

Ontological Metaphors in the Corpus of Sanggau Malay Songs: A Conceptual Metaphor Analysis

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Abstract: This study examines ontological metaphors in the corpus of Sanggau Malay songs through the lens of Cognitive Semantics. The analysis integrates Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory with Croft and Cruse's Image Schema Theory to reveal how conceptual mappings between concrete and abstract domains are realized in metaphorical expressions found in song lyrics. The data consist of seven Sanggau Malay songs, which were transcribed using the ELAN and Toolbox linguistic software. The transcriptions were subsequently verified through interviews with native speakers to ensure the accuracy of local meanings and cultural references. The findings indicate that ontological metaphors consistently occur in two songs, namely *Lanau Idau* and *Biar Gonting Inang Putus*. These metaphors illustrate cognitive processes in which abstract concepts—such as first impressions, determination, and life journeys—are conceptualized as concrete entities or physical experiences. Furthermore, each metaphor is associated with a particular image schema, including identity, existence, and space, demonstrating how the cultural experiences of the Sanggau Malay community are conceptually represented through metaphorical language. The findings suggest that Sanggau Malay songs function not only as artistic expressions but also as cognitive and cultural representations that preserve local knowledge and worldview.

Keyword: Conceptual metaphor, ontological metaphor, image schema, Sanggau Malay songs

Introduction

Metaphor plays a fundamental role in revealing how people conceptualize their experiences and construct meaning through language. Within the framework of cognitive semantics, metaphor is not merely a stylistic ornament but reflects the underlying structure of human thought (Haula & Nur, 2019; Kövecses, 2010; Saeed, 2016). According to Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, human cognition operates through mappings between a source domain (concrete experience) and a target domain (abstract concept). This theoretical perspective views metaphor as a cognitive mechanism for understanding the world rather than as a purely literary device (Gibbs & Steen, 1997; Knowles & Moon, 2004). Through these conceptual mappings, language reflects the organization of human cognition, enabling speakers to express complex and abstract realities in terms of familiar, experience-based concepts.

Within the context of local Malay culture, song lyrics serve as an important medium for expressing emotions, lived experiences, and collective identity (Mukminin et al., 2021; Syaeba & Yunus, 2019). Sanggau Malay songs from West Kalimantan, for example, embody local wisdom and community values through rich metaphorical expressions that integrate traditional symbols with local experiences (Asfar, 2019; Baa et al., 2023). These songs employ figurative language to articulate themes related to nature, love, and social life, thereby functioning as both linguistic and cultural artifacts (Wagiran, 2013). Despite their linguistic and cultural significance, no previous study has specifically examined conceptual metaphors in Sanggau Malay songs from the perspective of cognitive semantics (Abdul Wahab et al., 2016; Mat Saad et al., 2018). This gap leaves an important area of inquiry regarding how metaphor operates cognitively and culturally within the linguistic landscape of the Sanggau Malay community.

Previous studies have investigated conceptual metaphors in various contexts. Abdul Wahab et al. (2016), for instance, examined euphemisms related to death and divorce in Sarawak Malay using a cognitive semantic approach. Likewise, Mat Saad et al. (2018) compared the linguistic manifestations of conceptual metaphors in Malay and French, highlighting cross-cultural metaphorical patterns. Mukminin et al. (2021) explored metaphors in Madurese songs to investigate local wisdom; however, their study did not incorporate Image Schema Theory into the analytical framework. In contrast, the present study integrates Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor Theory with Croft and Cruse's (2004) Image Schema Theory to analyze metaphors in a corpus of Sanggau Malay song lyrics. The novelty of this research lies in its corpus-based cognitive semantic analysis, which bridges metaphorical structures with cultural cognition.

This study addresses the existing research gap by integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and Image Schema Theory (Croft & Cruse, 2004) within a corpus-based cognitive semantic framework. Such an integrated approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how metaphorical concepts are constructed, interpreted, and culturally grounded in Sanggau Malay song lyrics. The primary contribution of this study lies in its attempt to connect cognitive processes with local cultural identity through the analysis of metaphors embedded in traditional musical expressions.

This research is motivated by an interest in exploring how the Sanggau Malay community encodes its worldview, emotions, and cultural values through figurative linguistic patterns found in song lyrics. Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyze the ontological metaphors embedded in Sanggau Malay songs and to interpret their meanings

from both cognitive and cultural perspectives. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to documenting, preserving, and interpreting local linguistic creativity as an integral component of the cultural heritage of the Sanggau Malay community.

Methods

Theoretical Framework

Types of Conceptual Metaphors

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), conceptual metaphors can be classified into three primary types: orientational metaphors, ontological metaphors, and structural metaphors. First, orientational metaphors describe the extension of spatial orientation concepts—such as up–down, in–out, front–back, and left–right—to abstract concepts. These metaphors arise from human bodily experiences in interacting with and orienting themselves within the physical world (Fomin & Mona, 2019; Haula & Nur, 2019). For example, social status is commonly conceptualized through the up–down orientation, where high status is up and low status is down. Similarly, success and achievement are frequently associated with upward movement, as reflected in expressions such as *He will rise to the top*, whereas lower social positions are conceptualized as being at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Second, ontological metaphors conceptualize abstract entities—such as emotions, ideas, events, or natural phenomena—as concrete objects, entities, substances, or locations (Haula & Nur, 2019). This conceptualization is grounded in human experience with physical objects. For example, inflation is treated as a concrete entity in expressions such as *Inflation is making me sick*. In this case, inflation is conceptualized as something tangible that can exert a physical effect on people, thereby facilitating a more concrete understanding of an otherwise abstract economic phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Third, structural metaphors involve understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another, more structured conceptual domain (Aulia & Nur, 2020). Unlike orientational and ontological metaphors, structural metaphors provide an organized conceptual framework through systematic correspondences between domains. One common example is the metaphor *TIME IS A RESOURCE*, in which the abstract concept of time is structured through the more concrete concept of valuable resources. Consequently, expressions such as *spending time*, *saving time*, or *wasting time* reflect the conceptual mapping from the domain of resources to the domain of time (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Image Schemas

According to Saeed (2016), image schemas constitute one of the fundamental assumptions of cognitive semantics. The central premise is that human physical interactions with the surrounding world provide the basis for organizing conceptual structures across more abstract domains. Likewise, Haula and Nur (2019) define image schemas as recurring mental structures derived from bodily experiences, perceptions, actions, and spatial relationships. These schemas function largely below the level of conscious awareness but can be readily activated during conceptualization and language use.

Table 1. Image Schemas (Croft & Cruse, 2004)

<i>Space</i>	<i>Up-Down, Front-Back, Left-Right, Near-Far, Center-Periphery, Contact</i>
<i>Scale</i>	<i>Path</i>
<i>Container</i>	<i>Containment, In-Out, Surface, Full-Empty, Content</i>
<i>Force</i>	<i>Balance, Counterforce, Compulsion, Restraint, Enablement, Blockage, Diversion, Attraction</i>
<i>Unity/ Multiplicity</i>	<i>Merging, Collection, Splitting, Iteration, Part-Whole, Mass-Count, Link</i>
<i>Identity</i>	<i>Matching, Superimposition</i>
<i>Existence</i>	<i>Removal, Bounded Space, Cycle, Object, Process</i>

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The primary objective of this design is to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the phenomenon under investigation (Asfar, 2004, 2016, 2017; Dari et al., 2024; Syahrani et al., 2021). A descriptive approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to document and describe naturally occurring linguistic phenomena—namely conceptual metaphors and image schemas—in Sanggau Malay song lyrics without manipulating any research variables. This approach enabled an in-depth and context-sensitive analysis of the meaning construction processes embedded in the songs.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, which begins with theoretical assumptions and conceptual frameworks to investigate the meanings that individuals or communities assign to social and cultural phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Priya, 2021; Effendy et al., 2021; Abu Bakar & Zamani, 2023).

Data were collected through audiovisual and digital materials as well as semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The audiovisual materials consisted of Sanggau Malay song videos obtained from publicly accessible YouTube channels, namely GPD Corp. Sanggau, Christ TCG, Gusti 16, and Seniman Kabupaten Sanggau. Interviews with native speakers of Sanggau Malay were subsequently conducted to verify the linguistic data and ensure the accuracy of local meanings and cultural references.

The research data comprised a corpus of conceptual metaphors extracted from selected Sanggau Malay song lyrics. The corpus was compiled from several YouTube channels, including Kota Sanggau, GPD Corp. Sanggau, Christ TCG, Gusti 16, and Seniman Kabupaten Sanggau. Specifically, this study employed a collection of Sanggau Malay songs published on the Kota Sanggau YouTube channel (uploaded on 15 March 2023) as the primary corpus. The dataset consisted of seven songs: Pancur Aji, Posan Ini, Riyak Sekayam, Lanau Idau, Borita Kalengkang, Ngapai Kapuas, and Biar Gonting Inang Putus.

The corpus was constructed and analyzed through several stages. First, all song lyrics were transcribed using the linguistic software ELAN and Toolbox. These applications facilitate interlinear transcription, thereby producing more systematic, accurate, and organized linguistic documentation (Asfar, 2019). Second, interviews with native speakers of Sanggau Malay were

conducted to validate the transcriptions and clarify culturally specific meanings. Third, the lyrics were analyzed using Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor Theory to identify metaphorical expressions. A metaphor was identified whenever a conceptual mapping occurred between two distinct domains, particularly from a concrete source domain to an abstract target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Syahrizal, 2016). Fourth, each metaphorical expression was classified according to its conceptual metaphor type and corresponding image schema. Finally, all identified metaphors were interpreted using the integrated analytical framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and Image Schema Theory (Croft & Cruse, 2004) to explain how metaphorical meanings are cognitively constructed and culturally grounded within the corpus of Sanggau Malay songs.

Results And Discussion

Ontological Metaphors in the Corpus of Sanggau Malay Songs

Based on the corpus of Sanggau Malay songs analyzed in this study, only two songs contain ontological metaphors: *Lanau Idau* (LI) and *Biar Gonting Inang Putus* (BGIP). The song corpus is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Corpus of Sanggau Malay Songs

Judul Lagu	Kode Lagu
<i>Pancur Aji</i>	PA
<i>Posan Ini</i>	PI
<i>Riyak Sekayam</i>	RS
<i>Lanau Idau</i>	LI
<i>Borita Kalengkang</i>	BK
<i>Ngapai Kapuas</i>	NK
<i>Biar Gonting Inang Putus</i>	BGIP

The classified data revealed three expressions containing ontological metaphors, which are analyzed as follows.

Table 3. Lyrics from *Lanau Idau* (LI)

Data 1	
Lyrics	<i>Tanah menkian ceyomin mata</i>
Translation	<i>Mengkian Land is the reflection of the eye.</i>
line	4
Timestamp	00:01:15,020 --> 00:01:21,400
Image Schema	Identitas

The ontological metaphor in Data 1 is expressed in the phrase *tanah menkiaŋ ceyomin mata*. The **source domain** is *ceyomin mata* ("eye mirror" or "reflection of the eye"), while the **target domain** is **first impression**. The phrase *ceyomin mata* metaphorically refers to the eye as the first medium through which people perceive and recognize one another. In human interaction, the eyes often reveal emotions and become the first point of contact in establishing interpersonal relationships.

Within the cultural context of the song, the expression is closely associated with the historical significance of **Mengkiang Land**, which formerly served as the administrative center of Sanggau before the capital was relocated to present-day Sanggau City. Consequently, the lyric suggests that the historical grandeur and identity of Sanggau are reflected in Mengkiang Land. This interpretation is reinforced by the preceding lyric, *Tanah Sanggau, Tanah Sanggau susah dibaniŋ* ("The land of Sanggau is incomparable"), emphasizing Mengkiang Land as the historical foundation of Sanggau. In other words, Mengkiang Land represents the community's first impression and earliest identity of Sanggau.

The metaphor *ceyomin mata* evokes the **Identity** image schema, specifically the **matching** schema. This image schema emerges because the abstract concept of *the first impression of Sanggau* is mapped onto the concrete concept of *the eye*, creating a conceptual correspondence between visual perception and historical identity.

Table 4. Lyrics from *Biar Gonting Inang Putus* (BGIP)

Data 2	
Lyrics	<i>Mati-mati aba usaha</i>
Translation	<i>Father strives with all his might.</i>
line	9
Timestamp	00:01:01.980–00:01:06.230
Image Schema	xistence

The ontological metaphor in Data 2 appears in the expression *mati-mati aba usaha*. The **source domain** is *mati-mati* ("death" or literally "to die"), whereas the **target domain** is **earnest effort** or **determination**.

Literally, *mati* means "to die" or "to lose one's life." However, in this context, *mati-mati* does not denote physical death but rather symbolizes wholehearted effort and unwavering determination. The abstract concept of determination is therefore conceptualized through the concrete experience of risking one's life, emphasizing the intensity of a person's struggle.

This metaphor gives rise to the **Existence** image schema, specifically the **process** schema. The image schema emerges because determination is conceptualized as an ongoing process represented through the metaphorical notion of *mati-mati*, highlighting perseverance in achieving a desired goal.

Table 5. Lyrics from *Biar Gonting Inang Putus* (BGIP)

Data 3	
Lyrics	<i>Kili? kulu ncari? kerja</i>
Translation	<i>From downstream to upstream in search of work.</i>
line	10
Timestamp	00:01:06.320–00:01:09.010
Image Schema	Space

The ontological metaphor in Data 3 is expressed through the phrase *kili? kulu ncari? kerja*. The **source domain** is *kili? kulu* ("downstream and upstream"), while the **target domain** is **repeated journeys** or **going back and forth**. Literally, *kili?* (downstream) refers to the lower part of a river near its mouth, whereas *kulu* (upstream) denotes the upper reaches of a river. These two locations represent considerable spatial distance. Within the context of the song, the spatial movement between downstream and upstream metaphorically represents the repeated efforts of someone traveling from place to place in search of employment. The following lyric, *asel pina ga? ada* ("yet still without success"), further reinforces this interpretation by emphasizing that despite persistent efforts, no employment is obtained. Consequently, the abstract concept of repeatedly searching for work is conceptualized through the concrete spatial experience of traveling between downstream and upstream.

This metaphor activates the **Space** image schema, particularly the **near–far** schema. The conceptual mapping between repeated movement and spatial distance illustrates how the experience of continuous job searching is understood through embodied spatial experience.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that ontological metaphors in Sanggau Malay songs function as both cognitive and cultural mechanisms through which abstract concepts are conceptualized as concrete experiences. Among the seven songs analyzed, only two—*Lanau Idau* and *Biar Gonting Inang Putus*—contain prominent ontological metaphors. These metaphors reflect how the Sanggau Malay community conceptualizes identity, history, life struggles, and social experiences through culturally embedded symbols that are deeply rooted in their collective imagination.

The findings further reveal that each ontological metaphor is associated with a specific image schema, namely **Identity**, **Existence**, and **Space**. This relationship demonstrates that figurative language in Sanggau Malay songs serves not only an aesthetic function but also reflects the speakers' underlying cognitive structures. Metaphorical expressions such as *ceyomin mata* (the eye as a first impression), *mati-mati* (death as determination), and *kili? kulu* (downstream–upstream as repeated journeys) illustrate how everyday experiences are cognitively structured through embodied cultural knowledge, particularly regarding place, historical memory, and perseverance.

Overall, the findings suggest that Sanggau Malay songs function as both cultural representations and cognitive archives that preserve the worldview, emotional experiences, and social knowledge of the Sanggau Malay community. By integrating **Conceptual Metaphor Theory** and **Image Schema Theory**, this study highlights the value of corpus-

based cognitive semantic analysis for explaining how language and culture interact in shaping meaning within traditional musical expressions.

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