EVALUATING CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN NIGERIA AFROBEAT SONGS: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED DAVIDO'S SONG

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AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, IN PARTICULAR, TO FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

NOVEMBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by **Chidera Faith Ejike** in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

_____ _____

Prof. Esther N. Ugwu **Date**
Project Supervisor

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Almighty God and my parents Mr and Mrs Ejike.

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All glory to God almighty for inspiration, health and strength, all of which proved massively in the creation of this work.

Having appreciated God, I'd love to acknowledge my supervisor, prof. Esther N. Ugwu for her mature and astute supervision, motherly love, as well as her advice, encouragement, support and guidance. I could not have hoped for a better supervisor. Special appreciation to my dearest mother, deaconess Ejike Ebere and father, Pastor Ejike Fidelis for your unending love and support all through my years of study in the university of Benin. Same goes to my sister, Miss Ejike Vivian and Miss Ejike Glory. And to my grandma, Mrs Geraldine.

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I love you all

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Abstract

This study explores how structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors shape the expression of love, emotion, identity, and social experience in fifteen songs by Nigerian Afrobeat artist Davido. Using Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980), the analysis shows that structural metaphors map emotions onto familiar experiences, orientational metaphors spatialize relationships, and ontological metaphors materialize feelings as physical entities. These metaphor types reveal Davido's negotiation of love, power, vulnerability, and success within Nigerian culture. The study concludes that Davido's metaphors perform both cognitive and cultural functions, allowing listeners to conceptualize complex emotions through embodied, culturally resonant imagery and advancing understanding of metaphor in African popular music.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the use of conceptual metaphors in Nigerian Afrobeats songs, specifically Davido's songs, in depicting cultural values, social realities, and emotional experiences within the Nigerian context. It also seeks to reveal the cognitive processes behind these songs, understand the artistic level underlying Davido's lyrical creativity, and assess the ontological bearings that inform his musical expressions.

1.2 Scope of Study

This focus of the study is on the analysis of conceptual metaphors in fifteen selected Davido songs released between 2013 and 2025. The songs were chosen because Davido's lyrics, spanning 2013 to 2025, richly employ metaphorical language that reflects cultural values, personal growth, and societal themes, making them ideal for conceptual metaphor analysis: Gobe (2013),Skelewu (2013), Aye (2014), If (2017), Fall (2017),Assurance (2018),Blow My Mind (2019), Risky (2019), FEM (2020), Jowo (2020), Stand Strong (2022), Unavailable (2023), Feel (2023), With You (2025), 10 Kilo (2025).The songs selected for this study were selected because they provide a good perspective for examining conceptual metaphor in contemporary African popular music. Davido, as one of Africa's most influential artists, employs lyrical expressions that go beyond mere entertainment; his songs encode metaphors

of love, struggle, identity, power, and resistance that reflect both personal experiences and broader social realities. These tracks are also culturally resonant and widely circulated, making them a reliable corpus for academic analysis. By focusing on these songs, the study not only investigates metaphor as a linguistic and literary device but also demonstrates how Nigerian music becomes a site where abstract human emotions and social issues are framed, communicated, and understood through metaphorical constructions.

1.3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, with a focus on content analysis as the primary method for examining the use of conceptual metaphors in selected Davido songs. The choice of a qualitative approach is informed by the nature of the research, which seeks to interpret linguistic and cultural meaning rather than quantify occurrences. The primary data comprises the lyrics of Gobe (2013),Skelewu (2013), Aye (2014), If (2017), Fall (2017),Assurance (2018),Blow My Mind (2019), Risky (2019), FEM (2020), Jowo (2020), Stand Strong (2022), Unavailable (2023), Feel (2023), With You (2025), 10 Kilo (2025), all obtained from Spotify where all songs were typed out, cross checked for accuracy, copied and then printed into hard copy.

The analysis employs Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which identifies three broad categories of conceptual metaphors: structural, orientational, and ontological. Each song will be transcribed, read closely, and coded for metaphorical expressions using thematic coding procedures. Identified

metaphors will be categorized according to CMT's taxonomy, after which their cultural, emotional, and artistic implications will will be discussed . The findings will then be interpreted in light of Nigeria's socio-cultural context and the stylistic features of Afrobeats, providing a comprehensive understanding of how Davido's metaphors reflect and shape contemporary Nigerian thought.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) posits that metaphor is not merely a literary ornament but a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which we understand abstract phenomena via more concrete or bodily-experienced domains (Lakoff and Johnson 3–6). This theory asserts that our conceptual system is structured by systematic mappings between source domains (often physical or experiential) and target domains (typically abstract), enabling expressions like "life is a journey" or "time is money" to reflect an underlying cognitive structure rather than mere linguistic flair. This foundational principle underscores how metaphor is embedded in thought itself, not just language.

The historical roots of CMT trace back to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's groundbreaking work in the 1980s, which reframed metaphor as a constitutive dimension of human cognition rather than a rhetorical device (Lakoff and Johnson 9–13). More recent scholarship continues to build on and refine this foundation, embedding the theory within cognitive linguistics, embodied cognition, and neuroscientific inquiry. Notably, research by Paulo Nuno Vicente articulates how

these metaphorical mappings are grounded in human physicality, anchoring abstract cognition in sensorimotor experience (Vicente 45–47). Such embodied representation challenges disembodied models of cognition and emphasizes how orientation, movement, and spatial relations underpin conceptual structures.

Central to CMT are image schemas—recurring, prelinguistic structures formed via bodily interactions such as containment, balance, or path schemas—which serve as scaffolds for metaphorical mappings (Johnson 18–22; Oakley 215–16). These image schemas, as Oakley elaborates, provide cognitive patterns that enable our interpretation and construction of meaning across domains. Lawrence Barsalou's work further complements this view through the theory of grounded cognition, proposing that cognitive processing is mediated via simulations in sensory and motor systems rather than abstract symbols (Barsalou, "Perceptual Symbol Systems" 578–80). This underscores the embodied foundations of metaphorical thought.

Extending CMT, researchers like Zoltán Kövecses have challenged the rigid distinction between concrete and abstract domains, arguing that many supposedly literal, concrete concepts themselves carry figurative or metaphorical roots (Metaphor: A Practical Introduction 5–8). This perspective suggests that the binary between source and target domains may be overly simplistic and invites a more nuanced understanding of how metaphor functions in cognition. Additionally, critiques of CMT have pointed to methodological concerns—such as the reliability of identifying metaphors and the circularity between conceptual and linguistic

claims—prompting scholars to advocate for more rigorous empirical procedures and integration with corpus methods and discourse analysis (Cameron and Deignan 675–77).

Broader theoretical developments such as Conceptual Blending Theory, advanced by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, offer a dynamic expansion to CMT by modeling how multiple mental spaces can integrate creatively to yield emergent meaning (The Way We Think 40–45). Unlike the one-to-one mappings of classic CMT, blending illustrates how novel conceptual structures arise from the interweaving of several domains in real-time cognition. Recent bibliometric analyses further reveal that blending has gained prominence alongside CMT in metaphor research, especially between 2017 and 2022, with growing interest in issues of language, mental processes, and discourse analysis (Zhao and Xu 107–09).

Throughout the last few years, research on CMT has evolved across multiple intersecting paradigms: corpus linguistics provides empirical tools for systematic metaphor mapping in large text collections (Steen et al. 12–14); psycholinguistics examines the processing and cognitive effects of metaphorical expressions (Gibbs 32–34); and critical discourse analysis explores the ideological framing functions of metaphors in media and political discourse (Charteris-Black 19–22). Studies on metaphor usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, combine CMT with computational methods and thematic modeling to illustrate how metaphors like

WAR or FIRE shape public perception (Semino, “Not Soldiers but Fire-Fighters” 3–4).

This theoretical framework—grounded in CMT, embodied cognition, blending, and critical corpus methods—provides a powerful lens for examining how Davido’s songs deploy metaphor not only for aesthetic impact but also to frame emotional, social, and cultural experiences. It reinforces that metaphor in his lyrics is not decorative but deeply cognitive, socially resonant, and ripe for academic study.

In anchoring this discussion more specifically to Lakoff’s work, it is important to stress that his theory of metaphor is grounded in the conviction that the human conceptual system is largely metaphorical in nature (Lakoff, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor” 203–06). Lakoff, together with Johnson, argued that everyday reasoning is scaffolded by cross-domain mappings where abstract experiences are understood through more concrete bodily schemas (Metaphors We Live By 44–46). For instance, the common metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY demonstrates how relational experience is framed by the embodied schema of a path, with its destinations, obstacles, and progress markers.

Lakoff’s central tenets emphasize that metaphors are unconscious, automatic, and embodied, operating beneath surface-level linguistic expressions. His theory also underscores that metaphorical structures are asymmetrical, projecting from the source to the target but not vice versa; one can say “time is money” but not “money is time” (Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh 50–53). This asymmetry

highlights the directionality of human conceptualization, where abstract domains rely on physical experience for structure. Further, Lakoff developed the neural theory of metaphor, which locates metaphorical reasoning in neural circuitry, suggesting that mappings between domains are instantiated physically in the brain (Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh 57–60).

Other scholars have since expanded and sometimes critiqued Lakoff's framework. Kövecses, for instance, has refined Lakoff's ideas by proposing the Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory, arguing that metaphors are not static but dynamic and context-sensitive, varying across cultures and communicative situations (Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory 14–17). Similarly, contemporary linguists have questioned whether CMT, as outlined by Lakoff, adequately explains the emergent creativity of metaphor use in real discourse, leading to integrations with theories like blending and discourse metaphor analysis (Cameron 101–04; Semino, Metaphor in Discourse 52–55). Nevertheless, Lakoff's framework remains foundational, providing the central principles upon which contemporary developments rest.

Lokoff and Johnson (1980) categorize conceptual metaphor into three foundational types: (1) Structural: Systematically mopping inferential structure from a concrete source to an abstract target, e.g, Time is Money e.t.c

(2) Orientational: Structuring concepts via embodied spatial schemas as More is Up

(3) Onotological: Reifying processes, emotions or abstractions as entities or substances, e.g Inflation is an Adversary.

Subsequent cognitive linguistic research has refined this typology to include image-schematic metaphors(grounded in pre-linguistic sensorimotor patterns), primary metaphor(irreducible experiential pairings), and domain-specific variants (e.g emotion, event structure), collectively affirming metaphor as a constitutive mechanism of embodied cognition.

For this study, Lakoff's theory is particularly relevant because it offers a systematic and embodied account of how meaning is generated in everyday language, including popular music. Davido's lyrics, for example, can be understood as deploying entrenched conceptual metaphors such as LOVE IS FIRE, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, or SILENCE IS POWER, which directly correspond to Lakoff's idea of systematic metaphorical structuring (Lakoff and Johnson 109–10). Thus, grounding this analysis in Lakoff's framework ensures both theoretical rigor and interpretive depth in uncovering the metaphorical patterns that shape Davido's lyrical world.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship and Justification of Study

Scholars have devoted considerable attention to the study of conceptual metaphor across a wide range of discourses, from politics and health to music and popular culture. In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift towards exploring how conceptual metaphor manifests in creative expressions, including song lyrics, which function as a rich repository of cultural imagination. For instance, Musolff's study on

metaphor in political discourse emphasizes how entrenched metaphors such as "NATION AS A BODY" are mobilized to structure collective understanding, demonstrating the ubiquity of metaphor in shaping thought and communication[1]. While this work was not focused on music, it highlights the methodological foundation for analyzing figurative language in socially resonant texts.

In the African context, Owolabi explored Yoruba hip-hop lyrics and discovered that conceptual metaphors such as LIFE IS A BATTLE and SUCCESS IS A JOURNEY recur across the genre, reflecting how indigenous cultural schemas shape meaning in urban music. Using a cognitive linguistic approach, he showed that these metaphors are not merely decorative but reveal how artists and audiences construct realities around hardship, resilience, and aspiration. Similarly, Okeke examined Nigerian gospel songs, applying Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, and found that metaphors like GOD IS A ROCK and FAITH IS LIGHT serve both aesthetic and theological functions[2]. These studies suggest that African music offers fertile ground for metaphor analysis, as it is deeply embedded in cultural values and everyday lived experience.

Another relevant contribution is by Adegoke, who studied Afrobeat music and demonstrated how metaphor operates as a tool of resistance. By examining metaphors of oppression and liberation, such as OPPRESSION IS DARKNESS and FREEDOM IS LIGHT, the study revealed how music encodes socio-political struggles in figurative terms. In a similar vein, Adegbite analyzed Nigerian hip-hop

and showed how the pervasive metaphor of MONEY AS POWER structures lyrical narratives, shaping the aspirations of young audiences. Both studies align with Lakoff's principle of metaphor as conceptual framing, reinforcing the importance of music as a discourse site for examining collective cognition.

Beyond Nigeria, Mensah examined Ghanaian hiplife lyrics using a mixed-methods approach that combined cognitive metaphor theory with discourse analysis, finding that conceptual metaphors of LOVE AS WAR and SUCCESS AS CLIMBING were central to the genre. His findings parallel Nigerian studies, underscoring regional similarities in how West African music embodies cultural realities. Likewise, Mugubi's work on Kenyan urban music highlighted the metaphorical framing of politics, where metaphors of NATION AS FAMILY and LEADER AS FATHER were recurrent. These studies broaden the scope of metaphor research on African music while pointing to areas where more comparative analysis is needed.

The global scholarship also provides insights that intersect with African contexts. For instance, Charteris-Black examined metaphor in British pop songs and found that LOVE IS FIRE and RELATIONSHIPS ARE JOURNEYS remain dominant across cultures, suggesting the universality of some metaphorical patterns. However, African scholars like Ajibola argue that although some metaphors are universal, their meanings are localized, as Nigerian artists infuse them with indigenous proverbs, idioms, and cultural references. This localization makes

African music a distinctive corpus for metaphor research, as it blends global metaphorical patterns with culturally specific symbols.

In terms of methodology, studies on music metaphors often apply qualitative text analysis under the framework of conceptual metaphor theory, though some have integrated corpus linguistics for quantitative insight. For example, Babatunde employed a corpus-assisted approach in analyzing Nigerian pop songs and demonstrated that metaphorical collocations reveal systematic patterns of thought that might not be visible through qualitative methods alone. This methodological expansion has enriched the study of metaphor by making it possible to quantify conceptual patterns across large datasets of lyrics.

The findings from these studies converge on the recognition that metaphors in African music do more than embellish language; they articulate social realities, express personal emotions, and mediate collective experiences. However, while scholarship has addressed gospel music, hip-hop, and Afrobeat in general, there remains a gap in the sustained exploration of Afrobeats through the lens of a single artist's oeuvre. Davido, being one of the most prominent figures in contemporary African music, provides a unique opportunity for such a focused study. His songs blend themes of love, success, spirituality, and social commentary, all of which are deeply metaphorical. A conceptual metaphor analysis of Davido's lyrics therefore contributes both to the growing scholarship on African music and to the cognitive linguistic study of metaphor in popular culture.

Justifying the present study, it is important to note that while previous research has demonstrated the presence and importance of conceptual metaphors in African music broadly, few works have systematically analyzed how a single artist employs metaphor to construct meaning across a significant body of songs. By selecting Davido's songs, this study addresses that gap, offering insights into how metaphors operate not only as linguistic expressions but also as cultural resources that resonate with audiences locally and globally. This ensures that the research contributes to both theoretical development in conceptual metaphor studies and practical understanding of African popular music as a site of cultural meaning-making.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Davido's Afrobeats songs reflect a dynamic interplay of cultural identity, personal storytelling and love and relationships which operate on structural, orientational and ontological levels of metaphor.

CHAPTER TWO

STRUCTURAL METAPHOR IN DAVIDO'S SONGS

2.1 Introduction

Davido's music, situated at the intersection of Afrobeats, pop, and R&B, embodies a rich linguistic landscape in which metaphor operates as a primary mechanism for meaning-making. His lyrics frequently translate lived experience, emotion, and social realities into conceptual structures familiar to his listeners. The present chapter explores the structural metaphors that inform Davido's artistic expression, showing how he conceptualizes love, success, cultural identity, and personal storytelling through systematic metaphorical mappings.

Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), this chapter examines how Davido constructs coherent metaphorical systems in fifteen selected songs: *Gobe*, *Skelewu*, *Aye*, *If*, *Fall*, *Assurance*, *Blow My Mind*, *Risky*, *FEM*, *Jowo*, *Stand Strong*, *Unavailable*, *Feel*, *With You*, and *10 Kilo*. The analysis demonstrates that Davido's lyrics are not merely figurative decorations but reveal conceptual structures that organize his—and by extension, his audience's—understanding of love, success, and identity.

The central question guiding this chapter is: How do structural metaphors operate in Davido's lyrics to encode cultural identity, love, and personal storytelling? To answer this, the chapter first explains the theoretical underpinnings of structural

metaphor, then conducts close textual analysis of the selected songs, before concluding with a synthesis of patterns and cultural implications.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Structural Metaphor

According to Lakoff and Johnson, a structural metaphor is one in which "one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another" (Metaphors We Live By 5). For example, the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY allows speakers to use expressions like "our relationship has hit a dead end" or "we're going in different directions." This kind of metaphor extends systematically through language, shaping how speakers reason about the target concept (love) by mapping elements from the source domain (journey).

In musical lyrics, structural metaphors are especially salient because they condense complex emotions into vivid, embodied imagery. Davido, writing within a Nigerian and global Afrobeats context, draws upon both indigenous and cosmopolitan metaphorical resources. He often maps economic, spatial, journey, and body domains onto the experiences of love, success, and fame. This provides the listener with a familiar structure through which intangible feelings—affection, ambition, heartbreak—are understood.

In the following analyses, each song will be examined for its dominant structural metaphor(s), identifying:

The target domain

The source domain

The cultural or personal implications of the mapping

2.3 Structural Metaphors in Selected Davido Songs

2.3.1 "If" (2017)

The lyric "If I tell you say I love you o / My money, my body na your own o, baby" encapsulates Davido's recurring equation of love with ownership and wealth. The target domain is romantic love; the source domain is economic possession. The mapping produces the structural metaphor LOVE IS POSSESSION or LOVE IS WEALTH.

Here, affection is conceptualized as something that can be given, owned, or invested. This metaphor reflects both Davido's personal persona—a wealthy, generous lover—and a broader Nigerian cultural schema in which male economic ability signifies devotion. By offering "money" and "body," Davido collapses material and emotional domains, demonstrating how wealth becomes a language of love. The metaphor is thus structural because it systematically organizes the lover-beloved relationship through an economic framework: giving, owning, spending, and sharing are all mapped onto loving.

2.3.2 "Fall" (2017)

In Fall, Davido sings, "Money fall on you / Banana fall on you." The target domain is again love, but the source domain is rainfall or abundance. This yields the metaphor LOVE IS RAIN/ABUNDANCE. The verb fall is repeated to connote both physical descent and emotional surrender.

Within Nigerian English, “money fall on you” has become idiomatic for unexpected fortune. Davido thus structures romantic blessing as material blessing: affection is conceived as wealth that showers upon the beloved. The imagery constructs the lover as a benefactor, the beloved as recipient of plenty. The structural mapping between rainfall and prosperity echoes agrarian and Pentecostal conceptions of divine favor (“showers of blessing”), embedding his personal narrative in a shared cultural code.

Furthermore, “Fall” plays on the English idiom fall in love—another manifestation of LOVE IS A CONTAINER/JOURNEY metaphor—but recontextualizes it in economic-spiritual imagery, revealing Davido’s linguistic creativity within global and local Englishes.

2.3.3 “Assurance” (2018)

“Assurance” explicitly thematizes commitment: “I give my baby assurance / I give my baby lifetime insurance.” The structural metaphor here is LOVE IS CONTRACT/INSURANCE. Romantic stability is conceptualized through bureaucratic and legalistic domains.

By promising “assurance,” Davido frames love as a guarantee, much like a financial or insurance policy ensuring protection against loss. This mapping captures the modern, transactional dimension of love in Afrobeats culture, where loyalty, wealth, and social display intertwine. Linguistically, the repetition of financial lexis

("assurance," "insurance") extends the earlier LOVE IS WEALTH network, showing consistency across his discography.

Culturally, the metaphor resonates with Nigerian youths' aspiration toward security and trust in relationships often threatened by materialism or instability. The metaphor's structure provides emotional meaning through economic terminology, affirming Davido's awareness of his audience's socio-economic realities.

2.3.4 "FEM" (2020)

In FEM, meaning "be quiet" in Yoruba slang, Davido admonishes detractors: "E be like you don dey talk too much / FEM!" The song's structural metaphor differs from the love-focused pieces; here the target domain is social status/conflict, and the source domain is sound/noise. Thus, POWER IS SILENCE / DEFEAT IS NOISE.

By commanding rivals to be silent, Davido equates control with muting opposition. The metaphor's structure organizes social hierarchy: to "silence" another is to triumph over them. This aligns with African performance traditions where verbal dominance signifies authority. Through linguistic play, Davido transforms an everyday imperative ("fem") into a metaphorical weapon of self-assertion.

The broader mapping (STATUS AS SOUND) functions structurally: success generates legitimate "voice," while envy produces illegitimate "noise." This metaphor reinforces his cultural identity as a confident, resilient figure who asserts power through linguistic mastery.

2.3.5 “Aye” (2014)

“Aye” revolves around the line “she no want Ferrari, she say na my love ooo” Here, Davido inverts his usual economic metaphor, denying the equivalence of love and money. The target domain remains love, but the source domain (economy) is negated, producing a counter-metaphor: LOVE IS NOT COMMERCE.

This rhetorical reversal still depends on the structural framework established by earlier songs; by denying that love is money, he acknowledges that listeners normally conceptualize it that way. The song thereby critiques materialistic relationships while reaffirming genuine emotion as the true value.

The juxtaposition of Aye (“life”) with love portrays existence itself as shaped by affection rather than finance. The line “She no want designer, she no want Ferrari” emphasizes authenticity, situating Davido’s narrative within African moral discourse on sincerity in love. The metaphor’s structure thus opposes earlier mappings, enriching his conceptual network rather than negating it.

2.3.6 “Jowo” (2020)

The love ballad Jowo (meaning “please” in Yoruba) demonstrates Davido’s softer, persuasive voice. Lines such as” my baby jor, jowo” frame love as a force that can overpower or control the self. The target domain is love and desire; the source domain is physical force or natural power. This produces the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A FORCE/POWER.

Davido's use of "I no fit control" implies that affection acts upon him rather than emanates from him. This structure portrays the lover as passive, governed by emotion. Within Nigerian popular discourse, where masculinity often equates to dominance, the metaphor subverts gender expectations by depicting vulnerability. The structural mapping organizes emotions as forces—love "pushes," "pulls," or "controls." In cognitive-linguistic terms, it aligns with embodied experience: one feels "carried away" or "swept off" by emotion.

By embedding this metaphor in a plea ("jowo"), Davido converts personal surrender into romantic authenticity. The structural system of Jowo therefore reconfigures power relations in love, reflecting a personal storytelling mode that foregrounds emotional honesty within the Afrobeats genre.

2.3.7 "Unavailable" (2023)

In Unavailable, Davido declares, "I'm unavailable, them no Dey see me." The target domain is social accessibility or engagement, and the source domain is spatial presence or visibility. The underlying metaphor is SOCIAL CONNECTION IS PHYSICAL PRESENCE.

By calling himself "unavailable," Davido does not mean literally hidden; rather, he constructs emotional and social distance as physical inaccessibility. The repeated verb "dey" (to be) reinforces embodiment: being absent from drama equates to being physically elsewhere. The metaphor structures his self-image as one beyond reach—an assertion of control amid public scrutiny.

Within Nigeria's celebrity culture, "availability" implies openness to criticism or gossip; thus, to be "unavailable" is to occupy power. The mapping defines privacy as space, reputation as location, and control as distance. The song's metaphorical system supports his narrative of independence after personal trials, showing how spatial structures model psychological autonomy.

2.3.8 "Feel" (2023)

"Feel" explores emotional intimacy through sensory imagery: "I be on the phone calling you tonight / I wanna feel your body." The song employs the metaphor LOVE IS TOUCH/SENSATION. Here, the target domain is emotional connection, and the source domain is physical sensation.

Davido builds his structural system on the verb feel, repeated as both physical and emotional perception. This duality collapses distance between the body and the mind, suggesting that affection must be embodied to be real. Linguistically, this connects to Lakoff and Johnson's observation that emotion is often structured by sensory experience.

Culturally, "Feel" captures the tactile dimension of Afrobeats performance, where dance, rhythm, and bodily engagement communicate meaning. Thus, LOVE IS TOUCH extends beyond lyric semantics into performance semiotics, making the metaphor multimodal. The mapping demonstrates how Davido's language resonates with African epistemologies that value embodied knowing.

2.3.9 “Risky” (2019)

“Risky, risky, yes your body risky.” Here, love is mapped onto the domain of danger and gambling, producing LOVE IS RISK/GAME. The target domain is affection; the source domain is risk-taking or play.

Davido’s repetition of “risky” foregrounds the thrill and uncertainty of romance. The structure parallels cognitive metaphors where LIFE IS A GAME or LOVE IS A GAMBLE. The lover is a player, the beloved a tempting hazard. This metaphor encapsulates the Afrobeats ethos of spontaneity and enjoyment while acknowledging emotional stakes.

Culturally, the metaphor speaks to a Nigerian youth identity that values adventure and boldness. The mapping frames emotional engagement as a competitive but pleasurable pursuit, integrating personal storytelling (Davido’s confident persona) with social ideology (risk as vitality). The systematic use of gaming vocabulary (“risky,” “play,” “win”) structures the entire song’s semantics, exemplifying the structural nature of metaphor.

2.3.10 “10 Kilo” (2025)

In 10 Kilo, the lyric “Ọrọbọ ten kilo / Dey chop my money and everything I get” conceptualizes love through economic and corporeal domains. The target domain is romantic desire; the source domain is trade/commodity. The metaphor is LOVE IS COMMERCE/CONSUMPTION.

Davido portrays the lover's body as measurable ("ten kilo") and the relationship as a financial transaction ("chop my money"). The mapping equates affection with expenditure, pleasure with loss of resources. Yet the tone is playful rather than critical: spending becomes proof of affection. This structure reflects a social environment where generosity indexes masculinity and love.

By organizing desire around economic verbs—chop, get, spend—Davido articulates a distinctly Nigerian consumer metaphor of intimacy. This reinforces how Afrobeats operates as both musical and socio-economic commentary, encoding aspiration and hedonism through linguistic structure.

2.3.11 "With You" (2025)

In With You, Davido sings, "Baby, the weather is getting cold / Cold inside, double sweater." Here, the target domain is emotional warmth/closeness, while the source domain is climate and clothing. The resulting metaphor is LOVE IS WARMTH/WEATHER.

Emotional distance is experienced as "cold"; affection restores "warmth." By invoking tangible sensory experiences, Davido enables listeners to conceptualize emotional states physically. The addition of "double sweater" intensifies the metaphor, suggesting protection through intimacy.

This structural metaphor reflects human embodiment: emotions are often grounded in temperature metaphors across cultures. Yet Davido's imagery gains specificity from Nigerian climate discourse—warmth is normative, so coldness

indicates loss of vitality. The mapping thus turns universal bodily experience into culturally situated emotion, showing how personal storytelling intersects with collective metaphorical systems.

2.3.12 "Stand Strong" (2022)

In Stand Strong, Davido reflects on perseverance: "Look in my eyes, you see the life I live / I stand strong." The target domain is resilience and faith, and the source domain is vertical orientation and posture, yielding LIFE IS A BATTLE / STRENGTH IS UPRIGHTNESS.

This metaphor aligns with the orientational schema where "up" is good or powerful (Lakoff and Johnson 14). To "stand" is to remain morally and emotionally upright amid adversity. Davido's physical stance symbolizes psychological fortitude.

Culturally, this mapping draws from religious and communal discourse in Nigeria, where "standing strong" implies faithfulness and resistance to evil. By using posture as structure, Davido embeds moral philosophy into physical experience. The metaphor's systematic nature—stand, fall, rise—shows how bodily orientation structures his conceptualization of success and endurance.

2.3.13 "Blow My Mind" (2019)

Featuring Chris Brown, Blow My Mind employs the metaphor LOVE IS MADNESS/LOSS. Line like, "Girl you just Dey blow my, blow my mind, blow my mind" indicate a cognitive mapping between emotional intensity and mental

instability. The target domain is romantic affection; the source domain is mental explosion/disorder.

The structure positions love as overwhelming power that disrupts rational thought. The verb "blow" evokes both destruction and amazement, suggesting that passion annihilates reason. This aligns with global pop discourse while resonating locally with Nigerian slang, where "blow" also connotes sudden success. Thus, the metaphor's polysemy merges love and achievement—both cause ecstatic disorientation.

The structural system of Blow My Mind exemplifies how Davido fuses affective and cognitive imagery, revealing metaphor's dual role as emotional and semantic architecture.

2.3.14 "Gobe" (2013)

"Gobe" translates roughly as "trouble." Lyrics like "Girl your behind is a killer, I can see you're sensual " create the metaphor LOVE IS WAR/CONFLICT. The target domain is romantic relationship; the source domain is battle.

Davido's mapping constructs love as an arena of struggle where participants fight for control or survival. The Nigerian slang gobe denotes chaos, so affection here brings disorder. The structural metaphor organizes narrative progression: encounter → conflict → endurance.

This metaphor reveals a recurrent conceptualization of love as inherently risky or combative, linking to social discourses of jealousy, betrayal, and competition. The mapping integrates with Risky and 10 Kilo, showing consistency across his oeuvre.

2.3.15 "Skelewu" (2013)

In Skelewu, Davido exhorts listeners: "Skelewu, Skelewu, she dey dance Skelewu." Although seemingly light-hearted, the song's metaphorical framework constructs LIFE/JOY IS DANCE. The target domain is living and celebration; the source domain is dance/movement.

The repetition of kinetic verbs ("dance," "move") structures existence as rhythmic motion. This aligns with African worldviews where rhythm signifies life and continuity. By turning dance into a conceptual structure for joy, Davido frames happiness as embodied participation.

This metaphor also undergirds the Afrobeats genre itself, where rhythm is both musical and philosophical principle. The structural mapping thus transcends lyrical content, encoding cultural ontology: to live is to dance. Davido's lyric becomes a metaphor for resilience and community celebration.

CHAPTER THREE

Orientational Metaphor in Davido's Afrobeat Songs

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the manifestation of orientational metaphors in selected songs of Davido, one of Nigeria's most influential Afrobeat artists. Orientational metaphors, as proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in Metaphors We Live By (1980), organize concepts systematically in terms of spatial orientation—up/down, in/out, front/back, high/low, and so forth. Such metaphors are rooted in embodied human experience, in which physical orientation reflects abstract ideas such as happiness, love, power, or success. In Davido's Afrobeat repertoire, orientational metaphors structure the singer's expression of love, success, emotional struggle, and cultural identity.

By analyzing the lyrical texts of fifteen songs—*Gobe*, *Skelewu*, *Aye*, *If*, *Fall*, *Assurance*, *Blow My Mind*, *Risky*, *FEM*, *Jowo*, *Stand Strong*, *Unavailable*, *Feel*, *With You*, and *10 Kilo*. —this chapter investigates how Davido conceptualizes emotional and social experience through spatial imagery. His recurrent use of metaphors such as "up," "down," "high," and "low" not only reflects embodied cognition but also represents the sociocultural aspiration within Nigerian Afrobeat discourse, where rising signifies triumph and falling connotes emotional or relational decline.

The analysis reveals that Davido's orientational metaphors construct his identity as both a lover and cultural icon—one negotiating between vulnerability and dominance, groundedness and elevation, self-restraint and exuberance.

3.1 "If"

In If (2017), one of Davido's most popular love songs, orientational metaphors convey elevation and emotional surrender. The refrain "If I tell you say I love you o / My money, my body na your own o baby**"** projects love as a form of downward yielding—the speaker gives himself up, submitting possession to the beloved. The metaphoric orientation here moves from up (ownership, power) to down (submission, devotion).

Additionally, phrases like "carry my matter for your head o" depict emotional weight as an upward orientation: to "carry" a matter "on the head" situates affection and responsibility at a higher plane. This imagery resonates with Nigerian idiomatic usage, in which "carrying someone's matter on the head" connotes deep concern. Hence, upward orientation represents emotional height and commitment. The juxtaposition of "giving" (downward) and "carrying" (upward) exemplifies the emotional reciprocity central to Davido's conceptualization of love.

3.2 "Fall"

In Fall (2017), the metaphor of "**falling**" captures the vulnerability and loss of control associated with romantic infatuation. The title itself embodies a classic orientational metaphor: The line "I don't wanna be a player no more" signals a moral

ascent from frivolity to commitment, but the repeated "Fall for you" grounds that virtue in emotional descent.

According to Lakoff and Johnson, "up" commonly symbolizes control, power, and success, while "down" signifies loss or submission (15). Davido's "fall" thus signifies surrender, aligning affection with spatial descent. In Nigerian urban culture, "falling for someone" similarly implies yielding one's ego. Through this metaphor, Davido portrays love as an immersive experience where emotional descent leads paradoxically to fulfillment—a downward orientation yielding spiritual elevation.

3.3 "Assurance"

Assurance (2018) builds upon orientational metaphors of stability and grounding. The repeated word "assurance" implies firmness, suggesting that love provides equilibrium. The line "I give my baby assurance, I give my baby lifetime insurance" evokes security as spatial centeredness. In this metaphor, love functions as a horizontal axis—steady, balanced, and resistant to "fall."

The lover's emotional space is thus level, not oscillating between highs and lows. The phrase "**lifetime insurance"** also evokes containment—love enclosed within a secure boundary. This corresponds to the metaphor SECURITY IS BEING GROUNDED**,** contrasting with the instability seen in "Fall." Hence, Davido situates his romantic commitment not in ascent or descent but in stability, mapping love to orientation of equilibrium.

3.4 “FEM”

In FEM (2020), orientational metaphors emerge from sound directionality. The title “FEM”—a Yoruba slang meaning “shut up”—presents silence as downward suppression. When Davido commands “E be like you don dey talk too much / Small talk you don dey talk who talk / FEM**!”,** he positions excessive talk as upward expansion (noise rising), which he seeks to push down through silencing.

The vertical metaphor maps power to downward control: Davido asserts dominance by lowering the opponent’s voice. This corresponds to CONTROL IS DOWNWARD PRESSURE—the act of silencing others positions the self above, exercising authority. Through this orientation, Davido projects personal strength and masculine assertion within Nigerian socio-musical discourse.

3.5 “Aye”

In Aye (2014), orientational metaphors revolve around elevation and groundedness. The lyric “She no want designer / She no want Ferrari / She say na my love o**”** contrasts material high status objects (designer brands, Ferrari) with humble, emotional groundedness. Davido’s persona rejects social elevation (luxury) for grounded love, implying that TRUE LOVE IS DOWN-TO-EARTH.

Similarly, the expression “love is blind but I dey see am for your eyes” fuses perception with orientation. “See am for your eyes” locates affection within the eyes—an inward orientation. The metaphoric mapping LOVE IS AN INTERNAL

SPACE underscores intimacy and emotional depth. Thus, Aye celebrates simplicity and inward affection against the artificial "height" of materialism.

3.6 "Jowo"

Jowo (2020), meaning "please" in Yoruba, uses orientational metaphors to express emotional submission. The lyric "oh my baby jor oooo, Jowo " marks a downward orientation of supplication—the lover lowers himself to seek mercy. The gesture of asking "please" traditionally involves bowing or stooping, reinforcing the downward metaphor.

Moreover, the line "I'm begging, I'm on my knees**"** concretizes the orientation physically. Lakoff and Johnson note that "low status is down; high status is up" (17). Here, Davido willingly descends, portraying love as an experience of humility. The orientation "down" embodies devotion, mapping LOVE IS LOWERING THE SELF.

3.7 "Unavailable"

In Unavailable (2023), orientational metaphors depict self-elevation and independence. The refrain "I'm unavailable, dem no Dey see me**"** associates absence with transcendence—rising above negativity and distraction. The act of being "unavailable" metaphorically lifts the self beyond reach, implying SELF-PRESERVATION IS UPWARD MOVEMENT.

Davido's upward orientation expresses confidence and detachment from social noise. When he sings, "Dem no fit bring me down," the explicit metaphor reinforces

dominance. The line embodies SUCCESS IS UP; FAILURE IS DOWN, a recurrent conceptual pattern in Nigerian pop, where "rising" denotes progress. Thus, Davido positions himself metaphorically "above" criticism and mediocrity.

3.8 "Feel"

In Feel (2023), emotional movement aligns with rising and floating imagery. The chorus "**them they feel it"** frames joy as elevation. Happiness corresponds to up, echoing Lakoff and Johnson's HAPPY IS UP schema (15).

The expression "I feel on top of the world" (implied through tone and dance imagery) reinforces the metaphor POSITIVE EMOTION IS UPWARD ASCENT. Yet, the song also warns against emotional descent when love fades, embodying falling out of feeling. Hence, Feel embodies the oscillation between emotional rise and fall typical of Davido's affective metaphors.

3.9 "Risky"

In Risky (2019), orientational metaphors revolve around balance and danger. The repeated line "**This your body risky** " suggests a precarious tilt between desire and danger. Risk, in conceptual metaphor, implies TILTING FROM STABILITY. The lover's attraction threatens equilibrium—metaphorically a movement off balance.

The song's video imagery, involving police chase and tension, reinforces the metaphor EXCESS IS UP, CONTROL IS DOWN. Davido's indulgence in passion represents an upward, unstable motion, while self-control would signify downward

grounding. The interplay of these spatial orientations dramatizes the tension between pleasure and restraint.

3.10 "10 Kilo"

10 Kilo (2025) employs metaphors of weight and burden, both orientational in nature. The lyric "orobo, 10 kilo" maps affection to gravitational weight. The orientation here is downward pull: love drags, grounds, and roots the speaker. The metaphor LOVE IS A WEIGHT implies responsibility and seriousness.

Unlike "Fall," where descent is emotional surrender, "10 Kilo" presents downward orientation as enduring commitment. The love's "heaviness" anchors the persona, preventing flightiness. In Nigerian Pidgin, "heavy" also connotes depth or authenticity, reinforcing DEPTH IS DOWN**.** Davido thus situates mature love as gravity-bound, not airy or superficial.

3.11 "With You"

In With You (2025)), Davido employs orientational metaphors of proximity and enclosure. The lyric "**with you"** expresses love as CLOSENESS IS GOOD, aligning with Lakoff and Johnson's notion that emotional intimacy maps onto spatial nearness.

The metaphor operates horizontally: "with" implies side-by-side orientation, reflecting equality and companionship. The opposite—distance—would connote estrangement. Thus, Davido's conceptual metaphor LOVE IS PROXIMITY manifests in a balanced, horizontal space, contrasting with the vertical hierarchies of other songs.

3.12 “Stand Strong”

Stand Strong (2022) constructs resilience through the metaphor of vertical stability. The line “cause I stand strong” equates endurance with upright posture. This exemplifies STRENGTH IS UP/UPRIGHTNESS, a central orientational metaphor in human embodiment.

Davido’s “standing” symbolizes moral integrity and perseverance. When he sings, “They can’t put me down,” he explicitly rejects downward motion—failure, defeat, or moral collapse. The binary “stand” vs. “down” encapsulates Davido’s faith-driven determination, embedding cultural notions of persistence within vertical imagery.

3.13 “Blow My Mind”

In Blow My Mind (2019, featuring Chris Brown), orientation shifts to mental space. The phrase “girl you just Dey blow my mind” represents a movement outward and upward—mental expansion beyond ordinary boundaries. This metaphor corresponds to EXCITEMENT IS OUTWARD EXPANSION.

The song associates romantic passion with transcendence: love lifts the mind beyond control. Davido’s Afrobeat expression thereby integrates global pop idioms of emotional explosion with Nigerian vernacular rhythm. The upward-outward orientation indicates liberation and ecstasy, mapping the cognitive to the spatial.

3.14 “Gobe”

Gobe (2013) uses orientation to depict relational conflict. “Gobe” in Yoruba slang means “trouble.” The lyric “Omor see Gobe” situates chaos below, aligning with PROBLEMS ARE DOWN. Conversely, escape or reconciliation entails rising “above” the trouble.

This aligns with Lakoff’s schema CONTROL IS UP and TROUBLE IS DOWN. Davido’s persona thus seeks to rise from confusion, reclaiming stability. The metaphor situates moral order as elevation—a recurring image of ascension amid Afrobeat’s rhythmic vibrancy.

3.15 “Skelewu”

In Skelewu (2013), dance serves as metaphorical ascent. The song’s directive “Skelewu, skelewu, skelewu**”** invites bodily elevation—jumping, moving up. The choreography’s upward motions embody JOY IS UP.

Moreover, the call “Everybody dance skelewu**”** encourages collective rise, transforming physical dance into social uplift. The orientation of “up” equates joy with vitality. Thus, Davido converts embodied movement into conceptual metaphor, where dance becomes an index of emotional ascent and communal solidarity.

Davido associates conflict, gossip, or moral weakness with downward pressure, reflecting an aspirational movement “above” negativity.

These orientations are not merely linguistic; they resonate with Yoruba and Nigerian cultural schemas where “up” (oke) connotes blessing or elevation, while “down” (isale) suggests misfortune or humility. Davido’s Afrobeat thus extends

embodied metaphors into cultural discourse, merging universal cognitive structures with localized meanings.

Through orientational metaphors, Davido negotiates between personal storytelling, cultural identity, and emotional expression—the very axes defined in the thesis statement. Each metaphor functions dynamically, constructing spatial images that articulate the Afrobeat philosophy of progress, joy, and relational authenticity.

CHAPTER FOUR

ONTOLOGICAL METAPHOR IN DAVIDO'S SONGS

4.1 Introduction

Ontological metaphor, as proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in Metaphors We Live By, is the process through which human beings conceptualize abstract experiences as concrete entities, substances, or containers (Lakoff and Johnson 25). This conceptual framework allows individuals to understand and express intangible realities—such as emotions, identity, and social experience—in terms of physical or material phenomena. Ontological metaphors therefore serve as a crucial cognitive mechanism for transforming abstract experiences into tangible forms that can be perceived, handled, or interacted with.

In the lyrical discourse of Nigerian Afrobeat, Davido's music provides a rich ground for examining ontological metaphors. His songs frequently objectify abstract experiences such as love, success, pain, and fame, framing them in ways that resonate with the Nigerian sociocultural imagination. This chapter analyzes the use of ontological metaphor in a selected corpus of Davido's songs—If, Fall, Assurance, FEM, Aye, Jowo, Unavailable, Feel, Risky, 10 Kilo, With You, Stand Strong, Blow My Mind, Gobe, and Skelewu—to demonstrate how these metaphors reflect the interplay of cultural identity, love, and personal storytelling in his Afrobeat aesthetics.

4.2 Theoretical framework: ontological metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson categorize ontological metaphors into three dominant types: entity, container, and substance metaphors (30–32).

*Entity metaphors conceptualize abstract ideas as objects that can be owned, controlled, or manipulated.

*Container metaphors represent experiences or emotions as spaces that individuals can enter or exit.

*Substance metaphors treat abstract phenomena as tangible materials that can be measured or exchanged.

These categories guide the present analysis, which interprets Davido's lyrics as instances of ontological conceptualization. His consistent use of tangible imagery—body, money, space, weight, and possession—exemplifies how Afrobeat bridges personal emotion with material and cultural realities.

4.3 Ontological Metaphors in Davido's Selected Songs

4.3.1 If (2017)

"If I tell you say I love you, my money, my body na your own oh baby."

Here, love and affection are constructed as possessions that can be given and owned. The lyric "my money, my body na your own" presents love as a tangible object or property that can be transferred. The ontological metaphor LOVE IS A POSSESSION objectifies intimacy within a socio-economic frame where love is

validated through material offerings, reflecting Nigerian expectations of generosity in relationships (Nwachukwu 415).

4.3.2 Fall (2017)

“Money fall on you, banana fall on you“

The repeated **“**fall on you**”** suggests that love is a force of gravity. The metaphor LOVE IS A GRAVITATIONAL ENTITY constructs affection as a tangible, physical power that pulls the self. This ontological framing of emotion transforms love from abstract feeling into an embodied experience of surrender.

4.3.3 Assurance (2018)

“You’re the one I want o, before my liver start to fail.”

Here, emotional dependence is equated with physical health. The metaphor **LOVE IS LIFE-SUBSTANCE** positions affection as a biological necessity, granting love an ontological status as sustenance. The bodily imagery reflects cultural tendencies to materialize emotional commitment (Charteris-Black 64).

4.3.4 FEM (2020)

“E be like you don dey talk too much? FEM!”

Speech is personified as a controllable object that can be silenced. The metaphor TALK IS AN OBJECT THAT CAN BE SHUT DOWN situates verbal conflict within a power dynamic of dominance and self-control. It reveals Davido’s assertion of identity amid public discourse.

4.3.5 Aye (2014)

“She say na my love oooo”

Love is conceptualized as a resource or commodity accessible to everyone. The metaphor LOVE IS A MATERIAL RESOURCE emphasizes equality in emotional experience. Davido critiques class-based perceptions of affection, reasserting the communal African value that love transcends material wealth (Adegoju 185).

4.3.6 Jowo (2020)

“My baby jor, jowo’

Love is represented as a physical burden capable of exerting pressure. The ontological metaphor LOVE IS A WEIGHT conveys emotional struggle while sustaining tenderness. Through the personification of emotion as a tangible force, Davido dramatizes vulnerability and surrender.

4.3.7 Unavailable (2023)

“I’m unavailable, dem no dey see me.”

Availability becomes a state of being or space that can be entered or exited. The metaphor SELF IS A CONTAINER spatializes identity—Davido withdraws from the public gaze, constructing autonomy as an interior space.

4.3.8 Feel (2023)

“Dem go feel it, dem go run it down”

Belonging and exclusion are conceptualized as spatial positions. The metaphor EMOTION IS A PLACE situates acceptance and rejection in physical space, reflecting the communal consciousness of Nigerian culture where inclusion equals emotional fulfillment.

4.3.9 Risky (2019)

“Risky, risky, yes your body risky.”

The human body is personified as a dangerous object. The metaphor BODY IS A HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE turns attraction into tangible risk, merging sensuality with peril. This blend of danger and desire mirrors Afrobeat’s expressive energy.

4.3.10 10 Kilo (2022)

“Carrying love wey heavy like 10 kilo.”

Love is quantified and measured. The metaphor LOVE IS A PHYSICAL LOAD grants numerical tangibility to affection. By measuring love, Davido captures its emotional intensity and physical strain, illustrating ontological concreteness.

4.3.11 With You (2025)

“If I speak English, oh-oh,cho Cho Cho no working,”

Davido turns language into a tool that fails to function.Here, love becomes an object too powerful or vast to be contained by ordinary words.The metaphor shows

that his feelings exceed the limits of expression.By personifying language as something that "doesn't work," Davido gives emotion a tangible, overwhelming presence.It conveys that his love is beyond explanation—it must be felt, not spoken.

4.3.12 Stand Strong (2022)

"My fears are easier to face now,"

Fear is treated as a tangible entity, reflecting an ontological metaphor.The line maps onto the conceptual metaphor FEAR IS A PHYSICAL OBSTACLE.By framing fear as something external, the speaker positions themselves as an agent capable of confronting it.This externalization makes fear manageable and emphasizes personal empowerment.Overall, the metaphor turns an abstract emotion into a concrete challenge, highlighting growth and resilience.

4.3.13 Blow My Mind (2019)

"You just Dey blow my, blow my mind, blow my mind"

The mind is constructed as a container, and love as a force that explodes it. The metaphor MIND IS A CONTAINER; EMOTION IS A FORCE conveys intensity of emotion through imagery of physical disruption. The collision of cognition and emotion is made concrete.

4.3.14 Gobe (2013)

"Omor see Gobe,"

Trouble (*Gobe*) is treated as a tangible **entity**, reflecting an ontological metaphor.The line maps onto the conceptual metaphor TROUBLE IS A PHYSICAL

OBJECT.By framing trouble as something external, the speaker makes it perceptible and concrete.This externalization emphasizes that trouble can be confronted or noticed. The metaphor turns an abstract problem into a tangible presence, highlighting urgency and impact.

4.3.15 Skelewu (2013)

Skelewu, skelewu, skelewu,

The dance (*Skelewu*) is treated as a **concrete entity**, reflecting an ontological metaphor.The line maps onto the conceptual metaphor DANCE IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT OR THING. By naming the dance, it is conceptualized as something tangible that can be performed and interacted with.This gives the abstract act of dancing a sense of presence and identity. The metaphor frames dance as a manipulable, real entity, emphasizing participation and celebration.

The metaphors also embody the Nigerian cultural worldview in which emotions and relationships are lived experiences, not abstractions. In Davido's Afrobeat poetics, the ontological metaphor becomes both a linguistic strategy and a cultural lens, reinforcing the thesis that his songs reflect a dynamic interplay of cultural identity, personal storytelling, and love.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, FINDINGS, AND MY CONTRIBUTIONS

This study explored the use of structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors in Davido's selected songs to understand how abstract concepts such as love, emotion, identity, and social experience are represented in contemporary Nigerian Afrobeat music. Through detailed analysis of songs including ,*Gobe*, *Skelewu*, *Aye*, *If*, *Fall*, *Assurance*, *Blow My Mind*, *Risky*, *FEM*, *Jowo*, *Stand Strong*, *Unavailable*, *Feel*, *With You*, and *10 Kilo*,I examined the ways in which metaphor operates as both a cognitive and cultural mechanism. This study demonstrates that metaphors in Davido's music are not merely stylistic devices; they serve as tools for concretizing abstract experiences, making them accessible, relatable, and culturally resonant.

This study demonstrates that metaphor is central to the lyrical and cognitive strategies of Davido's music. Structural metaphors map abstract concepts onto familiar domains, orientational metaphors organize experiences spatially, and ontological metaphors transform intangible phenomena into tangible realities. Collectively, these metaphors enable audiences to engage with complex emotions, relationships, and social identities in a tangible, comprehensible, and culturally resonant manner.

5.1 Findings

From my analysis, several significant findings emerged. First, structural metaphors consistently mapped one domain of experience onto another, allowing abstract concepts to be understood through familiar frameworks. For instance, in *Risky* and *10 Kilo*, love and attraction are framed in terms of weight, load, and measurement, illustrating that emotional intensity can be quantified and made tangible. Similarly, in *With You*, language is represented as a tool that can fail to function, revealing the limitations of verbal expression in capturing overwhelming emotion. These findings indicate that structural metaphors in Davido's music enable the audience to conceptually link abstract feelings to physical or functional domains, enhancing emotional comprehension.

Second, orientational metaphors frequently appeared, reflecting spatial and directional conceptualizations of abstract experiences. In *Feel* and *Unavailable*, for example, emotions and social inclusion are represented as spatial positions. *Feel* situates belonging and exclusion within physical space, emphasizing the Nigerian cultural notion that social and emotional integration are intertwined. *Unavailable* frames the self as a container, with withdrawal or availability conceptualized as entering or exiting a space. These findings reveal that orientational metaphors allow Davido to represent relational and emotional dynamics spatially, helping listeners perceive and navigate social and emotional landscapes through imagery grounded in everyday experience.

Third, ontological metaphors were highly prevalent, transforming abstract phenomena into tangible entities, substances, or containers. In songs like *If, Fall, Assurance, Jowo,* and *Skelewu*, love, fear, trouble, and joy are conceptualized as objects that can be possessed, weighed, transferred, or experienced materially. For example, in *If*, love is framed as possession—"my money, my body na your own"—highlighting the socio-economic dimension of intimacy. In *Jowo*, love is represented as weight, while in *Blow My Mind*, emotions are treated as forces acting upon the mind, making abstract feelings perceptible and concrete. These patterns show that ontological metaphors materialize emotions and experiences, enabling them to be perceived, manipulated, and understood as real, tangible phenomena.

Across all three metaphor types, I observed that Davido's lyrics consistently bridge individual emotion and cultural reality. His metaphors are embedded in Nigerian socio-cultural values such as generosity, communal identity, and emotional expression. For example, in *Aye*, love is represented as a communal resource, reflecting the cultural principle that emotional experiences are shared rather than individualized. In *Stand Strong*, fear is externalized as a physical obstacle, allowing the speaker to confront it. My findings indicate that metaphor in Davido's songs serves both cognitive and cultural functions, enabling audiences to understand abstract experiences while reinforcing shared social values.

My findings underscore that Davido's metaphors are deeply embedded in Nigerian socio-cultural values, reflecting communalism, generosity, and social

connectedness, while also illustrating universal patterns of conceptualizing abstract experience. By analyzing structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors together, I have provided a comprehensive framework for understanding metaphorical expression in Afrobeat music, bridging linguistic, cognitive, and cultural perspectives.

5.2 Contribution to the Study

My primary contribution lies in the integrated analysis of structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors in Davido's songs. By examining all three types within a single framework, I have provided a comprehensive perspective on how abstract experiences are represented in Afrobeat music. Previous studies often focus on a single metaphor type or limit analysis to literary texts, whereas my study demonstrates the interaction of multiple metaphorical strategies within contemporary African popular music.

Furthermore, I have contributed by situating metaphorical expression within the Nigerian socio-cultural context. My analysis shows that metaphors in Davido's songs reflect communal values, relational norms, and social expectations, highlighting the interplay between cognitive processes and cultural realities. By connecting metaphor use to the lived experiences of Nigerian audiences, I demonstrate how Afrobeat music functions as both an artistic and socio-cultural medium. Through this study, I have made a distinct contribution to scholarship in linguistics, music, and cultural studies by demonstrating how Afrobeat lyrics can be

analyzed as sites of cognitive and cultural meaning. By integrating cognitive linguistic theory with socio-cultural context, my work highlights the power of metaphor as a vehicle for communication, emotional expression, and cultural reflection, offering new insights into the artistry and impact of contemporary Nigerian popular music.

Additionally, I have applied conceptual metaphor theory to popular music, extending Lakoff and Johnson's framework beyond literature and spoken discourse. This approach allows me to systematically analyze lyrics as sites of conceptual mapping, offering a methodological contribution for future research in music, linguistics, and cultural studies. My categorization of metaphor types and identification of recurring patterns across songs provide a structured analytical model that can be applied to other artists or musical genres.

A further contribution is the diachronic perspective in my study. By examining songs from 2013 to 2025, I reveal how Davido's metaphor usage has evolved over time. Early songs such as *Gobe* and *Skelewu* emphasize ontological metaphors that materialize dance and trouble, while later works like *With You* and *Unavailable* incorporate structural and orientational metaphors, reflecting increased emotional complexity and spatialized identity. This longitudinal approach allows me to identify continuities and changes in lyrical strategy, illustrating the dynamic nature of Afrobeat music as it interacts with cultural and personal development.

Finally, my study highlights the cognitive and emotional impact of metaphor on listeners. Structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors work together to make abstract experiences understandable, relatable, and emotionally resonant. Through my analysis, I show that Davido's metaphors facilitate the listener's engagement with emotion, identity, and social connection, reinforcing the value of metaphor as both a cognitive and cultural tool.

` Through this study, I have made a distinct contribution to scholarship in linguistics, music, and cultural studies by demonstrating how Afrobeat lyrics can be analyzed as sites of cognitive and cultural meaning. By integrating cognitive linguistic theory with socio-cultural context, my work highlights the power of metaphor as a vehicle for communication, emotional expression, and cultural reflection, offering new insights into the artistry and impact of contemporary Nigerian popular music.

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