

Morphology, Stylistics, and Conceptual Metaphor in Alex Warren's Ordinary

Mita Setriana Gultom¹, Teza Aditra Ginting², Tulus Maruli Purba³, Rahmadsyah Rangkuti⁴

^a Universitas Sumatera Utara, Jl. Dr. T. Mansyur No. 9 Padang Bulan, Medan, 20222, Indonesia

¹mitasetriana.gultom@gmail.com; ²aditginting234@gmail.com; ³purbatulus133@gmail.com; ⁴syahkuti@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines how meaning is constructed in the song *Ordinary* by Alex Warren using three linguistic frameworks: morphological theory, discourse stylistics, and conceptual metaphor theory. Most previous studies on song lyrics analyze only one linguistic aspect at a time, such as morphology, stylistics, or metaphor, which limits the understanding of how these elements work together. This study addresses that gap by combining all three frameworks in one analysis, making it possible to see how different linguistic levels interact to build meaning. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how word structures, stylistic patterns, and conceptual metaphors together represent the theme of love in the song. The data are taken from the song lyrics and analyzed through word formation processes, stylistic features such as repetition and pronoun usage, and metaphorical expressions. The findings show that the lyrics mostly use simple word forms and contractions, which make the message clear and easy to understand. Repetition and direct address create a strong emotional and intimate tone. Love is represented through religious and spiritual metaphors, presenting it as a sacred and meaningful experience. This study shows that song lyrics work as a complex linguistic system where multiple levels of language interact to create meaning. The findings offer a useful analytical model for studying popular music from a linguistic perspective and highlight how language shapes emotional and symbolic expression..

I. Introduction

Language plays a fundamental role in human communication, not only as a medium for conveying information but also as a means of expressing emotions, identity, and social experience. In contemporary society, language is increasingly manifested through artistic forms such as music, where song lyrics function as a powerful communicative and expressive medium. Song lyrics are not merely arranged words that accompany melody; rather, they represent complex linguistic constructions that encode meaning through multiple levels of language. As such, the study of song lyrics offers valuable insights into how language operates within creative and cultural contexts.

Within linguistics, several theoretical approaches provide useful frameworks for analyzing language in song lyrics. Morphology focuses on the internal structure and formation of words, enabling the identification of how lexical meaning is constructed. Stylistics, particularly discourse stylistics, examines how linguistic features such as repetition, parallelism, and pronoun usage function to create coherence, emphasis, and emotional effect within a text. In addition, conceptual metaphor theory explains how abstract concepts are understood through more concrete experiential domains, allowing researchers to explore how meaning is cognitively structured. Together, these approaches enable a comprehensive analysis of both form and meaning in language.

Previous studies have examined song lyrics from various linguistic perspectives, particularly in morphology and stylistics. Morphological studies, such as those conducted by Aprianti and Parmawati [1] and Putri and Djuharie [14], mainly focus on identifying word formation processes, including derivation, inflection, compounding, and contraction. These studies show that song lyrics often use

simple and informal morphological forms to enhance clarity and emotional expression. Similarly, studies on slang and word formation, such as Syahidah [16] and Habib, Hidayatullah, and Panggabean [2], reveal that processes like clipping, blending, and compounding are frequently used in contemporary songs, emphasizing creativity and stylistic flexibility in language use.

In the field of stylistics, several studies highlight the role of linguistic patterns in constructing meaning. Nkansah [11] finds that repetition and parallelism function as important stylistic devices that enhance emotional intensity and aesthetic effect in song lyrics. Similarly, Pirzada [13] shows that stylistic features such as metaphor and rhetorical devices contribute to narrative coherence and thematic development. Muzakka et al. [9] further argue that stylistic elements operate across different linguistic levels to form a unified discourse. Although these studies provide valuable insights, most of them focus on a single linguistic aspect, either morphology or stylistics. As a result, they offer only a partial understanding of how meaning is constructed in song lyrics. Therefore, a more integrated approach is needed to examine how different linguistic features interact in shaping meaning.

Despite the growing body of research, there remains a significant gap in the literature. Although previous studies have examined morphology, stylistics, and metaphor in song lyrics, these aspects are often analyzed separately. As a result, little attention has been given to how they interact to construct meaning, particularly in contemporary love songs. To address this gap, this study integrates morphological analysis, discourse stylistics, and conceptual metaphor theory to examine Alex Warren's *Ordinary*. By exploring how these linguistic features work together, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of meaning construction in contemporary popular music.

Therefore, this research intends to address this gap by analyzing how different linguistic features interact to construct meaning in the song *Ordinary* by Alex Warren. The song *Ordinary* by Alex Warren was chosen because it combines simple language, repeated stylistic patterns, and frequent religious images. Unlike many modern love songs that mainly express emotions directly, *Ordinary* describes romantic love through spiritual and sacred ideas, making it unique in both language and meaning. These features make the song a suitable choice for exploring how different language elements work together to create meaning. This study focuses on the integration of morphological structures, discourse stylistic patterns, and conceptual metaphors in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of meaning construction in contemporary popular music.

The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What morphological features are used in the song lyrics?
2. How do discourse stylistic elements contribute to meaning construction?
3. How are conceptual metaphors used to represent the theme of love?

This study contributes to linguistic research by offering an integrated analytical framework that demonstrates how multiple levels of language interact in constructing meaning. It also highlights the significance of popular music as a rich site for linguistic and cultural analysis.

II. Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the linguistic features found in the song *Ordinary* by Alex Warren. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the data consist of linguistic expressions in the form of words, phrases, and clauses, rather than numerical data. The purpose of this study is to interpret how meaning is constructed through language by examining morphological structures, discourse stylistic patterns, and conceptual metaphors within the song lyrics.

A. Data Source

The primary data source of this study is the lyrics of the song *Ordinary* by Alex Warren. The lyrics were obtained from a reliable online source and verified through repeated listening to ensure accuracy and consistency with the performed version of the song.

The data consist of selected linguistic units, including words, phrases, and lines that contain relevant morphological features, stylistic patterns, and metaphorical expressions. These units are treated as textual evidence for analysis.

B. Data Collection

Based on the lyrics analyzed in this study, the methodological description should provide specific information regarding the amount of data and the procedures used to ensure analytical trustworthiness. The dataset consists of 53 lyric lines (including repeated lines and chorus repetitions) taken from Alex Warren's *Ordinary*. From these lyrics, the analysis identified 24 morphological items, 31 stylistic features, and 18 metaphorical expressions relevant to the research objectives.

The morphological analysis focused on word-formation processes occurring in the lyrics, including contractions, inflectional forms, and derivational forms. A total of 24 morphological items were identified. Examples include contractions such as *you're*, *this town's*, and *heaven's*; inflectional forms such as *watered*, *lost*, *colors*, *angels*, *buried*, *kissin'*, *layin'*, *stayin'*, *knowin'*, and *running*; and derivational forms such as *ordinary*, *eventually*, *hopeless*, *heavenly*, and *sculptor*.

The stylistic analysis identified 31 stylistic features, primarily consisting of repetition, parallelism, pronoun usage, imagery, and emotional intensification. Repetition is the most dominant feature, as seen in recurring expressions such as "out of the ordinary," "The angels up in the clouds are jealous," and "Oh, my, my." The frequent use of first- and second-person pronouns (I, you, me, your) also contributes to the intimate and personal tone of the song.

The conceptual metaphor analysis identified 18 metaphorical expressions. These expressions largely reflect the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A SACRED OR DIVINE EXPERIENCE, in which romantic love is understood through the source domain of religion and spirituality. Examples include *holy water*, *faith*, *Heaven's gate*, *altar*, *pray*, *sanctuary*, *angels*, *return me to dust*, and *hallelujah*. Additional metaphorical expressions such as *stayin' drunk on your vine*, *you're the sculptor*, *I'm the clay*, *world was in black and white until I saw your light*, and *higher than ecstasy* further reinforce the portrayal of love as transformative, transcendent, and spiritually significant.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, several procedures were employed. First, the lyrics were repeatedly read and listened to in order to verify transcription accuracy and gain familiarity with the data. Second, all linguistic features were systematically coded according to predetermined categories derived from the theoretical frameworks of morphology, discourse stylistics, and conceptual metaphor theory. Third, the coding process was reviewed multiple times to maintain consistency and reduce subjective interpretation. Finally, the classifications and interpretations were cross-checked against established linguistic definitions and relevant scholarly literature to enhance analytical reliability and validity.

The analysis proceeded through four stages. First, the lyrics were segmented into individual lines and coded for relevant linguistic features. Second, the identified items were classified into morphological, stylistic, and metaphorical categories. Third, each category was analyzed using the corresponding theoretical framework. Finally, the findings were integrated to explain how morphological choices, stylistic patterns, and conceptual metaphors interact to construct meaning throughout the song. This procedure enabled a comprehensive examination of how different linguistic levels contribute to the representation of love as an extraordinary and sacred experience in *Ordinary*.

C. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis in this study was conducted using three theoretical frameworks: morphological analysis, discourse stylistics, and conceptual metaphor theory.

First, morphological analysis was applied based on the theory proposed by O'Grady and Guzman [12], focusing on word-formation processes such as inflection, derivation, compounding, and contraction. A linguistic item was categorized as morphological when it demonstrated a change in word structure or grammatical form. For example, words containing inflectional suffixes (-s, -ing, -ed), derivational affixes, or contracted forms were identified and classified according to their morphological processes.

Second, discourse stylistics was applied based on Jakobson's framework [3], which emphasizes the role of linguistic patterns in shaping meaning and communicative function. Stylistic features were identified by examining recurring linguistic patterns within the lyrics. Expressions were categorized as stylistic features when they functioned to create emphasis, cohesion, emotional

intensity, or interpersonal engagement. These features included repetition, parallelism, pronoun usage, and intensifying expressions.

Third, conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson [5] was used to analyze metaphorical representations of abstract concepts, particularly love. Expressions were classified as conceptual metaphors when they represented an abstract target domain through a more concrete source domain. The analysis focused on identifying conceptual mappings between source domains and target domains and interpreting their contribution to meaning construction.

The analysis was carried out through four stages. First, the lyrics were repeatedly read and listened to in order to ensure familiarity with the data and accuracy of interpretation. Second, relevant words, phrases, and lines were coded according to the three analytical categories: morphology, discourse stylistics, and conceptual metaphor. Third, the coded data were classified based on the criteria established by the selected theoretical frameworks. Fourth, the findings were interpreted to explain how each linguistic feature contributes to meaning construction and how different linguistic levels interact within the song.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, the coding and classification processes were reviewed repeatedly to ensure consistency. The interpretations were also cross-checked with the theoretical concepts and findings of previous studies to minimize subjective bias and strengthen analytical validity.

The analysis is carried out in several stages. First, the selected data are classified into three categories: morphological features, stylistic features, and conceptual metaphors. Second, each category is analyzed to determine its linguistic function and contribution to meaning. Third, the findings are interpreted by relating them to the theoretical frameworks and previous studies. Finally, the results are presented descriptively to answer the research questions and demonstrate how linguistic features interact to construct meaning in the song

III. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the linguistic analysis of the song Ordinary by Alex Warren and simultaneously interprets how these findings contribute to meaning construction. The results are organized into three main categories: morphological features, discourse stylistic features, and conceptual metaphors. Selected excerpts from the lyrics are used as evidence, and each finding is directly discussed in relation to previous studies and theoretical frameworks.

A. Morphological Features and Meaning Accessibility

The analysis reveals that the song predominantly employs simple morphological structures. Most lexical items are monomorphemic, while inflectional forms and contractions are frequently used, with derivational processes appearing less frequently.

Table 1. Morphological Features in the Song Lyrics

Category	Examples from Lyrics	Analysis
Monomorphemic words	love, faith, town, knife, vine, dust	Single morphemes carrying core lexical meaning
Inflectional morphology	colors, angels, running, knowing, watered	Inflectional suffixes (-s, -ing, -ed) indicate plurality, aspect, or grammatical function without changing word class
Contractions	you're, town's, heaven's, takin', layin', stayin'	Reflect spoken language patterns and conversational style

Derivational morphology	ordinary, heavenly, hopeless, sculptor	Derivational affixes change lexical meaning or word class
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Each morphological category contributes differently to meaning construction. Monomorphemic words such as *love*, *faith*, and *dust* provide semantic clarity because their meanings are direct and easily recognizable. Inflectional forms such as *colors*, *angels*, *running*, and *watered* add grammatical information without altering the core meaning of the words, thereby maintaining accessibility for listeners. Derivational forms such as *heavenly* and *hopeless* enrich the lyrical meaning by introducing evaluative and descriptive nuances that support the song's emotional and spiritual themes.

The frequent use of contractions, including *you're*, *takin'*, *layin'*, and *stayin'*, reflects natural spoken language. These forms reduce the distance between the speaker and the listener, creating a conversational tone that contributes to the song's intimacy. As a result, morphological simplicity not only facilitates comprehension but also supports the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of meaning construction.

B. Discourse Stylistic Features as Emotional and Structural Devices

The analysis identifies repetition, pronoun usage, parallel structures, and intensifying expressions as the most prominent stylistic features in the song.

Table 2. Stylistic Features in the Song Lyrics

Feature	Examples from Lyrics	Function
Repetition	“out of the ordinary”, “the angels up in the clouds are jealous”	Reinforces theme and emphasis
Pronoun usage	I, you, we	Creates intimacy and engagement
Parallelism	“You’re the sculptor, I’m the clay”	Highlights relational contrast
Intensifying expressions	“Oh my, my”, “Hopeless hallelujah”	Adds emotional depth

Repetition is particularly dominant in the phrase “*out of the ordinary*,” which appears repeatedly throughout the song. Beyond reinforcing the central theme, the repetition creates rhythmic cohesion and makes the phrase more memorable for listeners. Each recurrence reminds the audience that the relationship is perceived as exceptional rather than ordinary. This repeated emphasis strengthens the emotional impact of the lyrics and highlights the speaker's admiration for the beloved. Such findings support Nkansah [11], who argues that repetition enhances both emphasis and aesthetic effect.

Pronoun usage (*I*, *you*, and *we*) contributes significantly to the song's intimacy. The recurring interaction between *I* and *you* transforms the lyrics into a personal conversation rather than a detached narrative. This direct address allows listeners to experience the speaker's emotions more closely and creates a sense of emotional involvement. The pronoun *we* further emphasizes unity and shared experience, reinforcing the portrayal of love as a deeply personal relationship.

Parallel structures such as “*You're the sculptor, I'm the clay*” create balance and rhythm while simultaneously emphasizing relational dynamics. The line presents two contrasting yet interconnected roles, portraying one partner as the agent of transformation and the other as the

recipient of that transformation. This structure not only enhances the musical flow of the lyric but also strengthens its metaphorical meaning by illustrating how love shapes personal identity.

Intensifying expressions such as “*Oh my, my*” and “*Hopeless hallelujah*” communicate strong feelings of wonder, admiration, and devotion. These expressions amplify the emotional intensity of the song and help listeners perceive the depth of the speaker's affection. Together, repetition, pronoun usage, parallelism, and intensification function as stylistic devices that enhance emotional engagement, rhythm, and thematic cohesion throughout the lyrics.

C. *Conceptual Metaphors and the Representation of Love*

The analysis reveals that love is predominantly conceptualized through religious and spiritual domains.

Table 3. Conceptual Metaphors in the Song Lyrics

Expression	Source Domain	Conceptual Meaning
holy water, faith, hallelujah	Religion	Love as sacred experience
Heaven’s gate, angels	Afterlife	Love as transcendent
altar, pray, sanctuary	Worship	Lover as divine figure
sculptor and clay	Creation	Love shapes identity
drunk on your vine	Physical sensation	Love as intoxication

These findings support Lakoff and Johnson’s [5] conceptual metaphor theory, which explains that abstract concepts are understood through concrete domains. The dominant mapping identified in this study is:

LOVE IS A SACRED OR DIVINE EXPERIENCE

In this conceptual metaphor, love functions as the target domain, while religion and spirituality function as the source domain. The lyrics systematically transfer characteristics associated with sacred experiences to the experience of romantic love. For example, *holy water* maps the concept of spiritual purification onto emotional renewal through love, while *Heaven's gate* maps transcendence and salvation onto emotional fulfillment. Similarly, expressions such as *altar*, *pray*, and *sanctuary* transfer ideas of worship, devotion, and reverence to the relationship between the speaker and the beloved.

The mapping process allows listeners to understand the abstract experience of love through more concrete and culturally familiar religious concepts. Rather than presenting love merely as an emotion, the lyrics conceptualize it as a sacred experience characterized by devotion, transformation, and transcendence. This finding supports Lakoff and Johnson's [5] argument that abstract concepts are commonly understood through structured conceptual mappings from more concrete experiential domains.

Through this mapping, love is elevated beyond a personal emotion into a spiritual and transcendent experience. This aligns with Nasution et al. [10], who emphasize the role of emotional (affective) meaning in shaping interpretation.

Unlike previous studies that focus only on identifying metaphors, this research demonstrates that metaphorical meaning is strengthened by other linguistic features. Morphological simplicity ensures that metaphorical expressions remain accessible, while repetition reinforces their symbolic

significance. Thus, conceptual metaphors function as the central meaning-making mechanism, supported by morphology and stylistics.

D. Integration of Linguistic Levels in Meaning Construction

A key finding of this study is that morphological features, stylistic patterns, and conceptual metaphors function as an integrated system rather than independent components. This interaction can be clearly observed in the lyric “You're the sculptor, I'm the clay.”

From a morphological perspective, the line employs simple and familiar lexical items that make the meaning immediately accessible to listeners. From a stylistic perspective, the parallel structure created by “You're...” and “I'm...” establishes balance, rhythm, and emphasis while highlighting the relationship between the two participants. From a metaphorical perspective, the expression draws on the source domain of creation and craftsmanship to conceptualize love as a force that shapes personal identity.

Similarly, the expression “holy water” demonstrates the interaction of multiple linguistic levels. Morphologically, it consists of simple monomorphemic words that are easy to understand. Stylistically, its repetition throughout the song increases thematic prominence and emotional emphasis. Conceptually, it activates the metaphor LOVE IS A SACRED OR DIVINE EXPERIENCE by mapping religious purification onto emotional transformation. These examples demonstrate that meaning emerges through the combined operation of morphology, stylistics, and metaphor rather than through any single linguistic feature in isolation.

E. Cultural and Interpretative Implications

The findings also suggest broader linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical implications. The frequent use of religious imagery, including altar, pray, sanctuary, holy water, and hallelujah, reflects a tendency in contemporary popular music to conceptualize love through spiritual and sacred experiences. Rather than portraying love solely as a personal emotion, the lyrics frame it as a source of transformation, devotion, and transcendence.

This pattern may reflect broader cultural influences in which religious concepts remain powerful symbolic resources for expressing profound emotional experiences. By drawing upon culturally familiar religious imagery, the song enables listeners to interpret romantic love through concepts associated with faith, worship, and spiritual fulfillment. Such religious and spiritual metaphors are not unique to this song but represent a broader pattern in popular music, where abstract emotions are frequently expressed through culturally meaningful domains such as religion, spirituality, and transcendence. These metaphors allow artists to communicate complex emotional experiences in ways that are both relatable and emotionally resonant for audiences.

From a linguistic perspective, the findings demonstrate how meaning is constructed through the interaction of morphology, stylistic devices, and conceptual metaphors. The study highlights the importance of metaphorical language in shaping listeners' understanding of abstract concepts such as love. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that song lyrics can serve as valuable resources for teaching language, figurative meaning, and cultural interpretation. Analyzing lyrics through multiple linguistic levels can help students develop critical language awareness while also enhancing their understanding of how language reflects cultural values and emotional expression. Consequently, the lyrics demonstrate how popular music can function as a site where linguistic creativity, personal emotions, and broader cultural meanings intersect.

F. Summary of Findings

The analysis confirms that:

1. The song employs simple morphological features that enhance clarity and accessibility.
2. Discourse stylistic elements such as repetition, pronouns, and parallelism intensify emotional expression and cohesion.
3. Conceptual metaphors represent love as a sacred and transformative experience.

Most importantly, these features interact as an integrated system, demonstrating that meaning in the song emerges from the interplay of multiple linguistic levels rather than from isolated elements.

IV. Conclusion

This study examined how meaning is constructed in Alex Warren's *Ordinary* through an integrated analysis of morphology, discourse stylistics, and conceptual metaphor. The findings show that simple morphological structures enhance clarity and accessibility, stylistic features such as repetition, pronoun usage, and parallelism create emotional intensity and intimacy, and conceptual metaphors represent love as a sacred and transformative experience. Together, these linguistic features interact to construct a unified and meaningful portrayal of love.

The study contributes to linguistic research by demonstrating the value of integrating multiple linguistic levels in the analysis of song lyrics. Rather than functioning independently, morphology, stylistics, and metaphor work together to shape meaning and emotional expression in contemporary popular music.

However, the study is limited to a single song and focuses on three linguistic frameworks. Future research may examine a larger corpus of songs across different genres, artists, and cultural contexts, as well as incorporate additional approaches such as pragmatics, semantics, or critical discourse analysis to provide a broader understanding of meaning construction in song lyrics.

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Supplementary Material

The full lyrics of the song analyzed in this study are provided as supplementary material.