive use of vivid and imaginative expressions. The variety of metaphor types utilized in the album contributes significantly to its emotional depth, enriching the narrative and enhancing the overall impact of the songs.

In an educational context, song lyrics can be a valuable resource for teaching metaphor interpretation in English lessons. They provide an opportunity to engage students in critical reading exercises and help them better understand the use of figurative language in authentic, contemporary contexts.

For future research, scholars might explore comparisons of metaphor usage across different K-pop artists and genres, offering a broader perspective on the linguistic creativity within the genre. Additionally, studies could investigate the role of multimodal metaphors in K-pop music videos, where visual elements complement the lyrics to deepen the metaphorical meanings. Furthermore, examining the cognitive processing of metaphors through experimental methodologies could provide insights into how listeners interpret and engage with metaphorical language in music.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers would like to thank everyone who helped to finish this study. We are deeply grateful to the instructors at Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika’s English Literature Department for their advice, wisdom, and support during the research and writing process. Their support helped us develop a clearer understanding of the topic and stay focused during each stage of the study.

We also want to express our gratitude to our friends and classmates who shared references, provided feedback, and took the time to talk with us about various aspects of this study. Their input, both academically and personally, played a meaningful role in shaping the final outcome of this paper.

Lastly, our deepest appreciation goes to our families for their patience, motivation, and continuous support. We were able to finish this study with commitment and dedication because of their understanding throughout the research process.

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