VOLUME 2
Issue 2, November 2025

CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS AS EXPRESSIONS OF HUMANISM IN *LAKI-LAKI DI TAMAN SENJA*

Rizky Anugrah Putra
Faculty of Letters, Universitas Alkhairaat Palu, Indonesia

Article || Published: 30/11/2025
https://doi.org/10.58989/appling.v2i2.43
rizkyap2016@gmail.com

How to cite || Putra, R.A. (2025). Conceptual Metaphors as Expressions of Humanism in Laki-Laki di Taman Senja. Applied Linguistics: Innovative Approaches and Emerging Trends, 2(2), 113–131. https://doi.org/10.58989/appling.v2i2.43

Text || © Author – License: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International

YNIMGM
YAYASAN NURUL IMAN | MUARA GADING MAS
e-ISSN: 3047-549X

Abstract || This study explores the intersection of cognitive linguistics and literature to evaluate the humanistic values embedded within metaphors in the short story Laki-laki di Taman Senja by Muhamad Abi Fadila. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis combined with a stylistic approach, the research systematically classified textual excerpts against established cognitive metaphorical source domains. The analysis identified four primary conceptual categories manipulated by the author which are the human body, animals and plants, light and darkness, and direction and movement. Rather than functioning purely as aesthetic stylistic embellishments, these four distinct linguistic structures operate as essential cognitive frameworks. They map the protagonist's complex emotional landscapes, directly articulating three major humanistic theme which are the profound existential struggle against modern urban monotony, the transformative power of non-judgmental empathy, and the fundamental necessity of self-acceptance. Ultimately, these metaphorical mappings successfully bridge internal psychological realities with external social dynamics, offering profound insights into the human condition and individual resilience amidst contemporary societal alienation.

Keywords || Conceptual Metaphors; Humanistic Values; Stylistic Analysis; Indonesian Short Story; Literary Psychology.

Abstrak || Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persimpangan linguistik kognitif dan sastra untuk mengevaluasi nilai-nilai humanisme yang tertanam di dalam metafora pada cerpen Laki-laki di Taman Senja oleh Muhammad Abi Fadila. Menggunakan metode analisis isi kualitatif yang dipadukan dengan pendekatan stilistika, riset ini mengklasifikasikan data kutipan tekstual secara sistematis berdasarkan ranah sumber metafora kognitif yang mapan. Hasil analisis mengidentifikasi empat kategori konseptual utama yang dimanipulasi secara sadar oleh penulis yaitu tubuh manusia, hewan dan tumbuhan, cahaya dan kegelapan, serta arah dan pergerakan. Alih-alih berfungsi murni sebagai hiasan estetika gaya bahasa, keempat struktur linguistik yang berbeda ini beroperasi sebagai kerangka kognitif yang esensial. Metafora tersebut memetakan lanskap emosional protagonis yang kompleks, secara langsung mengartikulasikan tiga tema humanistik utama yaitu perjuangan eksistensial yang mendalam melawan monotoni perkotaan modern, kekuatan transformatif dari empati tanpa penghakiman, dan kebutuhan mendasar akan penerimaan diri. Pada akhirnya, pemetaan metaforis ini berhasil menjembatani realitas psikologis internal dengan dinamika sosial eksternal, menawarkan wawasan mendalam tentang kondisi manusia di tengah keterasingan sosial kontemporer.

Katakunci || Metafora Konseptual; Nilai Humanisme; Analisis Stilistika; Cerpen Indonesia; Psikologi Sastra

Introduction

Literature fundamentally operates as a profound reflection of the human experience, frequently utilizing various elements of the natural and physical world to delineate the internal states, emotional complexities, and psychological conflicts of its characters (Winiyanti et al., 2025; Denham, 2024; Newby, 2025). Throughout the evolution of literary expression, authors have consistently relied on the external environment as a sophisticated canvas upon which the intricate dynamics of human consciousness are projected. One of the most prevalent and effective literary and linguistic techniques utilized to convey these profound layers of meaning is the metaphor, wherein natural elements, spatial dimensions, and physical sensations are transformed into potent symbols that articulate complex emotional and psychological conditions. Within the broader scope of literary studies and linguistic inquiry, metaphors are increasingly recognized not merely as stylistic embellishments or poetic ornaments, but as highly effective cognitive instruments that bridge the external, observable world with the internal, subjective landscapes of literary figures. A comprehensive survey of contemporary literature reveals that the intersection of cognitive linguistics and literary criticism provides an indispensable framework for understanding how textual representations of the physical environment encode deep existential and humanistic reflections, allowing readers to traverse the boundary between the literal narrative and its philosophical underpinnings.

The theoretical foundation for understanding this phenomenon is deeply rooted in cognitive linguistics, which posits that metaphorical language is a direct reflection of human cognitive processing. According to the seminal work of Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors are by no means restricted to the exclusive domain of imaginative literary works, classical poetry, or persuasive rhetoric; rather, they constitute an integral, inescapable component of everyday human communication and cognition. Although historically associated with language that is strictly imaginative and artistic, the application and influence of metaphors extend pervasively into the fundamental patterns of human thought and consequent actions. This cognitive paradigm asserts that the intrinsic nature of human comprehension is inherently metaphorical, suggesting that the mechanisms through which individuals perceive the world, structure their realities, and interact with others are largely governed by the metaphorical frameworks embedded

within the mind. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue compellingly that a metaphor is not merely a superficial linguistic element, but a profound and foundational mode of reasoning. They elucidate that metaphorical concepts do not materialize spontaneously in a vacuum; rather, they are systematically constructed through embodied human experiences, encompassing cultural, social, and physical dimensions. These cumulative experiences generate specific cognitive pathways through which the abstract and the intangible are comprehended via the mapping of concrete, easily recognizable imagery, thereby rendering metaphors essential tools in communicating complex truths, shaping cognitive paradigms, and constructing everyday reality.

Despite the established understanding of metaphors as cognitive mechanisms, a persistent research problem remains in accurately decoding how modern individuals articulate and navigate profound psychological crises such as urban alienation, existential emptiness, and the search for identity within contemporary literary narratives (Houassi, 2023; Calderón et al., 2025). As modern society becomes increasingly characterized by monotonous routines and profound social disconnection, literary characters frequently embody a deep sense of isolation and internal conflict. The primary challenge lies in systematically identifying and interpreting how authors encapsulate these abstract psychological and emotional struggles through specific linguistic markers and figurative language. When characters grapple with the complexities of modern existence, their internal turmoil is rarely stated explicitly; instead, it is woven into the narrative fabric through subtle symbolic representations of nature, environment, and physical sensation. Consequently, there is a critical need to understand how the linguistic architecture of a text functions to project the psychological reality of characters who are desperately striving to find meaning and tranquility amidst the overwhelming pressures of contemporary societal structures.

To address this complex interpretative challenge, scholars generally turn to interdisciplinary solutions that synthesize linguistic methodology with literary analysis, specifically through the application of qualitative content analysis and stylistics. Content analysis, as a rigorous and objective methodological approach, enables researchers to systematically identify, categorize, and evaluate the specific elements of language embedded within a literary text (Krippendorff, 2013). By employing a stylistic approach, researchers can focus meticulously on the deliberate linguistic choices and structural patterns utilized by the

author, thereby illuminating how specific figures of speech construct deeper thematic meanings. This methodological synthesis allows for a structured exploration of how recurrent linguistic symbols, contrasts, and figurative mappings function beyond their literal definitions to support the overarching moral, social, or philosophical messages intended by the author. Consequently, stylistic content analysis provides a robust, evidence-based solution for bridging the gap between pure linguistic observation and profound literary interpretation, facilitating a more objective comprehension of how texts communicate complex human experiences.

In addressing the specific mechanics of metaphorical expression within this analytical framework, previous scientific literature offers precise conceptual solutions. Pateda (2010) elucidates that a metaphor operates as a unique form of comparative figure of speech that, unlike similes, entirely omits explicit comparative conjunctions such as "like" or "as." The fundamental structure of a metaphor, according to Pateda (2010), relies on the seamless integration of two primary elements: the subject being discussed (the tenor) and the concept used as the point of comparison (the vehicle). By forcefully combining these elements without explicit connectors, metaphors create an immediate and dense conceptual relationship, rendering the language more compact and conceptually effective in transmitting abstract significance. Furthermore, Knowles and Moon (2006) provide an essential descriptive framework, characterizing metaphor as an implicit comparison that intrinsically links literal meaning with non-literal or figurative meaning, the precise interpretation of which is heavily dependent on the surrounding textual and situational context. This specific operational mechanism transferring the distinct qualities or attributes of the comparative object directly onto the subject generates a novel understanding and a fresh perspective, confirming that metaphors function fundamentally as cognitive tools that enrich comprehension and add vital emotional nuance to the narrative discourse.

Building upon the mechanics of metaphor, the literature also provides specific taxonomic solutions for classifying these cognitive mappings, most notably through the comprehensive source domain framework developed by Kövecses (2010). Kövecses (2010) identifies thirteen primary conceptual source domains that are universally utilized to structure metaphorical thought. These include the Human Body, which serves as the most fundamental source for projecting human

attributes onto abstract concepts; Health and Illness; Animals, frequently utilized to delineate behavioral traits; and Plants, reflecting growth and cultivation. Furthermore, the framework encompasses domains such as Buildings, Machines and Tools, Games and Sports, Money and Economic Transactions, Cooking and Food, Heat and Cold, Light and Darkness, Forces (such as natural elements), and Direction and Movement. In the context of literary analysis, these specific categorizations are instrumental. For instance, metaphors of light and darkness are frequently employed to represent states of enlightenment, hope, or conversely, confusion and psychological despair. Similarly, metaphors centered on direction and movement effectively articulate the emotional and developmental trajectory of a character. By utilizing Kövecses' (2010) comprehensive taxonomy, researchers are equipped with a specific, scientifically grounded solution to categorize and interpret the diverse array of metaphors utilized by authors to convey the multifaceted nature of human existence.

While the theoretical tenets of cognitive linguistics, the structural definitions of metaphor provided by Pateda (2010) and Knowles and Moon (2006), and the comprehensive categorizations established by Kövecses (2010) offer a robust analytical apparatus, an overview of closely related literature reveals a distinct research gap. Existing scholarly investigations have extensively documented the cognitive mechanics of metaphors in political discourse, everyday speech, and classical poetry. However, there is a pronounced scarcity of research that rigorously applies these linguistic frameworks to extract and analyze specific humanistic values such as self-acceptance, profound empathy, and the intrinsic struggle for individual meaning within the context of contemporary Indonesian short fiction. Specifically, the short story *Laki-laki di Taman Senja* by Muhamad Abi Fadila presents an unexamined yet incredibly rich corpus where natural metaphors, such as twilight, rain, and wind, act as direct representations of a protagonist's psychological battle against urban alienation. Previous studies tend to isolate linguistic taxonomy from philosophical literary themes, thereby failing to synthesize how precise conceptual metaphors act as the primary vehicles for delivering profound humanistic philosophy regarding human existence in modern society. This lack of integrated cognitive-stylistic analysis on the humanistic dimensions of contemporary Indonesian narratives constitutes a significant void in the current academic discourse.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to systematically analyze how metaphors are utilized within the short story *Laki-laki di Taman Senja* to accurately depict the psychological and emotional conditions of the main character, and to explicitly identify the humanistic values reflected through this metaphorical usage. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach, mapping Kövecses' (2010) cognitive linguistic taxonomy directly onto the philosophical tenets of humanism, thereby demonstrating how ordinary concepts of the human body, nature, and spatial movement encapsulate complex existential themes of empathy, individual struggle, and self-acceptance in modern Indonesian literature. This study operates under the premise that the metaphors within the text transcend mere visual imagery, functioning instead as critical reflections of a psychological process oriented toward finding tranquility in an alienating urban environment. The scope of this research is strictly confined to a qualitative content analysis of the figurative language and metaphorical constructs present in Muhamad Abi Fadila's *Laki-laki di Taman Senja*, analyzing the intricate relationship between nature, linguistic symbolism, and the universal human quest for meaning.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design utilizing content analysis combined with a stylistics approach to comprehensively examine the utilization of metaphors within the short story *Laki-laki di Taman Senja* and their intrinsic connection to humanistic values. Content analysis serves as a highly appropriate methodology in this context, as it empowers researchers to objectively and systematically identify, classify, and evaluate specific linguistic elements and symbolic patterns embedded within literary texts (Krippendorff, 2013). This analytical method allows for the exploration of multiple layers of meaning that emerge from repetition, thematic contrast, and symbolic representation across the narrative structure. By integrating a stylistic approach, the research deliberately focuses on the architectural style of the language and the specific textual structures utilized by the author. This combined methodological framework enables a deeper exploration of how figurative language is constructed to communicate complex abstract ideas and moral messages regarding human existence. Consequently, this design facilitates a rigorous evaluation of how stylistic devices operate beyond mere decorative functions to project profound social

and psychological realities, ensuring that the subjective elements of the literature are analyzed through an objective, reproducible academic lens.

Data Source and Collection Procedures

The primary data utilized in this investigation consist of specific textual excerpts, narrative descriptions, and character dialogues containing metaphorical expressions extracted directly from the short story *Laki-laki di Taman Senja*. To systematically gather this data, the study employed a documentation method augmented by a rigorous reading and note-taking technique. This procedural approach required a highly focused and repeated reading of the literary text to meticulously isolate linguistic constructions that omit explicit comparative conjunctions. The identification process adhered strictly to the structural definition of metaphors as an implicit comparison connecting literal and non-literal meanings, a concept extensively established by Pateda (2010) as well as Knowles and Moon (2006). During the meticulous reading process, any sentence or phrase that demonstrated an implicit transfer of attributes from a concrete comparative vehicle to an abstract subject tenor was systematically recorded and compiled. This careful, structured documentation ensures that all relevant metaphorical occurrences that are intricately linked to the narrative's overarching thematic exploration of humanism are captured accurately for subsequent and comprehensive evaluation.

Data Analysis Technique

Following the comprehensive collection of textual data, the analytical phase was executed through a systematic and highly structured thematic classification process. The extracted textual quotes were meticulously categorized based on the cognitive conceptual source domains of metaphors thoroughly delineated by Kövecses (2010). Through this specific theoretical lens, the compiled data were systematically segmented into distinct cognitive classifications, specifically focusing on domains such as the human body, animals, plants, light and darkness, alongside direction and movement.

The subsequent analytical procedure involved interpreting how each categorized metaphorical instance intricately correlates with the humanistic values portrayed through the primary character's internal conflicts, emotional states, and profound moral reflections. By mapping the identified textual metaphors onto the robust framework provided by Kövecses (2010), the study systematically unpacks the deeply layered

meanings within the narrative. This rigorous interpretative process ultimately reveals exactly how physical descriptions and natural phenomena are linguistically manipulated by the author to construct a profound, underlying discourse on essential human themes such as self-acceptance, social empathy, and the enduring human search for existential tranquility amidst the complexities of contemporary urban life.

Results

Table 1. Thematic Distribution of Metaphorical Conceptualizations and Associated Humanistic Values in *Laki-laki di Taman Senja*

Metaphorical Source Domain	Textual Excerpt from the Narrative	Target Domain and Interpretative Meaning	Associated Humanistic Value
Human Body	*"Aku merasa sedikit sesak di dada." / "Aku merasa lelah di kepalaku."*	Psychological anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and the internalization of social pressures mapped onto physiological distress.	Individual Life and Struggle
Animals and Plants	*"Tetapi keindahan bunga-bunga juga membawa kupu-kupu yang cantik terbang menghampirinya..."*	The necessity of mutual dependence, social interaction, and symbiotic relationships for personal growth and fulfillment.	Empathy and Social Awareness
Light and Darkness	*"Melalui gelap kita bisa bertanya pada diri sendiri, apakah masih ada terang yang tersisa di hati kita."*	Existential despair, confusion, and the subsequent internal search for hope, clarity, and psychological enlightenment.	Self-Acceptance and Acceptance of Others
Direction and Movement	*"Aku bisa merenung. Sebenarnya aku merindukan sebuah rumah... yang aku butuhkan adalah tempat untuk pulang."*	The trajectory of emotional development, the endurance through life's obstacles, and the inherent desire for existential safety.	Individual Life and Struggle

The analytical findings of this study reveal that the narrative structure of *Laki-laki di Taman Senja* relies heavily on the strategic deployment of conceptual metaphors to articulate the protagonist's profound psychological realities and to embed overarching philosophical themes within the text. Consistent with the theoretical assertions established by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), the metaphorical expressions identified in the narrative are not merely decorative

linguistic choices but function as foundational cognitive frameworks that shape the protagonist's comprehension of her world. The identification and categorization of these metaphors align with the comprehensive source domain taxonomy proposed by Kövecses (2010), demonstrating how tangible, universally understood concepts are systematically utilized to map complex, abstract emotional landscapes. Furthermore, these linguistic structures serve as the primary vehicle for transmitting the narrative's core humanistic values, illustrating a sophisticated interplay between cognitive linguistics and literary philosophy. The subsequent sections detail the specific metaphorical conceptualizations extracted from the text and critically examine their direct correlation with the articulation of humanistic principles.

Metaphorical Conceptualizations in Laki-laki di Taman Senja

The qualitative content analysis of the short story yielded a diverse array of metaphorical constructions that fall distinctly into several primary cognitive source domains. By utilizing the interpretative framework provided by Knowles and Moon (2006), which emphasizes the implicit connection between literal vehicles and non-literal tenors, the analysis decodes how the author constructs a bridge between the physical environment and the internal psychological state of the main character. The identified metaphors are predominantly categorized into domains of the human body, animals and plants, light and darkness, as well as direction and movement.

Human Body Metaphors

The human body represents the most intimate and fundamental source domain for metaphorical conceptualization, as individuals naturally utilize their physiological experiences to understand abstract psychological distress. In the analyzed narrative, the protagonist's internal emotional turmoil is consistently mapped onto physical sensations. The textual excerpt expressing that the character feels a slight tightness in her chest ("*Aku merasa sedikit sesak di dada*") serves as a potent metaphor for severe anxiety, emotional suffocation, and psychological constraint. This physical symptom transcends its literal medical definition, functioning instead as a linguistic representation of the immense pressure and stagnation she experiences within her mundane urban existence. Furthermore, this internal conflict is deeply exacerbated by her perceived failure to fulfill familial expectations, as

evidenced by her lamentation regarding her inability to make her parents proud. The resulting frustration is articulated through another somatic metaphor, wherein she describes feeling a profound fatigue in her head ("*Aku merasa lelah di kepalaku*"). According to the theoretical paradigms of Kövecses (2010), utilizing the head as a metaphorical source domain often relates to cognitive overload and mental exhaustion. In this context, the fatigue is not a reflection of physical exertion but an illustration of a relentless, draining cognitive burden and emotional depletion. The author effectively uses these anatomical references to create a visceral, relatable depiction of a psychological state defined by profound stress, emotional entrapment, and an overwhelming sense of existential fatigue that cannot be easily remedied.

Animal and Plant Metaphors

Beyond the internal bodily experience, the narrative expands its metaphorical mapping to the external natural world, specifically utilizing the domains of flora and fauna to conceptualize complex social dynamics and interpersonal relationships. This is vividly illustrated through the dialogue concerning flowers and butterflies. The male character's observation that the beauty of blooming flowers inevitably attracts beautiful butterflies ("*Tetapi keindahan bunga-bunga juga membawa kupu-kupu yang cantik terbang menghampirinya*") operates as a sophisticated ecological metaphor for human socialization and mutual interdependence. As established by Pateda (2010), metaphors function by transferring the inherent qualities of the comparative object directly to the subject being discussed. In this instance, the flower symbolizes human vitality, inherent potential, and the blossoming of individual identity, while the butterfly represents external interaction, beauty, and the dynamic changes that occur as a result of external engagement. The symbiotic relationship wherein the butterfly requires the flower's nectar for survival perfectly mirrors the inherent human necessity for social connection and emotional exchange. This conceptualization suggests that individuals, much like the isolated flower, require the presence and interaction of others to achieve full actualization and to experience the richness of life. It implies a degree of freedom and natural selection in human relationships, emphasizing that genuine connection is a reciprocal process that fosters mutual growth, psychological enrichment, and the creation of profound meaning within the human experience.

Light and Darkness Metaphors

The juxtaposition of light and darkness constitutes one of the most pervasive and universally recognized metaphorical frameworks for conceptualizing epistemology, morality, and emotional states. In the context of this short story, variations of illumination are utilized to articulate the protagonist's deep internal journey through despair toward potential enlightenment. The explicit narrative advice to reflect within the darkness to discover if any light remains in the heart ("*Melalui gelap kita bisa bertanya pada diri sendiri, apakah masih ada terang yang tersisa di hati kita*") utilizes darkness as a symbol for psychological isolation, profound confusion, and existential crisis. When an individual is enveloped in this metaphorical darkness, they are perceived as lacking direction, ensnared in a seemingly insurmountable void. However, this darkness is simultaneously framed as a necessary crucible for deep introspection and psychological evaluation. The search for the remaining "light" signifies the inherent human drive to uncover residual hope, inner resilience, and cognitive clarity amidst overwhelming adversity. Similarly, the phrase detailing the state of affairs after the sky turns dark ("*Setelah langitnya gelap*") utilizes atmospheric phenomena to represent periods of emotional heaviness and situational bleakness. The transitionary implication of these celestial metaphors aligns with the cognitive structures identified by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), wherein light equates to knowing and surviving, while darkness equates to ignorance and suffering. The narrative suggests that traversing through the darkness is an unavoidable prerequisite for achieving emotional resolution, thereby transforming moments of severe vulnerability into crucial opportunities for personal rebirth and positive transformation.

Direction and Movement Metaphors

The conceptualization of life as a physical journey involving specific directions and movements is a critical metaphorical domain that articulates the passage of time, the pursuit of goals, and the evolution of the self. The protagonist's explicit desire to meet the male character again, despite the impending arrival of rain ("*Aku ingin bertemu lagi, meskipun hujan datang*"), employs forward movement and the anticipation of a future destination as metaphors for emotional perseverance. In this context, the rain operates as a natural barrier, symbolizing the inevitable socio-economic challenges, personal insecurities, and external disruptions that threaten human connection. The determination to move forward and facilitate the meeting despite

these atmospheric obstacles reflects a profound sense of optimism and agency, illustrating the human capacity to pursue meaningful connections even when environmental variables are highly unfavorable. Furthermore, the protagonist's introspective realization regarding her transition into adulthood and her ultimate longing for a home ("*Kuakui kepergianku ke dunia orang dewasa, pada akhirnya yang aku butuhkan adalah tempat untuk pulang*") utilizes spatial relocation to describe a deep existential longing. The departure into the adult world represents the loss of innocence and the forced confrontation with complex societal responsibilities. The concept of "returning home" functions not as a desire for a literal physical structure, but as a metaphor for the psychological pursuit of safety, unconditional acceptance, and a stable sense of identity. This movement back toward a foundational origin point highlights the cyclical nature of human emotional development, where progress often necessitates a reconnection with fundamental aspects of the self to achieve genuine tranquility.

Reflections of Humanistic Values

The extensive network of cognitive metaphors identified within the text does not merely serve a descriptive linguistic function; rather, it constitutes the foundational architecture through which the narrative's profound humanistic values are communicated. Humanism, in literary analysis, prioritizes the agency, emotional complexity, and intrinsic dignity of the individual, alongside the necessity of ethical, empathetic relationships with others. The metaphorical expressions previously analyzed directly correlate with three major humanistic themes embedded within the short story: the struggle for individual meaning, the cultivation of empathy, and the ultimate achievement of self-acceptance.

Individual Life and Existential Struggle

A primary humanistic value reflected in the narrative is the inherent right of the individual to seek psychological comfort and autonomous meaning in an otherwise alienating environment. The protagonist's admission that her life had become overwhelmingly monotonous, prompting her to adopt the new hobby of waiting for the twilight in the city park, underscores a deep existential struggle against the dehumanizing effects of modern urban routines. Her deliberate choice to utilize her time in a manner that is both economically accessible and spiritually calming reflects a reclamation of personal agency. The

narrative, through its portrayal of this quiet rebellion against the crushing momentum of the city, champions the humanistic perspective that every individual possesses a fundamental requirement to secure internal peace. The protagonist's struggle is not depicted through grand, heroic actions, but through the profound, quiet effort to carve out a space for personal reflection and aesthetic appreciation. This validates the everyday psychological battles individuals wage against boredom and alienation, affirming that the pursuit of simple, personal joy is a highly significant and deeply human endeavor.

Empathy and Social Awareness

Despite the protagonist's initial self-identification as a highly introverted and isolated individual, the narrative trajectory demonstrates a significant evolution toward empathy and profound social awareness, facilitated heavily by her interactions at the park. The realization that her preconceived notions regarding men were flawed ("*Bertemu dengannya membuatku sadar kalau tidak semua laki-laki bermata keranjang*") highlights a crucial humanistic triumph: the active dismantling of internal prejudices and the willingness to perceive the authentic humanity of another person. Furthermore, her observation that the man remained engrossed in intellectual pursuits rather than superficially evaluating her physical appearance fosters a deep appreciation for substantive internal qualities over superficial traits. This evolving dynamic is further enriched by her experience of being heard; she frequently shares her frustrations with him, and his restrained, non-judgmental reception ("*Dan dia tidak banyak berkomentar*") exemplifies the highest form of empathetic listening. The narrative eloquently posits that true empathy does not necessarily require profound verbal problem-solving or explicit agreement; rather, it often manifests as a silent, validating presence that offers a safe emotional harbor. This interaction emphasizes the humanistic belief in the transformative power of genuine, attentive companionship and the profound healing that occurs when individuals simply hold space for one another's vulnerabilities.

Self-Acceptance and the Acknowledgment of Others

The culmination of the narrative's humanistic exploration is found in the dual processes of accepting one's internal emotional reality and embracing the uncontrollable variables introduced by the presence of others. The protagonist's gradual acceptance of her own loneliness,

despite her introverted nature ("*Ternyata perempuan introvert sepertiku juga bisa merasakan kesepian*"), signifies a critical dismantling of her psychological defenses. Acknowledging one's fundamental human need for connection is portrayed not as a weakness, but as a courageous act of self-honesty and vulnerability. This internal acceptance eventually radiates outward, allowing her to recognize that the beauty of the world is exponentially magnified when shared, as evidenced by her realization that the sunset appears most spectacular when reflected in her companion's eyes. This poetic observation symbolizes the humanistic ideal that individual perception is profoundly enriched through interpersonal connection. Ultimately, her concluding philosophical resolution that she must learn to accept the existence of others around her ("*Aku harus bisa menerima keberadaan orang lain di sekitarku*") serves as the definitive humanistic thesis of the text. It dictates that existential peace cannot be achieved through perpetual isolation or by enforcing rigid, impossible standards upon the world. Instead, true tranquility is forged through the humble acceptance of diversity, the tolerance of uncertainty, and the courageous willingness to remain open to the complex, often unpredictable beauty of human interaction.

Discussion

The analytical findings present compelling evidence that the metaphorical constructions within Muhamad Abi Fadila's *Laki-laki di Taman Senja* transcend mere stylistic embellishment, functioning instead as profound cognitive frameworks that articulate complex humanistic philosophies regarding contemporary urban existence. This observation aligns robustly with the foundational cognitive linguistic theories established by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), who posited that metaphors are inescapable mechanisms of everyday human cognition and conceptualization rather than isolated poetic anomalies. By analyzing the narrative through this theoretical lens, it becomes evident that the protagonist's deeply internalized psychological crises and her subsequent emotional evolution are directly mediated through concrete physical and environmental conceptual mappings. The thematic distribution illustrated previously in Table 1 explicitly demonstrates how the author relies on universally understood source domains, specifically those categorized by Kövecses (2010), to construct a highly accessible yet philosophically dense discourse on the individual's struggle for existential meaning. Consequently, the text proves that the structural architecture of language itself is inextricably linked to the

transmission of profound humanistic values, demanding a critical interpretation that bridges linguistic form with philosophical substance.

An examination of the bodily metaphors identified in the text reveals a sophisticated articulation of the humanistic concern for individual well-being amidst the alienating pressures of modern societal routines. When the protagonist conceptualizes her psychological distress through somatic descriptors, the narrative effectively maps abstract emotional trauma onto immediate physiological vulnerability (Tellez, 2018). This direct mapping corroborates the metaphorical taxonomy developed by Kövecses (2010), which identifies the human body as the most primary and intimate conceptual source domain. From a humanistic perspective, this linguistic strategy deeply validates the individual's internal struggle, framing mental exhaustion as a tangible ailment and advocating for a compassionate understanding of emotional endurance (Rosenberg, 2022). Transitioning from the internal anatomical landscape to the external natural environment, the text's deployment of flora and fauna metaphors provides a profound commentary on the humanistic values of empathy and social interdependence (Mandal et al., 2025). In C.S. Lewis's **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe**, he employs nature as a moral agent that influences human behavior and values. The narrative highlights the reciprocal relationship between humanity and the natural world, fostering ecological awareness and ethical reflection on human-nature interdependence (Salma et al., 2025).

In analyzing the symbiotic relationship between blooming flowers and foraging butterflies, the theoretical framework proposed by Pateda (2010) is highly instrumental. Pateda (2010) asserts that the unique structural power of a metaphor lies in its complete omission of explicit comparative conjunctions, forcing a direct cognitive fusion between the literal vehicle and the abstract tenor. Drawing upon Knowles and Moon (2006), who emphasize the absolute necessity of contextual interpretation, this biological metaphor is understood not merely as an observation of nature, but as a realization that human beings require mutual exchange to achieve emotional actualization.

The pervasive utilization of light and darkness metaphors, alongside spatial trajectories, further deepens the text's philosophical exploration of self-acceptance and the arduous journey toward psychological clarity. In Hermann Hesse's novels, light and darkness are used to symbolize the process of individuation, in which characters

confront their inner shadows to achieve self-integration. This is particularly evident in "Demian," where the protagonist's journey involves accepting light and shadow as essential parts of the self (Yang, 2025). Conversely, Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" uses this metaphor to depict his character's psychological and moral descent. The journey into the African interior symbolizes a deeper exploration into the raw core of human nature, where social norms break down and primal instincts emerge (Dahal, 2025). Therefore, light is often viewed as a metaphor for consciousness, connecting metaphysical reality to human experience. This approach underscores the symbolic significance of light in understanding the human psyche (Aliana et al., 2025).

The cognitive mapping of darkness to represent despair, juxtaposed against light representing hope, is deeply embedded in human consciousness, a phenomenon thoroughly explored by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). The explicit encouragement within the narrative to search for residual light acknowledges that experiencing periods of profound existential doubt is a valid aspect of the human condition. Furthermore, metaphors that utilize spatial trajectories such as the determination to advance despite the impending rain, or the deep psychological longing to find a "home" illustrate the progressive nature of human development. Here, the concept of a destination is completely divorced from its literal architectural definition, as delineated by the analytical principles of Knowles and Moon (2006), becoming a non-literal target domain representing unconditional acceptance and psychological integration. The systematic integration of these distinct metaphorical domains, revealed through the rigorous content analysis methodology advocated by Krippendorff (2013), demonstrates that the linguistic texture of the narrative is meticulously engineered to evoke a deep empathetic response through structural resonance.

Conclusion

This study establishes that the short story *Laki-laki di Taman Senja* intricately employs cognitive metaphors to articulate the protagonist's psychological complexities and to convey profound humanistic philosophy. The analysis reveals that metaphorical source domains specifically the human body, animals and plants, light and darkness, alongside direction and movement function as essential cognitive

frameworks rather than mere stylistic embellishments. These tangible constructs effectively map the abstract emotional landscapes of urban alienation, existential fatigue, and the longing for interpersonal connection. Consequently, the primary finding is that the author systematically utilizes these linguistic structures to project core humanistic values: the inherent struggle for individual meaning amidst modern monotony, the transformative power of non-judgmental empathy, and the ultimate necessity of self-acceptance alongside the acknowledgment of others.

The implications of these findings suggest that figurative language serves as a critical bridge between internal emotional realities and external social dynamics, allowing readers to viscerally comprehend the abstract human condition. This research contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge by synthesizing cognitive linguistics specifically Kövecses' taxonomy with literary criticism, demonstrating that structural linguistic analysis can objectively decode complex philosophical themes within contemporary Indonesian literature. By moving beyond traditional stylistic categorization, this integrated approach provides a deeper understanding of how modern narratives construct meaning. Future research should expand upon this framework by conducting comparative analyses of cognitive metaphors across diverse genres of Indonesian fiction, or by investigating how rapidly changing urban environments continually influence the evolution of metaphorical source domains in contemporary literary discourse.

References

Journals

Aliana, C. R., Rizal, S., Firdaus, & Soraya. (2025). Cahaya sebagai metafora kesadaran: Integrasi pemikiran iluminasi Suhrawardi dan psikologi modern. *Psikoislamedia, 10*(2), 77–89. https://doi.org/10.22373/psikoislamedia.v10i2.31741

Calderón, J. R., Forero, A., & Gutierrez, G. (2025). El hombre en busca de sí mismo: La subjetividad como pregunta narrativa. *Ciencia Latina, 9*(3), 7783–7799. https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v9i3.18399

Dahal, T. K. (2025). Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness: An exploration of human interiority. *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences, 3*(3), 1280–1293. https://doi.org/10.58578/ijhess.v3i3.7490

Denham, A. E. (2024). *Empathy & literature*. Emotion Review.

https://doi.org/10.1177/17540739241233601

Mandal, G., & Joshi, B. (2025). Literacy echoes on human-animal coexistence in the works of Ruskin Bond: An ecological perspective. *Review Journal of Philosophy & Social Science, 50*(2), 346–353. https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2025.v50i02.04

Newby, D. R. (2025). Vulnerable earth: The literature of climate crisis. *Modern Philology*, E000. https://doi.org/10.1086/737710

Rosenberg, R. D. (2022). The body as metaphor. *Journal of Romance Studies*, 22(4), 483–501. https://doi.org/10.3828/jrs.2022.27

Salma, S., & Haryanti, R. P. (2025). Human-nature reciprocity in C.S. Lewis's The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: An ecocritical analysis. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature, 6*(2), 415–431. https://doi.org/10.56185/jelita.v6i2.978

Téllez, S. A.-R. (2018). Talking bodies: Sexual abuse, language, illness and dissociation in Camilla Gibb's Mouthing the Words. *Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies, 40*(1), 117–133. https://doi.org/10.28914/ATLANTIS-2018.40.1.117-133

Winiyanti, T., Suprihatin, D., & Suntoko, S. (2025). Analisis psikologi tokoh pada novel Debu dalam Angin karya Pratiwi Juliani (dengan menggunakan pendekatan psikologi) sastra dan pemanfaatannya sebagai bahan ajar di SMA. *EduInovasi, 5*(3). https://doi.org/10.47467/edu.v5i3.9399

Books

Knowles, M., & Moon, R. (2006). *Introducing metaphor*. Routledge.

Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor*. Oxford University Press.

Krippendorff, K. H. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology (3rd ed.)*. SAGE Publications.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.

Pateda, M. (2010). *Semantik leksikal*. PT Asdimahasatya.

Proceedings

Yang, F. (2025). An exploration of philosophical thought and internal symbolism in the works of Hermann Hesse. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 222, Article 05015. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202522205015

Online Sources

Fadila, M. A. (2024, August 27). *Laki-laki di taman senja*. Kompas Muda. https://muda.kompas.id/baca/2024/08/27/laki-laki-di-taman-senja

Houassi, O. (2023, July 12). *The portrayal of alienation and existential crisis in modern literature*. SSRN. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5009029