

Metaphor and Contextual Meaning in Selected Songs of Charlie Puth's Album *Nine Track Mind*

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the use of metaphor and contextual meaning in selected songs from Charlie Puth's album *Nine Track Mind*. The study draws upon figurative language theory and contextual semantics as the main analytical frameworks. The objective is to find metaphor within the songs, contextual meaning from the songs, and the overall message of the album. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study focuses on five songs: "One Call Away," "Dangerously," "Marvin Gaye," "We Don't Talk Anymore," and "See You Again." A total of 28 metaphorical expressions were identified, each reflecting emotions such as longing, heartbreak, desire, and personal growth. Contextual meaning was also analyzed to uncover how social, emotional, and cultural backgrounds shape lyric interpretation. The findings show that metaphors in Puth's lyrics effectively convey emotional depth and connect with listeners' experiences. Contextual elements add further meaning, enriching the interpretation of the songs. The album as a whole communicates themes of vulnerability, emotional struggle, and modern relationship dynamics. This study concludes that metaphor and context together create multi-layered meanings in song lyrics and offer valuable insights into semantic expression through music.

INTRODUCTION

Language and music have long served as intertwined forms of human expression. Among various artistic mediums, song occupies a distinctive space as a vessel through which individuals convey creativity, emotion, and identity. As stated by Cahyani et al., 2021 state, songs are not merely sources of entertainment but also cultural artifacts that mirror human experiences and linguistic evolution. Through lyrics, new expressions, idioms, and figurative forms emerge, reflecting the dynamic nature of language and the socio-cultural environments from which they originate.

One of the most significant linguistic devices found in songs is metaphor, a figure of speech that conveys abstract concepts through comparison and association. Metaphors allow artists to communicate deep emotional truths and complex experiences in ways that resonate with listeners. They bridge the gap between emotion and cognition, inviting interpretation beyond literal meaning.

As stated by Talita Zahria & Wibowo, 2024, metaphors in lyrics provide insight into the creativity of the songwriter while fostering engagement through emotional and contextual layers of meaning.

However, metaphors do not exist in isolation. Their interpretation depends heavily on contextual meaning, which considers the social, cultural, and historical circumstances shaping the listener's understanding. For instance, Charlie Puth's lyric in "*Dangerously*", "I love you dangerously, more than the air that I breathe", may initially appear ambiguous or extreme, but when interpreted contextually, it reflects themes of emotional dependence and vulnerability in love. Without awareness of these contextual cues, metaphors risk being misunderstood or losing their intended emotional impact.

Understanding how metaphor and context interact is crucial to appreciating the communicative function of songs. These linguistic elements not only shape the emotional tone of a composition but also serve as a mirror of social attitudes, relationships, and identity. As music continues to evolve as a global medium, songwriters employ metaphors to express universal emotions while embedding personal and cultural perspectives, creating space for multiple interpretations among listeners.

In this study, the researcher examines metaphors and contextual meanings in selected songs from Charlie Puth's album *Nine Track Mind*, including "*One Call Away*," "*Dangerously*," "*Marvin Gaye*," "*We Don't Talk Anymore*," and "*See You Again*." The objective is to analyze how semantic elements are used to express feelings such as love, heartbreak, hope, and personal growth. By exploring these songs linguistically, this research aims to uncover how metaphors serve as powerful communicative tools that connect artist and audience through shared emotional and cultural understanding.

The significance of this study lies in demonstrating that metaphors in song lyrics do more than decorate language, they encode emotion, shape listener perception, and bridge cultural meaning. Through contextual interpretation, this research highlights how Charlie Puth's lyrical style reflects broader human experiences, emphasizing the role of metaphor as both an artistic and linguistic phenomenon.

METHOD

This research applies a qualitative descriptive method to examine the use of metaphor and contextual meaning in Charlie Puth's *Nine Track Mind* album. The data consist of five selected songs, *One Call Away*, *Dangerously*, *Marvin Gaye*, *We Don't Talk Anymore*, and *See You Again*, chosen purposively for their semantic richness and emotional depth. The lyrics were collected from verified sources (Spotify) to ensure accuracy. The main instrument of the study is the researcher, using documentation and note-taking techniques to extract and classify figurative expressions.

The analysis process refers to the framework of figurative language theory by Zahria & Wibowo (2024) and semantic contextual meaning analysis by Cahyani et al. (2021). The data were analyzed through several steps: (1) identifying metaphorical expressions within the lyrics, (2) classifying them based on their types and functions, and (3) interpreting their contextual meaning in relation to the emotional and cultural setting of the songs. This approach allows a deeper understanding of how contemporary metaphors in pop music serve as a linguistic tool for emotional resonance and identity expression, aligning with current studies on language creativity and meaning construction in modern songwriting.

FINDINGS

This research identified various uses of metaphor and contextual meaning in the five songs analyzed from Charlie Puth's *Nine Track Mind* album: *One Call Away*, *Dangerously*, *Marvin Gaye*,

We Don't Talk Anymore, and *See You Again*. A total of **28 metaphorical expressions** were found as stated below:

Table: 1 Distribution of Metaphors and Contextual Meaning

Song Entry	Number of Metaphors	Number of Contextual Meaning
One Call Away	6	4
Dangerously	7	5
Marvin Gaye	4	3
We Don't Talk Anymore	5	4
See You Again	6	4
Total	28	20

Each illustrating different emotional and linguistic functions, such as love, loss, hope, and longing. The metaphors were categorized according to their conceptual mapping and contextual relevance, following the classification of Zahria & Wibowo (2024) and the contextual meaning interpretation approach of Cahyani et al. (2021).

The analysis revealed that the song *Dangerously* contains the highest number of metaphors (seven instances), reflecting the song's emotional intensity and themes of painful love and vulnerability. The line *"I love you dangerously"* metaphorically represents the emotional risk of loving someone too deeply, while *"more than the air that I breathe"* conveys the indispensable nature of that love.

In contrast, *One Call Away* employed metaphors that symbolize dependability and reassurance, such as *"I'm only one call away"*, which contextually means constant emotional presence and support rather than literal physical proximity.

Meanwhile, *See You Again* presented metaphors of grief and remembrance, where *"It's been a long day without you, my friend"* encapsulates the universal feeling of loss and healing through memory.

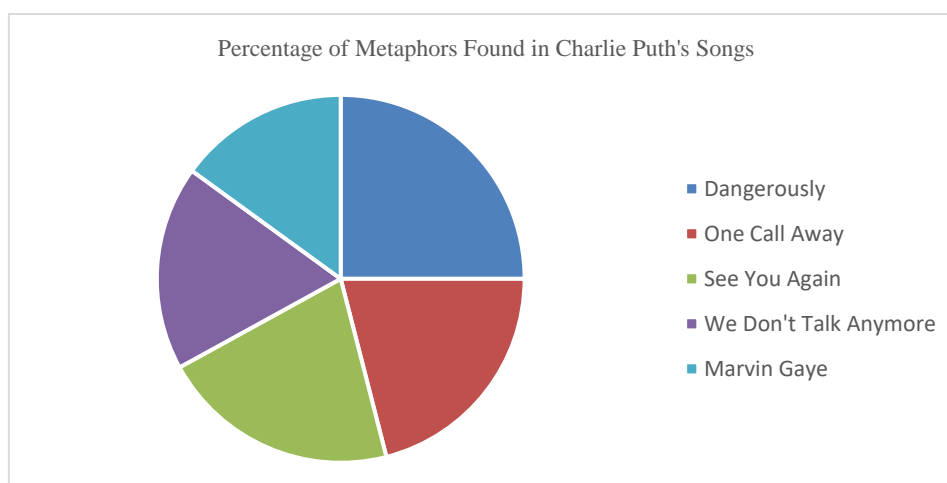


Figure 1. Percentage of Metaphors Found in Charlie Puth's Songs

These findings demonstrate that metaphor and contextual meaning play a critical role in enhancing emotional depth and interpretative diversity within Charlie Puth's songwriting. Each metaphor serves not only as a linguistic ornament but also as a medium to connect abstract feelings

with relatable human experiences, reinforcing the power of semantics in contemporary music expression.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that metaphors and contextual meanings are central to shaping the emotional and linguistic depth of Charlie Puth's *Nine Track Mind* album. The frequent use of metaphor—particularly in songs such as *Dangerously* and *See You Again*, demonstrates how the songwriter employs figurative language to convey complex emotions like love, loss, and hope beyond literal expression. This supports Talita Zahria and Wibowo's (2024) assertion that figurative language acts as both a creative and communicative tool, enabling listeners to connect with abstract emotional experiences through relatable imagery.

From a contextual meaning perspective, Puth's lyrics gain significance when interpreted through emotional, cultural, and situational lenses. Phrases such as "*I love you dangerously*" or "*See you again*" reveal deeper meanings of vulnerability, remembrance, and emotional attachment, depending on the listener's background and lived experience. This aligns with Cahyani et al. (2021), who highlight that meaning is shaped by the interaction between language and context, allowing for multiple interpretations across audiences.

The results underscore the interconnection between semantics and emotional cognition in music. Metaphors function as expressive linguistic forms, while contextual meaning grounds these expressions in shared human experiences. Together, they transform lyrics into emotionally resonant narratives that transcend linguistic boundaries. Practically, these findings offer insights for educators, linguists, and creative practitioners on how language in music can serve as a medium for emotional expression, identity formation, and cultural exchange.

In essence, the integration of metaphor and contextual meaning in *Nine Track Mind* enriches both the artistic and emotional dimensions of Charlie Puth's songwriting, affirming music's role as a multidimensional form of communication and storytelling.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that metaphors and contextual meanings serve as essential linguistic and emotional instruments in Charlie Puth's *Nine Track Mind* album. Through the analysis of five selected songs, *One Call Away*, *Dangerously*, *Marvin Gaye*, *We Don't Talk Anymore*, and *See You Again*, it is evident that metaphors enable the songwriter to communicate complex feelings such as love, longing, and grief in imaginative yet relatable ways. Meanwhile, contextual meaning strengthens these metaphors by grounding them within emotional and situational frameworks that allow listeners to interpret the lyrics through personal experience.

The integration of metaphor and contextual meaning enriches both the artistic quality and interpretive depth of the songs, transforming linguistic expressions into emotional narratives that transcend literal language. This highlights the dynamic relationship between semantics and human emotion, demonstrating that song lyrics can function not merely as entertainment, but as a reflection of human communication, creativity, and empathy.

Future research could extend this study by examining metaphor use across different music genres or cross-cultural contexts, to explore how cultural background, linguistic diversity, and audience perception shape the creation and interpretation of song lyrics. Such investigations would contribute to a broader understanding of how metaphor functions as a universal yet context-dependent form of emotional and artistic expression.

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