Metaphors Used in Avenged Sevenfold's *City of Evil* Album and Their Contribution to Vocabulary Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the metaphors found in Avenged Sevenfold's album *City of Evil* and how they can contribute to vocabulary teaching. The purpose is to highlight the pedagogical value of metaphorical lyrics in enhancing students' understanding of figurative language and expanding vocabulary through contextual learning. The findings indicate that the songs 'Seize the Day,' 'Beast and the Harlot,' 'Bat Country,' and 'M.I.A.' are rich in metaphorical expressions that communicate emotional and thematic depth. These metaphors provide relevant material for engaging learners in critical thinking, contextual interpretation, and lexical acquisition. This study implies that integrating popular music in English classrooms can serve as an innovative approach in teaching vocabulary and figurative speech.
Keywords: Avenged Sevenfold, City of Evil, metaphor, vocabulary teaching, song lyrics.

˙Introduction

Language Teaching in the 21st Century has growth significantly.Language education today is at a crossroads between traditional instruction and innovative, multimodal approaches. As English becomes more globally dominant—not only as a native language but also as a lingua franca—the demand for creative, engaging, and culturally responsive methods of instruction is greater than ever. With this shift comes the recognition that learning a language is not only about mastering grammar and syntax, but also about becoming competent in understanding context, culture, nuance, and especially, **figurative language**.

One of the persistent challenges in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is how to teach vocabulary effectively. Many language learners struggle not only with remembering word meanings but also with recognizing when a word or phrase carries connotative or metaphorical meanings. This is particularly important because English, like many other languages, is rich in metaphors. These metaphors are not only common in literature but are also embedded in everyday speech, media, advertising, and, significantly, music.

Metaphor is not just a literary device; it is a central mechanism in human thought and language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that human beings understand abstract or complex concepts through metaphors rooted in physical experience—what they call "conceptual metaphors." For example, time is often described using metaphors of movement: "time flies," "we're approaching the deadline," or "the days ahead." These metaphors reflect how people structure abstract understanding through tangible experience.

For learners of English, especially at intermediate or advanced levels, recognizing and interpreting metaphors becomes a critical component of language mastery. Metaphors help learners not only understand deeper layers of meaning but also acquire new vocabulary in a more associative and memorable way. However, the traditional language classroom has often neglected this area, focusing more on grammar drills and literal meanings.

This neglect may partly stem from a perception that figurative language is too advanced or that it belongs solely in literary studies. In reality, learners are exposed to metaphorical expressions all the time—especially through the media and music. Helping them unpack these expressions, therefore, is not only practical but necessary.

In recent decades, music has been recognized as one of the most effective authentic resources for language instruction. Songs are inherently memorable due to rhythm, melody, and emotional impact. They also serve as windows into culture, values, and social commentary. The integration of music into English instruction has numerous advantages: it increases student engagement, offers natural repetition of language structures, and fosters listening comprehension in an enjoyable format.

While the use of music in language classrooms is well-documented, much of the focus has been on genres considered linguistically simple—such as pop, folk, or children's songs. These genres are valuable but often lack the depth and sophistication of language needed to challenge advanced learners or to introduce metaphor-rich content. Herein lies the untapped potential of rock and metal music, particularly in albums like Avenged

▪Sevenfold's *City of Evil*, which combines emotionally intense themes with complex lyrical structures and figurative language.

Avenged Sevenfold (A7X) is an American rock/metal band known not only for musical virtuosity but also for the philosophical and metaphorical depth of its lyrics. The band's third studio album, *City of Evil* (2005), is widely regarded as a turning point in their career, blending classical music influences, complex instrumental arrangements, and metaphor-laden lyrical narratives. The album explores profound human experiences—love, death, madness, war, temptation—through vivid and often abstract metaphors. It provides a unique corpus for analyzing figurative language in action.

The songs chosen for analysis in this study—"Seize the Day," "Beast and the Harlot," "Bat Country," and "M.I.A."—each represent distinct thematic concerns and linguistic richness. For example, "Seize the Day" reflects on regret and mortality through the lens of time, while "Bat Country" explores chaos and drug-induced insanity using surreal metaphors. These songs are ideal for helping learners engage with metaphorical meaning in context while also encountering high-frequency academic vocabulary (e.g., *betrayal*, *redemption*, *sacrifice*).

Analyzing metaphors in song lyrics offers educational benefits that extend far beyond vocabulary acquisition. When students engage with metaphor-rich texts, they are prompted to think critically, interpret creatively, and draw connections between language and meaning. Such tasks inherently develop higher-order thinking skills as classified in Bloom's Taxonomy—analysis, evaluation, and creation.

Moreover, teaching metaphors through music invites students to make personal connections with the text. Metaphors are inherently subjective and interpretive, allowing learners to explore multiple meanings. This creates a student-centered learning environment where diverse perspectives are encouraged and cultural understanding is fostered.

In practical classroom terms, teachers can use metaphorical lyrics in various ways like listening and interpretation students listen to a song and identify figurative expressions,discussion and Debate groups interpret metaphors and argue for their interpretations,vocabulary Logs Learners record unfamiliar metaphorical phrases and research their meanings,creative Writing students compose their own metaphors based on the themes of the songs,cross-Cultural Comparison learners compare the metaphors in english to those in their native language.

These strategies make the classroom more dynamic, interactive, and cognitively engaging. They also demonstrate how metaphor is not confined to poetry books or exams but is part of real, living language.

One of the core tenets of successful language instruction is relevance. When learners see the direct relevance of the material to their lives, interests, and identities, they are more motivated to participate actively. For students who are already fans of Avenged Sevenfold or the rock/metal genre, studying these lyrics in class creates an immediate connection. Even for those unfamiliar with the band, the themes—love, death, struggle, identity—are universally human.

This approach also helps overcome the artificiality that sometimes characterizes language textbooks, which may feature outdated or overly simplistic dialogues. In

contrast, analyzing real-world artistic texts gives learners a chance to interact with English as it is actually used—and to build cultural literacy along the way.

Of course, using metal music in the classroom is not without challenges. Some educators might worry about violent or explicit content, complex language, or controversial themes. However, these concerns can be addressed through careful song selection and framing. It is the responsibility of the teacher to provide context, guide interpretation, and ensure that materials are developmentally appropriate. When managed responsibly, even dark or controversial content can lead to powerful educational moments, especially when students are encouraged to reflect, critique, and empathize.

Furthermore, the complexity of the language in songs like those in *City of Evil* is not a barrier but a learning opportunity. Learners must stretch their interpretative abilities and practice inferring meaning from context—both essential language skills. Exposure to complexity in a supported environment builds linguistic confidence and competence.

While numerous studies have examined the use of music in language learning, relatively few have focused on metaphor in metal music. Even fewer have investigated the direct application of metaphorical song lyrics for vocabulary instruction. This study addresses that gap by combining linguistic analysis, metaphor theory, and pedagogical application.

It contributes to an evolving understanding of how authentic cultural texts— especially those from youth-oriented genres—can enhance language instruction. By focusing on metaphor and vocabulary, this research highlights a specific and practical pedagogical goal that can be adapted to diverse educational contexts.

Based on the background and rationale outlined above, this study aims to:Identify and categorize metaphorical expressions in selected songs from *City of Evil*,analyze how these metaphors convey thematic and emotional meaning,evaluate their effectiveness and potential as materials for vocabulary teaching in EFL/ESL contexts,Propose pedagogical strategies for integrating metaphor-based lyric analysis into language classrooms.

Methods

This study uses qualitative content analysis to examine metaphorical expressions in four songs from *City of Evil*: "Seize the Day," "Beast and the Harlot," "Bat Country," and "M.I.A." Each song was analyzed to identify metaphorical language and interpret its meaning in the context of the song's themes. The educational value of each metaphor was then evaluated in terms of its potential contribution to vocabulary teaching.

Discussion

The findings show that all four songs contain a significant number of metaphorical expressions:

"Seize the Day" presents life and death through the metaphor of time slipping away. Phrases like "Seize the day or die regretting the time you lost" illustrate urgency and regret, making them suitable for teaching abstract concepts related to time, mortality, and life choices.

"Beast and the Harlot" uses apocalyptic imagery and biblical allusions to critique corruption and temptation. The metaphor of the "Beast" and the "Harlot" can be analyzed to discuss morality, power, and societal decay, providing rich material for vocabulary related to emotions and ethics.

▪ **"Bat Country"** evokes madness and escapism through vivid metaphors. Inspired by *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, it offers metaphors like "Too weird to live, too rare to die," which can initiate classroom discussions on mental states, identity, and rebellion.

"M.I.A." uses war metaphors to reflect on the personal costs of conflict. The title itself—an acronym for "Missing in Action"—becomes a metaphor for emotional absence and detachment, making it useful for vocabulary associated with war, trauma, and psychological conflict.

In all these examples, the metaphors add emotional and thematic depth, while also challenging learners to interpret meaning beyond the literal. This process of interpretation encourages critical thinking and contextual vocabulary acquisition.

Conclusion

The metaphorical language in Avenged Sevenfold's *City of Evil* provides a valuable resource for vocabulary teaching. Through contextual interpretation of lyrics, learners can enhance their understanding of figurative language while expanding their lexicon. This study supports the idea that popular music, when used intentionally, can be an innovative and effective medium for language education.

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