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Cultural Constructions of Impossibility in The Perspective of Stylistic Pragmatics: The Case of *Anak Bajang Mengayun Bulan*

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A B S T R A K

The present study is concerned with pragmatic and stylistic functions of metaphor in *Anak Bajang Mengayun Bulan (ABMB)*. The study focuses on three main research questions: the central metaphor as a pragmatic action, the stylistic choices and their function in guiding the inferential interpretation of impossibility, and the role of cultural, social, and societal contexts in the formation of metaphorical meaning and ideological implications. This study uses a hybrid framework of conceptual metaphor theory and stylistic pragmatics to analyze five major metaphors: (1) *gadung* tendrils as relational entanglement and asymmetry, (2) *lidi jantan* and rainbow imagery as protective authority, (3) paradoxical light-dark metaphors as existential hope, (4) immersion in darkness as psychological collapse, and (5) sinking into the ocean of night as existential disorientation. The findings reveal metaphor as a site of dynamic and situated meaning-making in which lexical, imagistic, and culturally-embedded elements interact with embodied cognition to construct relational, affective, and existential realities. The foregrounding of style and pragmatic inference enables readers to perceive impossibility, social hierarchy and ideological tension indirectly, and emphasizes the complex representation of human limitation and aspiration in the novel. This study emphasizes the importance of stylistic pragmatics for the interpretation of literary texts and provides implications for narrative analysis, literary pedagogy and cross-cultural translation. It also refers to metaphor as a carrier of cognitive, affective, and cultural meaning in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor theory; cultural context; existential representation; inferential meaning; stylistic pragmatics

Konstruksi Budaya tentang Ketidakmungkinan dalam Perspektif Pragmatik Stilistik: Studi Kasus Anak Bajang Mengayun Bulan

Penelitian ini mengkaji fungsi pragmatik dan stilistika metafora dalam novel Anak Bajang Mengayun Bulan (ABMB) dengan memfokuskan pada tiga permasalahan utama, yaitu bagaimana metafora utama berfungsi sebagai tindakan pragmatik, bagaimana pilihan stilistika mengarahkan interpretasi inferensial terhadap kemustahilan, serta bagaimana konteks kultural, sosial, dan kemasyarakatan membentuk makna metaforis dan implikasi ideologisnya. Dengan menggunakan kerangka terpadu antara teori metafora konseptual dan pragmatik stilistika, penelitian ini menganalisis lima metafora kunci: (1) sulur gadung yang merepresentasikan keterjeratan relasional dan asimetri, (2) lidi jantan dan citraan pelangi yang menandakan otoritas protektif, (3) metafora paradoks terang–gelap yang menggambarkan harapan eksistensial, (4) keterbenaman dalam kegelapan yang mengisyaratkan keruntuhan psikologis, dan (5) tenggelam dalam samudra malam yang merepresentasikan disorientasi eksistensial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metafora berfungsi sebagai ruang dinamis bagi pembentukan makna yang kontekstual, di mana unsur leksikal, imajistik, dan kultural yang terbenam berinteraksi dengan kognisi terwujud (embodied cognition) untuk membangun realitas relasional, afektif, dan eksistensial. Penonjolan stilistika (stylistic foregrounding) serta inferensi pragmatik memungkinkan pembaca memahami kemustahilan, hierarki sosial, dan ketegangan ideologis secara tidak langsung, sekaligus menegaskan representasi halus novel ini terhadap keterbatasan dan aspirasi manusia. Penelitian ini menegaskan peran krusial pragmatik stilistika dalam interpretasi sastra, serta menawarkan kontribusi bagi analisis naratif, pedagogi sastra, dan penerjemahan lintas budaya, dengan menempatkan metafora sebagai instrumen pembentuk makna kognitif, afektif, dan kultural dalam sastra Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata kunci: *konteks budaya; makna inferensial; pragmatik stilistika; representasi eksistensial; teori metafora konseptual*

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INTRODUCTION

This study conceptualizes ABMB as a literary site that pragmatically performs meaning through stylistic choices and contextual inference instead of encoding meaning. The reading is based on the interface between the theory of conceptual metaphor and stylistic pragmatics. The literary language is understood as a form of contextualized meaning-making in which metaphor is a communicative act rather than a semantic ornament (Guthrie & McCracken, 2010). Hence, meaning is considered to be emergent based on the interaction of linguistic form, readerly inference and culturally shared knowledge (Lee, 2001). Conceptual Metaphor Theory is a cognitive model of how abstract concepts such as impossibility, aspiration and limitation are structured through embodied experience (Robinson, 2000; Steen, 2023). On this view, a metaphor is a systematic mapping from a source to a target region, based on our embodied interaction with the world. But these mappings are not discrete functions; they are activated and interpreted in particular discursive and contextual milieus (Sikka, 2008).

Stylistic pragmatics studies the role of pragmatic inference and stylistic structures in the construction of metaphorical meanings. That's the cognitive illusion. The discourse method of metaphor is influenced by textual salience, aesthetic salience, and communicative aim (George et al., 2022; Terkourafi & Bezuidenhout, 2021). The stylistic economy, lyrical imagery, and symbolic succinctness of ABMB allow non-literal and evaluative readings. Metaphor is a type of indirect communication, where information is transmitted by inference and not by direct means (Searle, 1979). There is room to grow in the real world. The moon's course cannot be altered; it has no referent authority. Such evaluations, pragmatic stylisticsians argue, can be based on lexical simplicity, imagistic incongruity, and symbolic compression. The claim is emotional, symbolic and philosophical (Hickey, 1993, 1998; Leech, 1983; Yokoyama, 2001). In fact, the *anak bajang* is embedded in cultural understandings of the body, age and behaviour. Pragmatic linguistic choices are produced through shared cultural frameworks that can be decoded by the audience. The baby's diminutive size and lack of development signal vulnerability and marginality, and are symptomatic of a systemic constraint rather than a personal failure (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

So, the question of the subject of contextual awareness is an interpretive one. The *bulan* is an extraordinary sign, a sign of Transcendence, power, and unattainable ambitions. This symbolism is thus seen as cultural, but not universal, by stylistic pragmatics, but conditioned by myth, folklore, and literary tradition on the basis of intersubjective perception. The previous information is helpful for understanding the metaphor as well as for providing an outline of the framework of pragmatic interpretation (Black, 2006; Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). The metaphor measures the hierarchy and uneven access to power in society. In practical stylistic terms, the metaphorical language makes the disparity visually acceptable. The tension between *anak bajang* and *bulan* can be read as a performative representation of social marginality, in which the refusal of symbolic and material capital is performed as an internal limitation and not as a structural one (Haworth, 2006; Pang & Samp, 2022), referring to Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power. The metaphor works better with stories which take possession of desire and ration its satisfaction. Stylish pragmatics allows us to study the language actuality (not the aural delivery) of these ideological disparities. The metaphor reflects a basic dichotomy that occurs in all social structures: the desire to aspire and the tendency to be disappointed. In fact, the debate is a seesaw between cognitive advancement and financial inability (Qiu et al., 2022; Steen, 2023; van Poppel, 2020).

This study views the ABMB as a literary place, where meaning is produced pragmatically, through stylistic choices and contextual inference, rather than encoded. The reading is situated at the intersection of conceptual metaphor theory and stylistic pragmatics. Literary language is an idea of contextualized sense production where metaphor is a communicative act, not a semantic decoration (Guthrie & McCracken, 2010). So, meaning is understood to be born from the relation between the

form of language, readerly inference, and common cultural information (Lee, 2001). Conceptual Metaphor Theory is a cognitive model that sheds light on how abstract ideas such as impossibility, aspiration, and limitation are structured via embodied experience (Robinson, 2000; Steen, 2023). Thus, a metaphor is a systematic mapping from a source domain to a target region, grounded in our embodied interaction with the environment. But these mappings are not discrete functions; they are engaged and understood within certain discursive and contextual milieus (Sikka, 2008).

Stylistic pragmatics is the study of the role of pragmatic inference and stylistic structures in the emergence of metaphorical meanings. That's the head part of it. The discourse method of metaphor is influenced by textual salience, aesthetic salience, and the communication purpose (George et al., 2022; Terkourafi & Bezuidenhout, 2021). The economy of words, the poetry of imagery, and the symbolism of conciseness in ABMB allow for non-literal and evaluative readings. Metaphor is an indirect mode of communication, because information is conveyed by inference rather than directly (Searle, 1979). There is room to grow in the actual world. There is a large amount of work on conceptual metaphor, and separately, on stylistic analysis in literary discourse, but very little attention has been given to the way in which metaphor itself functions as a pragmatic activity inside the framework of stylistically mediated speech. While past research has concentrated on cognitive mappings, the role of style foregrounding and contextual inference when constructing meaning is still under-explored, especially in non-Western literary works (Cranmer et al., 2020; Pozhar, 2020). Thus, the pragmatic/ideological work of metaphor is still rarely addressed.

Also, stylistic pragmatic research has focused on conversational discourse or short literary passages, overlooking full-depth literary tales as locations for pragmatic meaning-making. There are very few systematic investigations at now which combine the conceptual metaphor theory with the stylistic pragmatics and the contextual analysis. This difference is especially visible in studies of culturally grounded metaphors representing social marginality and impossibility in some sociocultural contexts (Johansson, 2016; Kramsch, 2002). To address these restrictions, this research focuses on the following issues: How does the key metaphor in the story of ABMB function as a pragmatic action? Stylistic choices direct and guide an inferential knowledge of the impossible. What are the influences of cultural, social, and societal conditions on the pragmatic understanding of the metaphor and its ideological implications? You cannot alter the orbit of the moon. It has no credibility of reference. Such evaluations, pragmatic stylists argue, can be based on lexical simplicity, on imagistic incongruity, and on symbolic compression. This remark is emotional, symbolic, and philosophical (Hickey, 1993, 1998; Leech, 1983; Yokoyama, 2001).

In practice, the *anak bajang* is embedded in cultural understandings of body, age and behaviour. It is a common cultural context in which pragmatic choices are made and which is intelligible to the listener. The baby's smallness and lack of growth are symptoms of vulnerability and marginality and are diagnostic of a systemic constraint rather than a personal fault (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). The topic of the subject of contextual awareness is therefore a question of interpretation. The *bulan* is a marvellous symbol, a sign of transcendence, power, and aspirations beyond reach. Such symbolism is, according to stylistic pragmatics, cultural rather than universal, the product of an intersubjective perspective conditioned by myth, folklore and literary tradition. The above is helpful both to understand the metaphor and to delineate the frame of the pragmatic interpretation (Blanks, 2011; Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). The metaphor depicts the hierarchy and uneven access to power in society. The variance is visually acceptable in the metaphorical practical style features. The tension of *anak bajang* and *bulan* can be understood through Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power, in the case of a performative representation of social marginality, where the

renunciation of symbolic and material capital is performed as an internal limitation rather than a structural one (Haworth, 2006; Pang & Samp, 2022).

The metaphor works best for stories that depict desire and allocate fulfillment. The fashionable pragmatics methodology allows us to investigate the language reality of these ideological differences. The metaphor exposes a fundamental dichotomy to be seen in all social groups: the desire to desire and the tendency to be disappointed. Indeed, it's a seesaw between cognitive advancement and financial limits (Qiu et al., 2022; Steen, 2023; van Poppel, 2020). Therefore, the study intends to analyze the metaphor ABMB as a site of situated meaning-making by merging the theory of conceptual metaphor with stylistic pragmatics. It aims to account for the emergence of metaphorical meaning through the interaction of embodied cognition, stylistic form, and contextual knowledge, and how this relationship enables the expression of social hierarchy, ideological tension, and existential restriction in the story. This study contributes theoretically to the creation of an integrative paradigm that conceptualizes metaphor as pragmatic activity, rather than as static cognitive mapping. The present work foregrounds stylistic mediation and contextual inference, extending current models of metaphor analysis and contributing to the development of stylistic pragmatics as a strong analytical tool for literary discourse.

METHOD

The study uses a qualitative interpretive research design based on stylistic pragmatics and conceptual metaphor theory that are particularly appropriate to explore how metaphor functions as a pragmatic action in literary discourse (Fendt & Sachs, 2008). This approach is focused on close textual reading, so that the researcher can follow the relationship between language form, stylistic patterning, and pragmatic meaning within the narrative. This type of design allows the investigation of meanings that are culturally located, ideologically loaded, and contextually mediated, and that cannot be accessed through quantitative metrics alone.

The main data are metaphorical expressions and stylistically salient narrative portions of ABMB which articulate the key metaphor of impossibility. Data collection is informed by a purposive sampling strategy with explicit criteria: (1) metaphors that are conceptually central to the narrative, (2) passages where stylistic devices such as imagery, repetition, or lexical foregrounding enhance meaning, and (3) instances where cultural, social, or societal contexts are explicitly or implicitly referenced. Read the text several times to completely identify all metaphorical structures.

Data analysis is performed in three interconnected steps. The first step is to identify the conceptual metaphors and classify them according to the source-target domain mappings of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that indicate the underlying cognitive processes. Secondly, a stylistic analysis is carried out in an effort to explore the contribution of narrative strategies, lexical choice, grammatical organisation, figurative imagery and discourse emphasis to metaphorical meaning and to the direction of interpretive focus. Thirdly, pragmatic analysis examines the inferential processes activated by the metaphors – such as implicatures, presuppositions and likely speech act functions – in relation to frameworks from relevance theory and speech act theory (Rahardi & Budhiono, 2024; Wilson & Bishop, 2022).

In the interpretive process, contextual analysis is systematically integrated to account for the influence of cultural, social and societal elements on the meaning-making process. Every metaphor identified is analysed in terms of cultural context, social strata and ideological narratives – how symbolic images are created and understood in the collective consciousness of the audience (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This means that the study is not only interested in the identification of linguistic and stylistic aspects but also in positioning the meaning in a wider socio-cultural and ideological context thus offering a complete picture of the nature of metaphor as pragmatic activity.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this section we present the findings of this study, framing metaphor as a dynamic junction of stylistic form, pragmatic function and cultural cognition in ABMB. By analysing five important metaphors, the study reveals how the story orchestrates inferential meaning rather than propositional exposition, and hence readers are forced to actively create relational, emotive and existential knowledge. Each metaphor is a pragmatic act: they influence interpretation, foregrounds impossibility, and encodes ideological and cultural information through choice of lexicon, imagery and narrative positioning. Thus, the study can tackle the research issues of the pragmatic function of key metaphors, the role of stylistic foregrounding in structuring the inferential routes, and the impact of social and cultural circumstances on meaning construction. The ensuing discussion draws on these findings to demonstrate the interplay of embodied cognition, stylistic-pragmatic strategies, and contextual knowledge in the representation of complex human experience such as relational asymmetry, protective authority, hope, despair, and existential limitation, and to advance an understanding of metaphor as a cognitive and socio-cultural tool in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Inferential Construction of Impossibility

The simile *bagai sulur-sulur pohon gadung yang sedang merambati pohon-pohon di tepi telaga* [Like the delicate tendrils of the gadung vine entwining the trees that stand along the lake's shore] is a pragmatic strategy to direct the readers' inferential construction of relational impossibility. The metaphor does not say "entangled" or "dependent," but enacts these states through vegetative imagery, forcing readers to perceive attachment and asymmetry. Lexical choices such as *sulur-sulur and merambati* stress fragility, slow movement, and structural limitation, while the culturally resonant pohon gadung creates nuanced moral and affective tension. In form and function, the text illustrates how the narrative leaves meaning-making to the reader, metaphor being an active mechanism that conveys relational intricacy and impossibility without propositional exposition.

Data 1.
"Kalau mereka harus diibaratkan dengan sesuatu, itu seperti sulur-sulur pohon gadung yang merambati pohon-pohon di tepi telaga." hlm 3 [If their words and feelings were to be translated at all, they would be like the tendrils of a gadung vine, gently crawling on the trees on the edge of the lake.]
Discursive-Stylistic Context:
This utterance is uttered in the situation where the *Bajang* giant is playing and teasing with the young animals in Lake Sulendra. They are portrayed as close, loving, and interdependent on each other. Such feelings are said to grow naturally and slowly, like the creeping proliferation of *gadung* tendrils.

Simile *bagai sulur-sulur pohon gadung yang merambati pohon-pohon di tepi telaga* [Like the delicate tendrils of the gadung vine twining the trees that stand along the lake's shore] in this discursive setting of warmth and conviviality is a practical deed, not a mere descriptive embellishment. Metaphor has an indirect communicative role from the stylistic-pragmatic point of view, because it does not directly state emotional intimacy or mutual reliance, but it regulates the way such relational meanings are to be obtained. Hence, sense is not a matter of the clarity of the proposition, but of the inferential labor of the reader. The metaphor exemplifies a non-assertive mode of meaning-making based on implicature at the level of speech pragmatics. The story does not make any of the definitive semantic claims, and instead replaces the explicit psychological language with a picture of creeping vegetative growth, allowing the reader to infer relational dynamics through shared experiential knowledge. Attachment, proximity, and dependency are not verbal, but performative in images. This requirement for inference has further significance in this respect. Looking at the apparently placid scene, laughter and compassion accompany a metaphor that gently encodes fragility and limitation. Hence the pragmatic power of the speech is its capacity to sustain complexity under the lightness of the story. Even bonds of delight are subject to structural constraints.

Stylistic foregrounding, then, is crucial in the formation of this inferential horizon. *Sulur-sulur* repeats to emphasize plurality and thinness, foregrounding fragility and lack of independent activity. Tendrils cannot stand or grow erect by nature, but must be attached to stronger supports. This imagistic choice pragmatically restricts interpretation to the asymmetry of relations: proximity is reached by dependency, not interdependence. But the relationship appears to be close and at the same time asymmetrical. These stylistic gestures subtly mark out the limits of imagining love, leading the reader to recognize that emotional bonds, however weak, are maintained by imbalance. The pragmatic effect of this metaphor is further complicated by the reference to *pohon gadung*. *Gadung* is ambivalent in Indonesian ecological and cultural knowledge: it is a resource and a threat, nourishing yet harmful if mismanaged. By using this culturally charged plant, the book imbues the scene of play with an undertow of danger and moral discomfort. Pragmatically, this cultural coding limits the range of reasonable inferences: the partnership is not romanticised as just harmonious but as potentially hazardous. Love arises, but in a form that bears within it a threat and limitation. The metaphor therefore quietly undermines the superficial harmony of the setting.

The verb *merambati* is a key element of the inferential formulation of impossibility. *Merambati* is not about conscious ascension, reciprocal growth, or purposeful movement. It is, rather, about sluggish, creeping expansion, distinguished by inevitability rather than intention. Stylistically and pragmatically, this vocabulary choice indicates that relational development is less a matter of volitional desire and more a matter of situational necessity. Growth occurs not because it wishes to, but because it must. This creates an implicature of emotional inevitability: once attachment is formed, it develops steadily and becomes harder to erase. Impossibility is therefore not understood as a sudden prohibition but as a gradual trapping in a process that seems natural and benign. This vision is pragmatically shaped also by cultural and social settings. The metaphor draws on agrarian and ecological experience, which Indonesian readers know, that ties abstract emotional links to a common material environment. And relationships are conceived as observable patterns of growth that occur in daily life: adaptive, marginal, and frequently environmentally limited expansion. This enables the metaphor to operate as an indirect variant of social hierarchy: one thing adheres, another thing supports, echoing greater arrangements of reliance in society. Pragmatically, the metaphor suggests we see such disparities as everyday realities, not as unusual circumstances.

In the notion of conceptual metaphor, the sentence exemplifies the mapping from relational experience to plant growth that is facilitated by embodied cognition. This is not importantly a metaphor of thriving or mutual cultivation, but of conditional survival. Growth is parasitic rather than expansive; it is a matter of closeness, effort, and limits. In combination with stylistic pragmatics, this mapping also indicates that metaphorical meaning is not just conceptual, but interactional, originating from the interplay of bodily experience, linguistic foregrounding and culturally shared knowledge. The metaphor thus does ideological work by naturalizing asymmetry and limitation, making them organic rather than blatantly imposed.

Inferential Construction of Guardianship

The metaphor of the coconut leaf stalk into *lidi jantan* that radiates the colors of the rainbow is pragmatically working to describe the safeguarding authority and moral vigilance. Lexical and imagistic choices are based on power, guidance, and harmonious oversight and build the *Bajang* giant as a guardian figure. The refraction of light, stylistically, suggests aesthetic beauty and symbolic power, allowing readers to infer relational and ethical dimensions without explicit comment, revealing how metaphor orchestrates interpretive interaction through culturally and cognitively resonant imagery.

Data 2
"Batang daun kelapa itu seperti lidi jantan, yang sinarnya berpendaran menjadi aneka cahaya Pelangi." hlm 4 [The coconut leaf stalk was like a delicate midrib, its luminosity refracting into a spectrum of rainbow hues.]
Discursive-Stylistic Context:

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At dusk, the *Bajang* giant guides the young animals home, this statement. The lidi jantan serves as a symbol of strength and protection, while the rainbow-like illumination represents the *Bajang* giant's position as a protector for harmony and tranquility.

Pragmatically, the simile *batang daun kelapa itu seperti lidi jantan* operates as an active location of interpretive interaction, rather than as a mere descriptive embellishment. In stylistic-pragmatic terms, the metaphor governs the way the readers are asked to infer the protective power and moral dependability of the *bajang* giant. Rather than displaying strength or guardianship openly, the narrative makes these attributes into something recognizable in a vegetative form inside its culture. The reader is forced to fill in the semantic gap between the visible natural object (the coconut stalk) and the relational/ideological function of the giant. This is an example of how metaphor works as an inferential, action-oriented method in the formation of character meaning. In terms of style, the metaphor highlights structural and emotive features by means of chosen word choices. The reference to lidi jantan is a matter of slenderness, of being upright, of resilience—qualities that index strength not as physical force but as functional, stable stability. This comparison is situated in a culturally known setting of coconut trees and hence the narrative grounds abstract moral and relational aspects in a physical, ecologically evocative image. Pragmatically, such foregrounding reduces the scope of interpretive possibilities: the reader is led to associate protection and authority with subtle, durable, and upright types of strength rather than with overt displays of power, emphasizing the giant's ethically based and culturally appropriate custodianship.

The second portion of the metaphor, *yang sinarnya berpendaran menjadi aneka cahaya pelangi*, furthers the inferential and evaluative task. The refracted rainbow light suggests plurality, harmony, and visual richness, pointing to the affective effects of the giant's protective role. Stylistically, this foregrounding is a non-assertive instruction to the reader: harmony and peace are experienced, not prescribed, inferentially. The rainbow imagery embeds moral and social value in the perceptual field, making the giant's guardianship an experiential interpretive experience. Pragmatically, the scene is used to create the affective and evaluative effects by subtle implicature rather than overt narrative exposition. The pragmatic force of the metaphor is based on cultural and social understanding. In this, the coconut palm, and by extension the *lidi jantan*, is associated with durability, shelter, and functional resilience in Indonesian lived experience. Such analogies, laden with cultural meaning, allow readers to infer that protection and strength are incorporated in naturalized, socially legible forms. The metaphor thus functions as a mediator between human character and broader societal norms: the giant's authority is not contained in narrative statement, but in interaction with culturally grounded indications, rendering his guardianship both affectively engaging and ideologically resonant.

The text sets up a conceptual metaphor mapping between strength/protection and structural plant form, mediated by embodied cognition, within the conceptual metaphor theory framework. The giant's strength is not abstract or generic, but incarnate in the thin rigidity and brilliance of the *lidi jantan*. Read in terms of stylistic pragmatics, this mapping demonstrates the ways in which moral and relational meaning emerges dynamically from the interaction of bodily experience, linguistic form and cultural knowledge. The metaphor thus does ideological work: it naturalizes guardianship and ethical authority as observable, dependable and culturally consistent attributes, with character evaluation according to shared perceptual and social schemas.

Inferential Construction of Existential Continuity

This reflective remark is a practical trigger for the inferential growth of optimism in adversity. The relation of morning and night, light and darkness, indicates the cyclical continuity and resilience, challenging the reader to make sense of the temporal and existential tension. Stylistically, parallelism and antithesis serve to underscore the contemplative tone, while pragmatically, inference allows the

reader to comprehend abstract emotional and philosophical states, demonstrating the function of metaphor as a mediator of existential insight in the narrative.

Data 3.
"Pagi senantiasa bersembunyi di balik malam, dan terang hadir di tengah kegelapan." hlm 6 [There is always morning in the night. And light is enveloped in the dark.
Discursive-Stylistic Context:
This thoughtful message comes when the Bajang giant closes his eyes on a silent night. He thinks of existence as the constant alternation of light and gloom. Night is not a conclusion but a period within which hope exists.

The declarative paradoxes of morning is always contained within night, and light is enfolded within darkness serve as pragmatic inferential cues to the reader, orienting interpretive engagement with the giant's reflective consciousness. Stylistically-pragmatically, these parallel clauses do not merely state a universal truth, but rather perform a nuanced cognitive action, urging the audience to reconcile apparent contrasts and to perceive continuity within existential oscillation. The metaphoric formulation turns temporal and light occurrences into vehicles for the protagonist's interior confrontation with hope, mortality, and the cyclical rhythm of experience. Meaning is not propositional but inferential, requiring interpretive work on the basis of both linguistic form and narrative context. In terms of style, the recurrence and symmetry of the phrases bring forth contrast and interdependence. The dual axis of morning/night and light/darkness constructs an existentially coded, not simply a temporal or visual, dual axis. The verbs *tersimpan* (contained) and *terkandung* (enfolded) reflect relationship dynamics. Containment connotes preservation, while enfolding signifies protection and closeness; both of which provide nuanced affective clues regarding the nature of hope and resilience. Pragmatically, these language choices restrict inference to the recognition of life's fundamental duality: that ends are never final, darkness is never without possibility, and reflection is an interpretive effort of finding hidden continuity.

This pragmatic function is facilitated by cultural and narrative background. In Indonesian literary and ecological imagination, night is typically imagined not as a time of conclusion, but as a time of meditation, rest, and latent promise. The story suggests that darkness is a means of change and preservation, through the placing of the giant's reflection in *malam sunyi*. The metaphor, thus, mediates between individual cognition and the culturally comprehensible schemas of temporal and moral cycles, enabling the inferential construction of hope to grow out of contextualized experience. In practical terms, the giant's reflection mirrors an interpretive activity where readers learn to grasp continuity, resilience, and hidden promise, even in the midst of apparent halt. From the point of view of conceptual metaphor theory, the passage exemplifies the mapping of existence/life as light within darkness, with temporal, visual, and affective domains. But this is not a typical growth or achievement metaphor. Unlike the latter, this mapping focuses on cohabitation, potentiality, and cyclic repetition, not teleological advancement. From a stylistic pragmatic perspective, meaning is formed dynamically through the interaction of lexical foregrounding, parallel structure, and narrative context. The metaphorical duality performs ideological work: it naturalizes endurance and reflective hope as part of the human experience, defining existential oscillation not as failure or absence, but as an entrenched, interpretable condition.

Metaphor is an indirect speech act at the level of discourse. It does not teach, it does not preach, but it sets off guided inference, leading the readers to see the coexistence of opposites, the latent promise of closure. The decision to parallel morning/night and light/darkness is stylistic, allowing the reader to experience the tension and balance concurrently, performing understanding rather than receiving it as explicit knowledge. This method of inference reflects the *bajang* giant's own contemplative practice, strengthening a narrative congruence between character cognition and reader involvement.

Inferential Construction of Psychological Descent

Here, the layered vision of night eating night speaks of deep psychological disintegration and sadness. In practical terms, the metaphor does not express the inner dilemma of the character, but accomplishes it. The viewers have to know that the character is trapped in darkness and choked up emotionally." Stylistic methods like repetition, intensity, and lexical foregrounding emphasise the sense of existential incarceration and highlight how metaphor operates as a performative device for articulating internalized tension and emotive extremes.

Data 4.
"Raksasa bajang ditelan dalam malam yang ditelan malam, dalam kegelapan yang ditelan kegelapan." p.7 [The Bajang gigantic swallowed in a night Swallowed in a night Swallowed in darkness Swallowed in darkness.]
Discursive-Stylistic Context:
The utterance is made while the bajang giant is in the midst of a serious inner crisis. He's anxious and hopeless about the future. The black layers metaphorically represent a stifling and uncomfortable mental state.

The repetition swallowed within a night swallowed by night, within darkness swallowed by darkness functions pragmatically as an inferential method that leads readers down into the giant's psychological collapse. From the stylistic-pragmatic point of view, the metaphor not only reflects the outward environment but also represents the mental state, and so makes the sensation of hopelessness and existential entrapment accessible through words. The recurrence adds to the strength of the entrapment, and pushes the readers to perform interpretative labour so that they can understand the meaning of the crisis, very much in accordance with the greater objective of the research to understand metaphor as pragmatic action rather than as beautiful embellishment. Foregrounding, lexically and syntactically, stylistically, intensifies the inferential construction of psychological extremes. The verbs *ditelan* (swallowed) and the recursive layering of night and blackness stress engulfment, impotence, and inescapability. Pragmatically, these choices limit feasible interpretations: readers are invited to infer total submersion in adversity, a mental condition in which hope and orientation are occluded. The layering of the repetition reflects the oppressive character of the giant's mind, such that interpretation is performed, not only seen. This is an example of how stylistic devices, such as lexical repetition, parallelism, and semantic intensification, mediate emotive and cognitive involvement in a direct way.

In the Indonesian literary imagination, darkness is often culturally and contextually linked to reflection, spiritual hardship, or existential dread. The juxtaposition of the giant's dilemma with *malam yang ditelan malam and kegelapan yang ditelan kegelapan* in the narrative is based on common semiotic systems that make it possible for readers to deduce the moral and emotional burden of the state. In effect, the metaphor translates the giant's inner battle into a culturally acceptable paradigm of cyclical and encompassing darkness, rendering the crisis vivid to the imagination and resonant to the conscience. Conceptual metaphor theory would see this sentence as an example of a mapping of mental state/crisis as physical engulfment, mixing embodied cognition with verbal foregrounding. Here the mapping is not about relational tension or guardianship as in earlier metaphors, but about total absorption, the negation of agency and existential opacity. Stylistic pragmatics shows how meaning is produced through the interaction of repetition, semantic layering and context: the giant's despair is not explicitly narrated but inferred, enabling readers to sense the constriction and hopelessness embedded in the textual and cultural environment.

At the level of discourse, this metaphor acts as an indirect speech act. Rather than saying I am hopeless, the story externalizes inward breakdown through environmental and lexical metaphor. The style layering conveys the severity of mental restriction while also activating the reader's inferential participation, who must negotiate the semantic and emotive complexity in an effort to understand the

depth of despair. This reflects the protagonist's own cognitive and emotional imprisonment, thereby enhancing the narrative alignment between character consciousness and reader experience.

Inferential Construction of Existential Disorientation

The image of sinking into the ocean of night is a pragmatically used image to convey existential confusion and suspension of hope. The lexical and imagistic choices, such as *tenggelam and samudra malam*, highlight helplessness, vastness, and lack of orientation; yet the negation of morning as a guiding shore suggests loss of direction and purpose. Stylistically and pragmatically, the paragraph enacts a psychological and existential turmoil and allows the readers to deduce the unstable and unmoored situation of the protagonist's inner life without explicit exposition.

Data 5:
"Raksasa bajang pun tenggelam dalam samudra malam, di mana pagi tak menjadi pantainya lagi." hlm. 7.
[The Bajang giant sank into the ocean of night, where morning no longer reached its shore.]
Discursive-stylistic context:
The phrase reflects the ongoing inner turmoil of the Bajang behemoth. No longer does the morning serve as a lighthouse to guide and inspire. Life is a journey without a port.

The metaphor 'sank into the ocean of night when morning no longer reached its shore' has a pragmatic function as a place of inferential work. It is not just a physical immersion, but an existential bewilderment. The piece achieves a psychological and temporal collapse, stylistically-pragmatically: the giant is not only in darkness, but he is plunged into a night which denies the normal sense of orientation. Guided inference creates meaning. It is up to the reader to interpret rather than to propositionally present the loss of directional hope of the giant. The metaphor is a performative act of cognition, implicating the listener in an experiential understanding of existential uncertainty. The stylistic, linguistic, and imagistic choices heighten the sense of displacement and despair. Sank is helpless; he has no agency. Samudra malam expands the scope of the problem, transforming the personal misery into a large, almost cosmic space. The line 'where morning no longer reached its shore' provides us with a relational metaphor: morning, a source of orientation and temporal continuity, is now absent. These lexical and grammatical features pragmatically constrain the range of possible interpretations to one of existence adrift, foregrounding the psychological dislocation and the suspension of conventional temporal or existential anchors.

The pragmatic power of the metaphor is also a function of cultural and narrative circumstances. In the Indonesian literary imagination, sunrise is typically a sign of freshness, clarity, and guidance. The story denies morning its "shore," activating shared cultural schemas so that the reader might infer the giant's dilemma as total: not only is the present oppressive, but the hope of future resolution or direction is suspended. The text pragmatically choreographs inferential meaning, inscribing existential disorientation in culturally salient environmental imagery, making the giant's psychological state accessible, yet interpretatively challenging. The text considers the conceptual metaphors of life/journey as navigation and hope/orientation as morning, but with an inversion: the guiding light of hope is absent, and navigation is impossible. The metaphor, when combined with stylistic pragmatics, reveals how the meaning is produced by the interaction of corporeal experience (sinking, being adrift), lexical foregrounding, and contextual knowledge. The metaphor ideologically renders moments of despair and confusion intelligible as existential phases, not aberrant situations.

The metaphor works as an indirect speech act at the level of language, communicating the giant's internal collapse without an explicit emotional proclamation. Disorientation and hopelessness are not stated directly, but must be inferred by the reader from language indications such as scale (ocean), action (sank), and absence of relationship (dawn no longer reached its coast). This inferential interplay reflects the giant's experience of life, establishing harmony between the character's consciousness and the reader's cognition.

Discussion

ABMB uses five metaphors that produce layered meanings through elaborate stylistic and pragmatic orchestration. These metaphors are not used as mere rhetorical devices but as active ways to build the reader's inferential engagement with the narrative, making figurative language a key means through which relational, moral, and existential experiences are constructed and understood (Hyland & Jiang, 2020; Wilss, 2012). Each metaphor produces a particular interpretive frame, but also encourages readers to establish connections between the literal image of the metaphor and broader psychological, social, and cultural meanings. Thus, the point of these expressions is not only their figurative nature, but also their ability to structure narrative experience and direct readers to contextually appropriate interpretations.

The imagery of gadungs in Data 1 constructs a representation of relational impossibility via uneven connection and structural dependency. The metaphor uses the familiar features of a plant to articulate a relationship whose existence depends on an unequal or problematic form of attachment. Its interpretive power is located in the tension between the material qualities of the plant and the relational conditions described in the story. Readers are invited to look beyond the literal reference and to infer a condition where connection does not necessarily mean mutuality, stability, or relational fulfillment. The metaphor thus shows how ecological imagery can stand in for complex interpersonal dynamics without actually describing them. Its pragmatic importance is the inferential work that must be done to establish the correspondence between the natural object and the human setting.

The rainbow and lidi jantan images in Data 2 take on a different but complementary interpretative direction. These images underscore moral watchfulness, protective authority, and the possibility of guidance within a specific relational or ethical field. Their meanings arise from culturally recognizable associations, rather than from direct propositional statements. The imagery encourages readers to view the figures or situations represented in terms of responsibility, vigilance, and the possible consequences of human action. Thus, metaphorical expressions do more than depict a situation; they set up an evaluative viewpoint from which that situation makes sense. The tension between the relational dependency implied in Data 1 and the protective orientation of Data 2 shows how metaphorical meaning is constructed through the interaction between lexical choice, contextual placement and culturally available interpretive resources.

Data 3 presents paradoxical existential reckonings of light and gloom, questioning the cyclical tenacity of optimism despite hardship. Light is often a resource that stands for hope, clarity, or possibility, and gloom can stand for uncertainty, limitation, or emotional difficulty. But the tension created by the bringing in of these associations results in a more complex interpretation than the simple opposition of positive and negative experience. The metaphor implies that hope and misfortune may be contained within the same existential condition, and so optimism is neither absolutely safe nor necessarily defeated by misfortune. This tension in interpretation is in line with the broader view that figurative language can trigger multiple conceptual associations at the same time (Goddard, 2004; Steen, 2023). Thus, the metaphor prompts the reader to contemplate the precarious nature of human expectations and the constant presence of uncertainty in lived experience.

The last two data sets increase the psychological and existential aspects of the narrative through metaphors of being eaten by darkness and of diving into the ocean of night. In these formulations, darkness is not merely an environmental condition but a staggering force, a danger to the individual's ability to navigate, agency, and emotional equilibrium. The verb merambati ('creeping'), for instance, may suggest a slow, potentially irresistible movement, while ditelan ('swallowed') may refer to an experience in which the subject in question is overcome by a force greater than itself. Similarly, tenggelam ('sinking') describes a movement into an encompassing medium that can obscure boundaries and undermine the subject's sense of control. Thus these verbs do more than describe physical action; they support inferences of gradual encroachment, loss of agency, and psychological absorption in context. Imagery of darkness and night makes otherwise

abstract emotional states experientially available by allowing readers to understand distress through embodied, spatially organized representations.

In sum, the five metaphors illustrate a progression through relational, moral, emotional, and existential dimensions of narrative experience. It is not in each metaphor taken in isolation as a symbolic meaning that their importance lies. Instead, it is the interaction of the interpretive possibilities they generate and the broader narrative context that they are part of that produces their cumulative effect. Ecological dependence, the protective authority, the contradictory hope, the engulfing darkness, and the immersion in night are different but connected ways of showing the boundaries and fragility of human existence. This pattern suggests that in ABMB, metaphor interpretation requires readers to negotiate between the immediate linguistic utterance and the broader experiential context to which it refers. The story then depends on an active process of meaning construction in which readers draw textual details into a web of contextual knowledge, embodied experience, and culturally available associations.

Stylistic pragmatics has a significant role in this process, as the construction of meaning depends on the interaction of linguistic organization with contextual inference. Lexical foregrounding, repetition, parallelism, and layered imagery foreground certain semantic and affective elements over others, and so guide the interpretive direction of the narrative (Blanks, 2011; Leech, 1983; Chapman, 2014). These stylistic resources do not lead to a mechanical way of a single interpretation. Rather, they make some readings more plausible given the context and reduce the salience of competing readings that are less consistent with the textual and narrative evidence. Meaning is thus constructed from the relationship between the formal properties of an expression and the interpretive expectations that readers bring to it.

This relation is very clearly illustrated by the verbs merambati, ditelan and tenggelam. Their meanings have pragmatic significance in the sorts of relations they establish between an experiencing subject and the force, substance, or environment with which the subject's condition is associated. Merambati stresses movement through or into a space, perhaps implying a slow extension of influence. Ditelan forms an asymmetrical relation wherein the affected entity is depicted as being consumed or overcome by another force. Tenggelam, in contrast, suggests a sense of immersion and less control in a surrounding medium. Although the verbs differ in their immediate semantic content, they can be used contextually to signal related inferences about vulnerability and restricted agency to the reader. Thus, their contribution to the narrative is the result of the confluence of lexical meaning, metaphorical mapping, and contextual interpretation

The analysis also points out the importance of implicature in literary communication. The story does not spell out every relational conflict or psychological condition. Rather, it provides images from which the reader is meant to infer meanings that are partly unspoken. The task of the reader is to discover relevant correspondences, to judge the contextual fitness of possible interpretations, and to relate the inferences drawn to the narrative as a whole. This kind of interpretative work could help to explain the inseparability of stylistic form and pragmatic function. The metaphorical expression provides the linguistic material for the interpretation but it is the contextual placement and the activity of inference of the reader that contribute to the construction of narrative significance. So ATMB shows how linguistic creativity can structure cognitive engagement and emotional response without reducing literary meaning to a fixed, or universally identical, interpretation.

These metaphors are further enriched in their inferential potential through their cultural and environmental encoding. The references to gadung, lidi jantan, night and morning are derived from ecological, agrarian and temporal domains which are likely to be familiar to Indonesian readers from daily experience and culturally transmitted knowledge. These references offer concrete experiential frames for understanding abstract relational and existential conditions. However, the effectiveness of these metaphors does not come from cultural familiarity alone. It also depends on the way the narrative selects and positions certain images to build correspondences between known phenomena

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and human situations. Cultural knowledge thus serves as an interpretive resource that readers may draw on to connect the literal image with its figurative meaning.

This cultural dimension also signifies an ideological and ethical dimension. When human relations and existential conditions are expressed as natural or cosmological imagery, the comparisons may invite the reader to interpret social asymmetry, hierarchy, resilience, and limitation through the patterns of the natural world. Such representations can make complex social or moral conditions intuitive because they are linked to familiar experiences of growth, attachment, darkness, and change over time. At the same time, such analogies encourage critical reflection on the relationship between human circumstances and the interpretive frameworks in which those circumstances are understood. As discussed in the literature on cultural meaning and metaphorical interpretation (Poole, 2017; Shen, 2022), figurative language can link embodied experience to wider conceptual and evaluative perspectives. Its ideological significance, therefore, is to be approached through the meanings it offers the text, not naturally from the use of natural imagery.

In general, the discussion shows that ABMB is an example of stylistic pragmatics as an interaction of linguistic form, cognitive inference, emotional experience, and cultural knowledge. Its five metaphors structure the narrative by rendering complex relational and existential conditions into images that readers can read through textual evidence as well as lived experience. Lexical choices highlight specific aspects of these conditions, metaphorical mappings make abstract experiences more tangible, and pragmatic inference allows readers to relate images to meanings not explicitly stated. The process is enriched further by cultural and environmental associations which provide recognizable frames of interpretation. Metaphor in ATMB is therefore not merely a stylistic device, but rather a pragmatic resource for the construction, negotiation and evaluation of narrative meaning. This perspective emphasizes the need to analyze literary language in terms of an integrated account of stylistic patterning, contextual inference and culturally situated cognition.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the passage through the five datasets reveals ABMB positions metaphor at the intersection of stylistic form, pragmatic inference, and cultural knowledge to express multi-dimensional human experience. The metaphors lead the reader from relational entanglement (Data 1) to protective authority (Data 2), to existential hope (Data 3), to psychological breakdown (Data 4), and to final existential disorientation (Data 5), thus illustrating a consistent thematic and cognitive trajectory. The analysis, by combining conceptual metaphor theory and stylistic pragmatics, shows that meaning is emergent, performative, and contextually situated, generated from the interplay of lexical choices, narrative structure, embodied cognition, and culturally intelligible schemata. In this way the novel illustrates the capacity of literary metaphor to act as a dynamic, inferential and ideologically-charged device, in complete agreement with the study's goal to find metaphor to be a locus of situated, pragmatic and multi-layered narrative meaning.

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Author Contribution Statement

Both authors contributed to the research and manuscript preparation. The first author was primarily responsible for conceptualization, research design, data collection, and the first draft of the manuscript. The second author was involved in data analysis, interpretation of results, and critical revision and refinement of the manuscript. Both authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest that might have influenced the research process, findings, interpretation, or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement
The data that support the findings of this study were obtained from a widely published novel by Sindhunata that is publicly available. The relevant textual data can be accessed through the published novel. Access to the complete text is subject to applicable copyright regulations.

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