

Exploration of collocation and meaning of song lyrics in the album *Hit me Hard and Soft* by Billie Eilish: A corpus linguistics approach

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ABSTRACT

This study examines complex language patterns and thematic components in Billie Eilish's album *Hit Me Hard and Soft* and aims to reveal how the use of collocations and conceptual metaphors is employed to convey themes such as social criticism, emotional conflict, and identity. The data consists of ten songs including *Skinny*, *Lunch*, *Chihiro*, *Birds of a Feather*, *Wildflower*, *The Greatest*, *L'amour De Ma Vie*, *The Diner*, *Bittersuite*, and *Blue* are analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method is applied, combining text linguistics and semantic analysis. The primary data is collected from the website *Genius*, the data were analyzed through corpus-based text analysis to identify word frequency, collocations, and patterns of collocations. Then, these language characteristics are analyzed through a semantic framework and conceptual metaphor theory to understand how meaning is constructed in song lyrics. The results show that recurrent collocations such as *a bird in a cage*, *dog in a dog pound*, and *burning alive* emphasize themes of self-reflection, emotional confinement, and psychological distress. In addition, conceptual metaphors such as emotional pain as physical confinement and love as an object that can be lost or taken away free frequently used to represent complex emotional states, including isolation, vulnerability, and existential longing. This figurative language reinforces these patterns by representing complex states such as feelings of confinement, depression, and existential longing. This analysis highlights how the album constructs broader themes related to social critique, emotional struggle, and personal identity, while simultaneously creating a strong aesthetic and emotional resonance for listeners. This study contributes to discourse linguistics and literary analysis by showing how collocations and metaphors interact in contemporary popular music. It also underscores the value of corpus-based methods for uncovering hidden patterns in song lyrics and illustrates how language in music functions not only as a means of artistic expression but also as a form of cultural commentary.

Keywords: Billie Eilish; corpus linguistics; *Hit Me Hard and Soft*; metaphor; song lyrics.

INTRODUCTION

Music is often seen as a universal medium used to convey stories, emotions, and social commentary. In contemporary popular music, lyrics play a crucial role in conveying personal experiences, emotional struggles, and social issues through specific linguistic choices. Recent linguistic studies show that analyzing the meaning of song lyrics can reveal how language works not only aesthetically, but also cognitively and socially in constructing emotional resonance (Rahmat & Dianita, 2024).

In this context, linguistic features such as collocations play an important role in shaping meaning within song lyrics. In this study, collocations refer to

recurring and relatively stable word combinations that frequently appear in the lyrics and contribute to emotional and thematic expression.

Among contemporary musicians, Billie Eilish has gained international fame thanks to her unique vocal style and expressive lyrics. As a cultural figure, she is often associated with the voice of today's youth, raising topics such as emotional vulnerability, identity conflicts, social anxiety, and generational concerns. Her latest album, *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, is notable not only for its experimental musical composition, but also for its linguistic density, including recurring lexical patterns, distinctive collocations, and rich metaphorical expressions, which makes it particularly suitable for corpus-linguistic and semantic analysis.

Studying the structures and meanings in song lyrics is important because recurring lexical patterns reflect how words naturally interact in authentic linguistic usage. Through these patterns, songwriters can build emotional depth and thematic coherence. Semantic analysis allows researchers to interpret how linguistic choices and contextual meanings contribute to the representation of emotions, experiences, and social messages in song lyrics. Previous studies have shown that semantic analysis is effective in revealing the deeper meanings and emotional complexities in popular song lyrics (Rahmat & Dianita, 2024).

Furthermore, metaphor analysis has been widely applied to explore how abstract experiences are expressed through concrete linguistic representations in song lyrics. Recent research suggests that conceptual metaphors play an important role in shaping emotional expression and meaning construction in contemporary music (Trisnadi & Djuharie, 2025). For example, Rahim and Farabi show how metaphorical expressions in song lyrics function as cognitive tools to reflect on emotional experiences and individual problems (Rahim & Al Farabi, 2019). Studies conducted on Billie Eilish's early albums have largely focused on figurative language and thematic interpretation, highlighting the emotional intimacy and existential contemplation in her songwriting style.

Collocation has been recognized in linguistic studies as a critical component in understanding meaning formation through recurring word pairs. Collocation, according to (Rianugraha, 2025), shows how words interact to convey meaning beyond isolated words and represent actual language use. Although his study focuses on the collocation abilities of Indonesian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), it demonstrates the importance of collocation as a meaningful linguistic unit. This perspective is relevant to current research, as studying collocation patterns in song lyrics may reveal underlying semantic structures and emotional meanings contained in recurring word choices.

However, despite these contributions, systematic investigation of recurring linguistic structures using corpus-based approaches remains limited, particularly in the album *Hit me Hard and Soft*. This gap is significant because analyzing linguistic structures such as linguistic constructions can reveal how recurring lexical patterns reinforce themes of emotional conflict, social criticism, and personal identity. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the linguistic and thematic dimensions of the album *Hit me Hard and Soft* by combining text linguistics, semantic analysis, and conceptual metaphor analysis. This study focuses on identifying recurring linguistic structures in song lyrics and interpreting their contribution to broader thematic meaning, providing new insights into how language functions as a powerful tool for storytelling and self-expression in contemporary popular music.

This study applies Kövecses' (2002) theory who proposed conceptual metaphor theory as an analytical framework for analyzing metaphorical meaning in the lyrics of Billie Eilish's album *Hit me Hard and Soft*. In this approach, metaphors are understood as cognitive mechanisms used to organize and interpret abstract concepts through more concrete empirical domains. This analysis focuses on identifying metaphorical expressions in song lyrics and determining how abstract concepts such as emotions, identity, and social experiences are represented through source domains that are physical, spatial, or empirical in nature.

Metaphor analysis is conducted by identifying linguistic expressions that refer to metaphorical correspondences between the source domain and the target domain. This correspondence is analyzed to reveal how emotional states and psychological experiences are represented through concrete images, such as movement, involvement, conflict, or direction. In line with the principle of personification, this analysis examines how metaphorical patterns reflect physical and sensory experiences that are commonly used to express abstract meanings in song lyrics (Nugraheny & Yuwita, 2023).

Furthermore, metaphorical expressions are classified based on three types of conceptual metaphors: structural metaphors, in which a concept is understood through the structure of another concept; existential metaphors, in which abstract concepts are described as entities or materials; and orientational metaphors, which organize concepts using spatial orientation (Rachmaningsih et al., 2023). This classification allows the study to systematically explain how different types of metaphors work in constructing emotional expression and narrative meaning.

The analysis also considers the interaction between metaphorical patterns and the broader social and cultural context (Alfiani et al., 2025). While some metaphors reflect universal human experiences, others are interpreted as cultural expressions related to modern identity, emotional vulnerability, and social alienation (Huszka et al., 2025). Through this analytical procedure, conceptual metaphor theory is used as a methodological tool to reveal how metaphorical structures contribute to building meaning, emotional depth, and thematic coherence in the album (Dewi & Gusthini, 2025).

Word frequency in Billie Eilish's album *Hit me Hard and Soft* was initially identified using AntConc and Voyant Tools. Several words such as *I'm*, *know*, *love*, *it's*, and *ah* appeared frequently in the initial corpus data. However, not all instances were included in the qualitative interpretation. The researchers then filtered the results based on their semantic and contextual significance. Instances that reflected the main themes of the study—identity, emotional conflict, and social reflection—were analyzed in depth, while repetitive or structurally insignificant elements were disregarded.

METHOD

Research design

To investigate the lexical and metaphorical patterns in the lyrics of Billie Eilish's songs from the album *Hit me Hard and Soft*, this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach that combines linguistic and semantic analysis. Instead of using numerical generalizations, the qualitative approach uses context awareness to evaluate meaning in natural data (Rachman et al., 2024). This technique seeks to

examine how frequently used words contribute to describing key meanings such as social criticism, emotional conflict, and identity.

Data collection

The main data of this study consist of the complete lyrics of all songs from Billie Eilish's album *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, written by Finneas O'Connell and Billie Eilish. The data consist of ten songs, including *Skinny*, *Lunch*, *Chihiro*, *Birds of a Feather*, *Wildflower*, *The Greatest*, *L'amour De Ma Vie*, *The Diner*, *Bittersuite*, and *Blue*. The lyrics were obtained from Genius.com, a publicly accessible digital music portal founded in 2009, which provides song lyrics along with metadata such as song titles, artists, and album details. The dataset includes every song in the album, which serves as the corpus for analyzing word frequency, collocations, and metaphorical patterns.

For analysis, the five most frequently occurring words across the entire album were identified using AntConc and Voyant. These high frequency words were examined for their semantic significance and contextual relevance.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, some steps were undertaken. As Corpus Analysis was applied, the first step was inserting all song lyrics from the album into AntConc and Voyant. The frequency, and co-occurrence patterns were then semantically analyzed. For the detailed analysis, only the five most frequently occurring words across the entire album were selected for collocation and semantic analysis. These words *I'm*, *know*, *love*, *it's*, and *ah* were chosen as they represent the most prominent lexical patterns and thematic expressions in the dataset. Other frequent words were not included to maintain analytical focus and avoid redundancy, allowing determination of the main lexical elements of the album. These significant words were further analyzed using semantic frameworks and conceptual metaphors to determine their contribution to meaning. Topics such as social criticism, emotional conflicts, and identify were used to classify the metaphors and thematic patterns observed in the lyrics, capturing recurring patterns across the album.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Text analysis using **AntConc** and **Voyant** Tools shows that lexical elements such as *I'm*, *know*, *love*, *it's*, and *ah* appear with high frequency in the album's lyrics. However, qualitative analysis reveals that only a small number of these repetitions have thematic or metaphorical meaning. For example, out of 40 instances of repetition of *I'm*, only 16 have contextual meaning. A similar pattern is seen with other words, where only words that convey emotion, reflect identity, or carry a social message are retained for interpretation. This selection explains the difference between raw repetition and semantic repetition, confirming that high lexical repetition does not always mean deeper meaning.

1.1 Corpus Analysis

The corpus analysis of Billie Eilish's album *Hit me Hard and Soft* identified the five most frequently used words across the lyrics, as shown in Table 1. The frequencies were obtained using the corpus tools Voyant and AntConc.

Table 1. The five most frequently occurring words in the entire album

No	Keyword	Frequency
1	I'm	40
2	Know	36
3	I'ts	28
4	Love	27
5	Ah	21
Total		152

Notes:

The word “ah” is not a lexical word but represents Billie’s vocal expressions (screaming, humming, sighs) used to convey emotion or melodic effect.

1.2 Semantic and Metaphorical Analysis

Each frequent word was further analyzed for collocations and metaphorical meaning using a semantic framework and conceptual metaphor theory. Examples of collocations, their metaphors, source and target domains, and explanations are presented below.

Table 2. Collocational Findings of “I’m” (1)

No	Collocation	Keyword	Collocation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
1		I'm	a bird in a cage I'm a dog	Caged bird	Feeling isolated, both emotionally and socially	The trapped bird in this metaphor symbolizes someone who feels limited by their life circumstances, such as social demands or the expectations of others.
2		I'm	Dog in a dog pound	The dog is in a holding cage, which is an unpleasant or isolated place for a dog	A feeling of not being wanted or influenced by others	Symbolizes a sense of loneliness, disrespect, or isolation.
3		I'm	Burning Alive, like a sign	Body on fire	Intensity such as emotions like pain, guilt, or anger	By describing overwhelming and unbearable emotional feelings, “like a sign” shows that these emotions seem real, as if they are a warning.
4			So blue	The color blue is usually associated with sadness;	emotion of sadness	indicating a sad or heartbroken feeling
5	In the back of my mind	I'm	Still overseas	Geographical location (overseas)	A feeling that is distant, foreign, or far from reality	indicating that one feels distant from this state emotionally or mentally.

Table 2. Collocational Findings of “I’m” (2)

No	Collocation	Keyword	Collocation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
6	She’s the headlight	I’m	The deer	A deer trapped by a vehicle's headlights	A feeling of surprise or helplessness in a given situation	Describes someone who feels intimidated or doesn't know how to respond.
7		I’m	Still on my knees	Kneeling (low position)	Emotional vulnerability or submissiveness	indicates that a person still feels vulnerable or gives up easily.
8		I’m	Waitin’ on your block	Block as a physical location	Hopefulness	indicating continuous attention from someone
9		I’m	Turning blue	Turning blue due to lack of oxygen	Feelings of hopelessness or numbness	indicates a state of almost hopelessness.
10		I’m	Here around the clock	Time of day (24 hours)	Commitment that is not limited by time	Indicates that the speaker is always present or available without stopping, portrays strong loyalty or interest
11		I’m	In the grave, till I rot away	Graves and the process of decomposition	A sense of loss, total despair	denotes feelings of deep despair or extreme commitment to death.
12		I’m	In the casket you carry if you go	A coffin that someone carries	Dependence on someone	Indicates that the speaker feels like a part of the other person's life, even if it means following them into despair or a horrible end
13		I’m	Over you but that’s still not true	“over” as a physical movement past something	Emotional process of overcoming the relationship	Describes where the speaker wants to believe that they are over someone, but in reality they are still emotionally attached to them
14		I’m	Pullin’ up my chair and I’m puttin’ up my hair, baby	The physical act of pulling curtains and styling hair	Preparation for an action or interaction	Describes mental or emotional preparation for something, whether a conversation, or an intimate moment
15		I’m	True blue	The color blue is associated with sincerity, honesty or melancholia	Melancholia	Deep sadness for what happened

The term *I’m* collocations show a strong pattern of self-representation when the speaker places the self in psychological distress, emotional imprisonment, and isolation. *I’m* acts as a linguistic anchor for conveying identification through metaphorical formulations rather than only as a grammatical subject. The self is commonly portrayed as weak and emotionally confined, as seen by the collocations that link it to images of constraint *a bird in a cage*, abandonment *a dog in a dog pound*, and extreme emotional anguish *burning alive*.

Table 3. Collocational Findings of “know”

No	Collocation	Keyword	Collocation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
1	Do you	Know	How to bend	Flexibility	Adaptive understanding	Describes the ability to be flexible or adapt to situations.
2	You don't	Know	If you'll make it back	Journey without certainty	Life's uncertainties	Described as a journey with no guarantee of return, indicating uncertainty
3	Tell me it's all been trap, don't	Know	If you'll make it back	Physical traps	Life difficulties	Living in situations described as traps that are full of uncertainty and difficult to escape from.
4	I don't	Know	You at all	Stranger	Lack of understanding of a person	Ignorance of a person is perceived as dealing with a stranger with no connection
5	I don't	Know	Why I called	Loss of direction	Lack of rational reason	Describes a loss of direction or purpose in understanding emotional actions
6	Don't	Know	What I'm crying for	Confusion	Emotions without a clear reason	Ignorance of the reason for crying out is perceived as confusion about the direction of travel
7	Do you wanna	Know	What I told her?	Secret discovery	Hidden knowledge	Knowing something is perceived as discovering or unearthing an unrevealed secret

The word *Know* exhibits a recurrent pattern of cognitive instability and ambiguity in its collocations. *Know* often arises in situations that convey uncertainty, bewilderment, and lack of direction rather than clarity or a clear understanding. These collocations imply that knowledge is viewed as an imperfect or disturbed process, mirroring the speaker's psychological confusion and feelings of insecurity.

Table 4. Collocational Findings of “it's” (1)

No	Collocation	Key-word	Collocation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
1		It's	A craving, not a rush	Hunger	Deep desire or emotional need	An intense desire, more profound than just an impulse or a rush.
2		It's	All been a trap	Trap	Feeling trapped in a deceptive situation or relationship	Expressing that what is happening is an emotional trap or situation that turns out to be manipulative and deceitful.

Table 4. Collocational Findings of “it’s” (2)

No	Collocation	Key-word	Collocation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
3		It’s	Just a hunch	Sense or premonition	A feeling about someone very special	Describes the feeling that there is a strong gut feeling, even though there is no clear evidence yet, that this person is very significant.
4		It’s	Not my fault	Burden or responsibility	A feeling of freedom from blame or responsibility	Expressing that one is not responsible for a particular situation, relieving oneself of the burden or the alleged blame
5		It’s	Not worth fighting for	Battle	A situation or relationship that is not worth defending or fighting for	Indicates that it is not worthwhile to fight for a relationship or situation that does not offer benefits or better meaning.
6	I hope	It’s	Not for sure	Uncertainty	Uncertainty Uncertain expectations	Expressing uncertainty about the future, where one expects something to be uncertain or yet to happen.
7		It’s	Over now	End	A phase of a relationship that ends emotionally	Indicates that a phase, relationship, or feeling has ended, and can no longer continue, providing a sense of emotional closure.
8		It’s	So romanticized if this is how I die	Death is a dramatic feeling	A romantic or idealistic view of the end of life	Describes a very romantic or dramatic view of death, perhaps as an escape or a moving ending.
9		It’s	Such a pity we’re both so pretty	Beauty is tragedy	Feelings that are hampered by beauty	Expresses that despite being very beautiful and attractive, it is the real problem of relationships

The speaker's assessment of emotional states and life circumstances is reflected in the collocations created with *It’s*. Phrases like *just a hunch*, a craving, *not a rush*, and *not for sure* demonstrate how desire and doubt are presented as intangible emotions rather than hard facts. Collocations like *it's over now*, *not worth fighting for*, and *all been a trap* highlight emotional fatigue and resignation while portraying relationships and experiences as dishonest or already over. In general, the speaker can describe personal experiences through judgment, closure, and emotional detachment by using *It’s* to label abstract feelings and circumstances.

Table 5. Collocational Findings of “love” (1)

No	Collocation	Key-word	Collo-cation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
1	You said you'd never fall in	Love	because of me	Love is a trap	Love that hinders freedom or self-development	Shows how love is perceived as something that binds and prevents one from loving again, due to trauma or bad experiences
2	Man, am I the greatest? My congratulations, all my	Love	And patience	Love is a gift or resource	Sacrifice in giving love	Describes that love is something that can be given as a form of appreciation or care, even if it is not appreciated.
3	Fell out of	Love	And you both let go	Let go: The physical act of letting go of something previously grasped, indicating a loss of ownership or attachment to something	Love: An emotional connection that is considered to be “lost” or “let go,” as if it were a tangible object	Love is perceived as something that can be released or lost from grasp when the relationship ends.
4	Did you take my	Love	Away from me?	Love is an object that can be taken away	A feeling of loss or disappointment at being stolen or taken away	Describes the feeling that love can be taken away, which shows a deep sense of loss and helplessness.
5	I fell in	Love	For the first time	Love is a new experience or feeling	The first time a strong and significant feeling is felt	Describes the moment the feeling of love first arises, which becomes an important emotional experience in life.
6	I know that you	Love	Me, you don't need to remind me	Love is knowledge or certainty	Trust or confidence in an emotional relationship	Trust or confidence in an emotional relationship Indicates that love is something that is certain and does not need to be proven anymore, because it is obvious.
7	I said you were the	Love	Of my life	Love is a life goal or achievement (goal, purpose)	Love as the most important thing and the center of one's life	Indicates that a person is considered the center of one's life, which is everything in life.

Table 6. Collocational Findings of “love” (2)

No	Collocation	Key-word	Collocation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
8	I was the	Love	Of your life, but you were not mine	Life: A description of one's entire existence and experiences that are considered meaningful.	Love: Love is seen as an important, but sometimes unbalanced or reciprocal emotional experience in relationships between individuals.	Love is considered the center of one's life, but it does not always carry the same meaning for all parties.
9		Love	So bittersweet	Bittersweet: A combination of sweetness and bitterness in a sensory experience, reflecting the duality of emotions or complex experiences.	Love: Love is described as an emotional experience mixed between happiness (sweet) and suffering (bittersweet), describing a complex relationship.	Love has complex emotional elements, such as flavors consisting of happiness and pain simultaneously.
10	I can't fall in	Love	With you	Love is the ability or capacity to connect (ability)	Inability to develop feelings of love due to various reasons	States that love is something that requires the ability or readiness to connect with someone, and in this case, the ability does not exist.
11	You were the	Love	Of my life	Love is the center of life or the goal of life (center of life, goal)	Love is considered the most important thing in one's life	Expresses that it is everything to a person, dominating or giving meaning to their life.
12	I'll	Love	You till the day that I die	Love is the uninterrupted passage of time (time)	Love that is eternal and infinite throughout life	Expresses a commitment and dedication that will never end, indicating that the love will last until the end of life.

The collocations created using the word *Love* present love as a complicated, multidimensional experience. Expressions like *fall in love*, *love of my life*, and *love you till the day that I die* present love as a major life objective and a sustained commitment. Collocations that highlight vulnerability and emotional imbalance in relationships, such as *love is a trap*, *did you take my love away from me*, and *fell out of love*, depict love as an object that may bind, be taken, or be lost. Furthermore, phrases like *love so bittersweet* emphasize how love is both happy and painful. All things considered, these collocations show that love is portrayed in the lyrics as an emotionally potent force that can support, limit, or even undermine individual identity rather than as an idealized state of perfect harmony.

Table 6. Collocational Findings of “ah”

No	Collo- cation	Keyword	Collo- cation	Metaphor		Explanation
				Source Domain	Target domain	
1		Ah-ah, ah-ah		Natural human voice (spontaneous vocal expression when feeling something deep	Emotion: reflection of emotions that cannot be expressed through concrete words	Vocal impression is emotion: the sound “ah” represents deep feelings that are difficult to explain
2		Ah, ah, ah, ah		Echo: the repetition of the sound gives the impression of resonance	Deep thought: the echo of thoughts that keep repeating within a person	Repeated sound is internal thought: the repetition of the sound shows the process of self-reflection or longing
3		Ah-oh,	I, I loved you,	Sigh: a sound like a long breath that comes out when feeling something emotional	Sadness/consciousn ess: a feeling of lost love or recognition of deep feelings	Breath is sadness: a sigh expresses emotional intensity, especially loss or longing
4		Ah-ah	Born bluer than a butterfl y	Color blue: association of sadness	Emotional state: the feeling of being born in a melancholy or reflective state	Color is emotion: color is used to reflect one's emotional state

Repeated vocal phrases like *ah*, *ah-ah*, and *ah-oh* serve as non-lexical collocations that describe emotions beyond words. These vocal sounds are examples of unplanned human utterances that convey intense feelings like melancholy, introspection, desire, and emotional consciousness. While sigh-like sounds like *ah-oh* express emotional release connected to loss or realization, the repetition of "ah" produces an echo-like effect, implying recurring and unresolved internal thoughts. Vocal sounds are viewed as emotional messengers in this context, when sound itself takes on significance. This result suggests that the lyrics' emotional intensity is created not only by lexical choices but also by vocal expressions that represent emotions that are difficult to fully explain through words.

1.3 Collocational Meaning and Conceptual Metaphor

The collocation patterns identified in song lyrics reveal complex interactions between emotions, identity, and experience. Through the use of metaphorical and semantic groups, songwriters convey emotional depth by projecting human feelings onto animals, colors, and abstract concepts. The following discussion interprets these collocation patterns using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) framework proposed by (Kövecses, 2002) which suggests that abstract human experiences are understood through more concrete domains.

(1) Collocations Related to Animals

Expressions such as *a bird in a cage*, *I am a dog*, *a dog in a dog pound*, and *a deer* function as metaphors for emotional limitation and vulnerability. The phrase *a bird in a cage* represents feelings of being trapped, restricted, or emotionally

suffocated, in line with the conceptual metaphor Freedom is a Bird. Similarly, *I am a dog* and *a dog in a dog pound* symbolize loneliness, rejection, and emotional neglect. These collocations reflect how the songwriter expresses human suffering through animal imagery—a strategy for revealing vulnerability indirectly yet powerfully. This combination of words shows how songwriters use animal imagery to describe human suffering—a strategy for subtly yet effectively expressing vulnerability. These results are consistent with previous research on song lyrics, which shows that animal-related metaphors are often used to project human emotions and psychological vulnerability onto familiar and concrete objects. For example, (Fadhila & Juanda, 2023) show how metaphorical expressions in song lyrics use source-target domain mapping to convey inner turmoil and emotional suffering through vivid imagery.

(2) Collocations Related to Color/Emotion

The repetition of the color blue in expressions such as *so blue*, *turning blue*, and *true blue* represents sadness, despair, and a cold emotional state. According to the metaphor Emotion is Color, the use of *blue* conveys psychological suffering and sadness. The songwriter's choice to use the same color in different variations shows the persistence of emotional suffering and a lack of vitality or warmth, reinforcing the overall tone of sadness in the lyrics. This phenomenon has also been observed in studies of metaphorical language in song lyrics, where emotional connotations are conveyed through figurative terms rather than literal descriptions (Listiwati et al., 2025).

(3) Collocations Related to Death/Darkness

Collocations such as *in the grave*, *in the casket*, *till I rot away*, *burning alive*, and *like a sign* evoke feelings of decay, despair, and existential emptiness. These expressions are in line with the metaphor Death is Emotional Void. They describe not literal death, but emotional death the absence of life or joy in a person's soul. The use of morbid imagery reinforces the dark aesthetic characteristic of the artist's lyrical style, highlighting internal suffering and self-destruction. This perspective is in line with research by (Dewi & Gusthini, 2025), which shows that metaphors related to death and darkness in song lyrics generally function as representations of psychological suffering and emotional loss, rather than as references to physical death.

(4) Collocations Related to Love/Relationships

Expressions like *as not worth fighting for*, *over now*, *it's a shame we're both so beautiful*, *for the first time*, *you both let go*, *if you'll make it back*, and *because of me* describe emotional turmoil and the complexity of love and loss. These lines align with the metaphor Relationships are War, which compares the end of a relationship to the end of a conflict. By using this collocation, the songwriter depicts love as a battlefield filled with suffering and failure rather than harmony, expressing resignation, despair, and emotional exhaustion. Similar results were also found by (Fitri, 2024) and (Adawiyah et al., 2025) who argued that metaphors in modern song lyrics often describe romantic relationships as places of inner conflict, loss, and emotional struggle, thereby reinforcing the idea that love is an exhausting and painful experience.

(5) Collocations Related to Self/Identity

Phrases such as *of my life*, *away from me?*, and *you don't need to remind me, what I'm crying for, what I told her?, why I called* express deep self-reflection and identity crisis. In the metaphor Self is a Fragmented entity, the songwriter describes a shattered sense of self, often questioning their self-worth and emotional stability. This collocation marks an introspective shift in the lyrics, revealing an internal dialogue and self-awareness of pain and guilt. This interpretation is in line with previous research showing that metaphorical expressions in song lyrics often serve as a tool to describe deep emotional experiences and aspects of personal identity, where the self is expressed through figurative language that reveals internal feelings and mental states (Panggabean, 2024).

(6) Collocations Related to Time/Space

Expressions such as *still overseas*, *waitin' in your block, here around the clock*, and *pulling up a chair and I'm puttin' up my hair, baby* represent the passage of time and spatial separation as emotional distance. These phrases align with the metaphors Time is Space or Distance is Emotional separation, reflecting waiting, longing, and endurance in the face of absence. The physical imagery of *waiting* and *distance* renders emotional distance tangible and visual. This study explores the phrase Time is Space, which conceptualizes physical distance and duration of time as emotional waiting and isolation. (Syah Putra et al., 2024) analysis of orientational metaphors in song lyrics reveals a similar pattern: spatial concepts are often used to describe interpersonal distance and emotional feelings.

(7) Collocations Related to Abstract/Uncertainty

Finally, expressions such as *all been a trap, just a hunch, not for sure, how to bend, a craving, not a rush*, and *so romanticized if this is how I die* express uncertainty and ambiguity in perception. This collocation represents the metaphor Life is an Uncertain Journey, in which the speaker navigates doubt, confusion, and self-deception. This lexical choice illustrates emotional and mental instability a continuous internal negotiation between truth and illusion. (Syah Putra et al., 2024) also found a similar pattern by projecting abstract experiences into a more concrete conceptual domain, metaphorical phrases in song lyrics often serve to convey complex emotional states and psychological ambiguities.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the collocation patterns and metaphorical meanings found in the lyrics of Billie Eilish's album *Hit me Hard and Soft* using corpus based combined with semantic analysis and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This study shows that recurring lexical patterns are crucial in creating meaning that goes beyond simple repetition, by analyzing word frequency, and collocations using AntConc and Voyant Tools. The results prove that not every frequently occurring word contributes equally to meaning; rather, the importance of words in expressing themes is determined by their contextual use and semantic relevance.

According to the study, metaphorical collocations representing emotional struggles, identity crises, relational conflicts, and psychological uncertainty dominate the album's lyrics. Conceptual metaphors such as *Freedom is a Bird*, *Emotions are Colors*, *Death is Emotional Emptiness*, *Relationships are War*, *The self is a Fragmented Entity*, *Time is Space*, and *Life is an Uncertain Journey* show how abstract emotional and psychological experiences are systematically mapped

onto concrete and sensory domains. Through vivid and relevant imagery, these metaphors allow listeners to understand complex internal experiences such as vulnerability, desire, sadness, and self-doubt.

Furthermore, the combination of qualitative interpretation and corpus-based research shows how collocations function as linguistic anchors that support thematic cohesion throughout the album. Billie Eilish's unique lyrical approach, which emphasizes introspection, emotional honesty, and social reflection, is evident in her repeated use of animal imagery, color symbolism, spatial expressions, and abstract uncertainty. By addressing current concerns about emotional vulnerability, identity development, and interpersonal relationships, these linguistic patterns also position the album as a kind of cultural commentary.

In conclusion, this study reveals that corpus linguistics provides a powerful methodological tool for identifying hidden patterns in song lyrics, while qualitative analysis offers deeper insights into meaning production. By showing how collocations and conceptual metaphors interact in contemporary popular music, this research contributes to discourse linguistics and literary studies, highlighting the role of song lyrics not only as artistic expression but also as meaningful reflections of modern emotional and social experiences.

Building on these findings, the study suggests that contemporary popular music, particularly in the works of Billie Eilish, relies on simple yet repetitive lexical patterns to construct complex emotional narratives. This demonstrates how minimal linguistic elements can be strategically used to convey identify, vulnerability, and social themes, reinforcing the artists to compare linguistic patterns across genres. Additionally, further studies may explore multimodal aspects, such as the relationship between lyrics, music videos, and audience interpretation, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of meaning construction in contemporary music.

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