
Analysis of the Use of Figurative Language in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the types of figurative language and connotative meanings contained in four Taylor Swift songs, "Blank Space," "Love Story," "All Too Well," and "Cardigan." This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with documentation techniques that involve reading the lyrics as a whole, recording parts that contain figurative language, and analyzing them from the perspective of stylistic theory and connotative meaning. The research findings show that Taylor Swift consistently uses a variety of language styles, such as metaphors, similes, personifications, hyperbole, symbolism, and allusions. The use of figurative language serves to reinforce the emotional and aesthetic messages of the lyrics, especially those related to themes of love, inner conflict, nostalgia, and the healing process. Thus, language style is an important element that enriches the conveyance of meaning in Taylor Swift's musical works.

Keywords: Figurative Language, Taylor Swift, Song Lyrics.

INTRODUCTION

Language does not only function as a means of communication. But also as a medium of expression of human feelings, thoughts and fantasies. In literary works, including song lyrics, language is used in a unique way to express meaning in a more aesthetic and profound way. Language is one of the media to convey information. By using good language, it allows the information or message that will be conveyed to the audience, readers or listeners to be well received. In the process, the use of language often uses various language styles, one of which is figurative language style (Faisal, & Gusthini. 2024). Figurative language or figurative language is one of the linguistic elements that are often found in literary works, which are used to

express meaning indirectly. Rather, it uses the meaning of comparison or symbols to emphasize the message to be conveyed. The style of figurative language has the function of making writing more interesting and imaginative, and the message to be conveyed can be expressed clearly (Fatim, & Apriliani. 2025)

Song lyrics can be seen as a form of modern poetry because it has elements of language beauty and deep meaning. Taylor Swift is one of the singers and songwriters who has the expertise of writing poetic and emotional lyrics. He often uses metaphors, similes, personifications and other language styles to convey or express personal stories and complex and deep emotions, making the writer interested in analyzing the lyrics of his songs in terms of their figurative language.

This research focuses on four Taylor Swift songs, namely "Love Story", "Blank Space", "All Too Well", and "Cardigan". It is hoped that the analysis of the lyrics of this song can help in understanding how figurative language is used to express emotional messages as well as connotative meanings in musical works.

Previous research conducted by Layalia, & Anshory (2023) in the journal The Direction of Cultural Literature with the title "Analysis of the Meaning of Figurative Language in Taylor Swift's Anti-Hero Song Lyrics" has shown that the use of figurative language in the lyrics of the song plays a very important role in expressing feelings and creating the emotional atmosphere of the song. This shows that figurative language not only beautifies language, but also deepens its meaning or meaning. Therefore, this study becomes relevant to further analyze the types and benefits and functions of figurative language in Taylor Swift's other works.

Based on this background, the main problem of this study is how four Taylor Swift songs use figurative language, as well as the connotative meanings resulting from the use of these language styles. The purpose of this study is to find the types of figurative language that exist in the lyrics of the songs Blank space , All too well, Love story and Cardigan, and also to explain the connotative meanings that result from each language style.

METHOD

This study applies a qualitative descriptive method with the aim of describing and analyzing in depth the use of figurative language contained in Taylor Swift's song lyrics.

According to Creswell, qualitative research is a method used to understand various problems related to humans and their social environment, with the aim of producing a complete and in-depth

picture. The results of this research are then presented in the form of detailed word descriptions based on data from reliable sources (Roosinda, 2021).

The data sources presented in this study include primary data, namely from the lyrics of Taylor Swift's songs that are the object of analysis, including the songs Love story, Blank space , All too well, and Cardigan. As well as secondary data from several previous journals that discuss figurative language in literary works, such as those in the research of Isabillah and Hikam (2025) and Yunos and Frncis (2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study is in the form of song lyrics by Taylor Swift that contain figurative language. The four songs that were used as the object of research were "Blank space ", "Love story", "All too well", and "Cardigan". The selection of these four songs was made because each song has strong emotional power in conveying meaning through lyrics. Each song presents a different phase and character of Taylor Swift's writing, from the hopeful teenage love story in "Love story" to the emotional maturity and self-reflection in "All too well" and "Cardigan." Thus, the four songs are considered worthy of analysis because they show the variety of uses of rich and diverse figurative language in expressing emotions and connotative meanings in the lyrics.

In the lyrics of her song, Taylor Swift uses several figurative languages including metaphor, irony, simile, personification, hyperbole, allusions, symbolism, and imagery

1. Song "Blank Space"

The lyrics of the song "Blank Space" contain various uses of figurative language that function to express innuendo, emotions, and images of excessive love and the singer's self-image in the media.

There are several types of language styles found including metaphors, hyperbole, irony, similes, persimism, and symbolism

Metaphors are seen in the lyrics "Love's a game, want to play?" which describes love as a game full of risks, as well as in the lyrics "I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream" which illustrates the contrast between charm and danger that exists in the singer, a woman who is so ideal but dangerous in a romantic relationship

On the lyrics "got a long list of ex-lovers" dramatically increase the number of ex-lovers, and "it'll leave you breathless, or with a nasty scar" describe the consequences of a very strong relationship that feels like a physical injury or difficulty breathing. These expressions transcend reality to evoke stronger feelings and

affirm how intense the experience is in the lyrics of the song. The language is a hallmark of hyperbole.

Lyrics "you look like my next mistake", and "boys only want love if it's torture" is an example of figurative language of irony. This irony shows the incompatibility of meaning where the expression is meant to satirize the cycle of love that is actually detrimental and brings pain or suffering, even though love is expected to bring happiness. So, these lyrics express something that goes against expectations subtly through the use of words that have opposite meanings.

"Rumors fly" gives the nature and actions of humans or living beings to inanimate objects or abstract concepts. These lyrics contain figurative language called personification. In this context, "Rumors" It is depicted as if it can fly like a human or a living thing, whereas rumors are something abstract and have no physical ability to move.

on the lyrics "Cherry Lips, Crystal Skies" Not only does it depict something literally, but it also contains symbolism. This symbolism reinforces the aesthetic and emotional messages conveyed through the lyrics, creating a powerful visual image and a deep mood.

Connotatively, the song "Blank Space" does satirize the image of Taylor Swift who is often perceived by the public as a woman who changes partners. However, through the use of figurative language, Taylor Swift actually turns the stigma into a form of self-empowerment and narrative control over her public image.

2. Song "Love Story"

Taylor Swift's song "Love Story" depicts a love story full of obstacles by adapting the classic story of Romeo and Juliet. The lyrics of this song are rich in different types of figurative language that reinforce the message and emotions in the narrative.

"you were romeo, I was a scarlet letter" and "you'll be the prince and I'll be the princess" The two lines of the song's lyrics are examples of powerful metaphors, depicting perfect love like in a fairy tale. The allusion is evident through the mention of the characters "Romeo" and "Juliet" which refer to

in Shakespeare's work, providing strong cultural references in the lyrics.

"I was crying on the staircase, begging you 'please don't go'" dramatically describes despair. This exaggerated expression is not meant literally, but rather to reinforce the emotional impression, the figurative language contained is hyperbole.

"see the lights, see the party, the ball gowns" lyrics that create a visual, auditory or other sensation for the reader or listener so that they can imagine the atmosphere or object being depicted. In these lyrics, there is a figurative language of imagery that enlivens the atmosphere of parties and romanticism.

"White dress" symbolizes the purity of marriage, and "balcony" is a symbol of distance and limitations in relationships. In these lyrics there is a figurative language of symbolism, the use of symbols or symbols to represent a certain idea or broader meaning.

The connotative meaning of this song shows the hope of true love that can endure even when facing various obstacles.

3. The Song "All Too Well"

In this song there are several figurative languages such as metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism and imagery that depict deep and wounded memories of love

"autumn leaves falling down like peaces into place", "time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it" and "you call me up again just to break me like a promise" show an explicit comparison between falling autumn leaves and neatly arranged pieces, a time that feels slow and a state of growth that seems paralyzed, and depicts the pain of betrayal. It was as if he was destroyed like someone broke a promise. This expression fulfills the characteristics of majas simile by connecting two different things to give a stronger and more precise picture.

"Time Won't Fly" where time is depicted as a human who refuses to move, symbolizing deep sadness. These characteristics are personified majas that give human nature and behavior to inanimate objects or abstract concepts.

The "scarf" symbolizes memories and the emotional bond between two individuals. And "autumn leaves" become a symbol of change and the end marker of a story or phase in a relationship. The lyrics use a combination of symbolism to convey a deeper meaning and strengthen the emotional nuances in the lyrics of the song, so that the listener can feel the implied message.

"We're Dancing 'Round the Kitchen in the Refrigerator Light' This lyric uses Majas Imajeri which creates an intimate and emotional visual image, as if the listener can see the atmosphere depicted and feel the moment, as well as evoke feelings of nostalgia or emotional closeness.

4. Song "Cardigan"

The song "Cardigan" accentuates the melancholy atmosphere by incorporating various types of figurative language such as

metaphors, similes, personifications, allusions, hyperbole and symbolism

"I felt like I was an old cardigan under someone's bed" symbolizes the feeling of being forgotten and neglected, like an old thing being hidden and forgotten. In addition, in the lyrics "you drew stars around my scars", the lyrics use a metaphorical majas that describe the process of emotional healing where the inner wound which is likened to a scar surrounded by a star, signifies hope and recovery. The lyrics are categorized in the form of a metaphor because they contain two things that are directly compared as if they are the same as the comparator (Sinabutar et al., 2019)

"You'd linger like a tattoo kiss" and "Leavin' like a father, runnin' like water" these two phrases compare memories and departures to things that have certain characteristics. "Tattoo kiss" depicts something that leaves a permanent mark that is hard to erase, like memories that stick with it. While "leavin' like a father, runnin' like water" describes the inevitable departure and keeps flowing, like water that is hard to stop. Therefore, the use of the connecting word "like" in these two sentences shows the existence of an explicit comparison that is the main characteristic of the simile majas. The characteristics of the simile language style can be seen from the use of conjunctions such as, like, as, bak, like, etc. (Wahyudi et al., 2025)

"The Smell of Smoke Would Hang Around This Long" describes the smell of smoke that is given the ability to last and stick for a long time like memories that are difficult to remove. This phrase gives the impression that the memories in the relationship remain, even though time has passed. These lyrics use personified majas to reinforce the melancholy nuances and depth of feelings conveyed through the song.

"Peter losing wendy" in the lyrics of Cardigan's song refers to the story of Peter Pan who refuses to grow up and ends up losing Wendy. This lyric is a mishmash of allusion because it indirectly refers to the story of Peter Pan and Wendy which is widely known in popular culture.

"Once in Twenty Lifetimes" is an example of hyperbole because it uses exaggerated statements to emphasize how rare and precious a relationship is. The use of hyperbole like this aims to have a dramatic effect so that the listener feels a very strong depth of feeling so that it makes the relationship look unique.

"Old cardigan" is a symbol of comfort and stored warm memories, such as old items that still have emotional value even though they are forgotten. The lyrics of "stars" become a symbol of

hope and an ongoing healing process, while "smoke" becomes a symbol of past memories that are difficult to remove, like smoke that is faint but still felt. The lyrics of this song use symbolism to enrich the meaning of the song with deep emotional nuances and connect personal feelings with a more universal and easily understood image.

The connotative meaning in the lyrics of the song "Cardigan" tells about a childhood love experience full of wounds and bitter memories. This song describes the feelings of someone who is considered naïve and inunderstood by others because they are young, but go through deep emotional experiences, including feelings of betrayal and abandonment.

The use of figurative language in Taylor Swift's lyrics not only serves to add to the aesthetic power of language, but also expands the capabilities in emotional society and complicated stories in a more powerful way. Instead of expressing emotions directly, Taylor uses metaphors, hyperbole, similes, allusions, personifications, symbolism and imagery. Through a creative approach, the lyrics have deep artistic value and are still able to establish an emotional closeness with listeners from various backgrounds. This creative approach makes the song have a strong emotional impact and affirms the important role of figurative language in bridging personal expression with a wider audience (Sulistyawati, 2025)

Metaphor

According to keraf (2009, cited in Wahyudi et al, 2025) the metaphorical language style belongs to the category of analogue language styles that compare two things directly, but are presented briefly and concisely. In general, this style of language uses words or a series of words that are different from their literal meaning. Therefore, metaphor acts as a form of figurative expression that can add to the beauty of language and leave a deep impression on the reader.

Personification

In general, the style of personification language is characterized by the imparting of human qualities to inanimate objects, so that the object seems to have life or the ability to act like a human being. This is done to clarify the picture, beautify the language, and arouse the imagination and emotions of readers or listeners (Isabillah, Hikam, 2025). Through this equalization, inanimate objects appear alive and play an active role in the context

of language. With this majas, it allows singers to express emotions indirectly and enrich the listener's interpretation.

Hyperbole

Hyperbolic majas is a style of language used to express something excessively from the actual situation. Mirza and Dita (2022) explain that, as stated by Keraf (1981), hyperbolic majas are used to highlight meaning by exaggerating reality to provide a strong emphasizing effect. The main goal is to provide an affirmation or create a stronger dramatic effect on the message you want to convey to the reader or listener.

Simile

Majas simile is a form of language style that contains elements of comparison between two different things by placing them in an equal position through the process of equalization and excessive affirmation of meaning (Hakim et al., 2020). The style of simile language makes expressions more vivid and beautiful through an interesting comparison between two different things. For example, in songs, similes are useful to reinforce emotional and visual impressions in listeners.

Irony

In the study of stylistics, irony is a form of language style that expresses something with a meaning that is contrary to its true meaning. This majas is usually used to provide innuendo, convey criticism, or affirm something in a subtle and indirect way (Putri, 2025). The use of irony shows the songwriter's skill in processing meaning, so that the lyrics produced feel sharper, reflective, and have a strong artistic appeal.

Alusi

An allusion is a form of language style that indirectly refers to a certain person, place, or event. (Haedariah, 2023). Allusions are often used to emphasize certain messages or values by taking symbolic meanings from characters or events that are indirectly alluded to. The use of allusions adds to the beauty of language by presenting a multi-layered meaning that is open to various interpretations, so that the work becomes more in-depth and interesting to study.

Symbolism

Majas symbolism is a style of language that describes a meaning through the use of certain symbols or symbols. According to Tjahjono Widarmanto (2018, quoted in Pangestika, 2025), symbolism is a majas that uses certain words or names to represent the meaning of something or other circumstances beyond its literal meaning. Through the use of concrete and easy-to-understand

symbols, majas symbolism allows authors to express ideas or feelings that are abstract, such as love, sadness or death.

Imagery

In a broader scope, imagery includes the use of language to describe objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, mental states, as well as various sensory and extra-sensory experiences in a way that presents all of them. (Paudyal, 2023). Through the use of words that evoke the five senses, imagery makes readers or listeners able to imagine, hear, feel, and even smell what is depicted, thus making literary works seem more lively and realistic.

In the study by Layalia & Anshory (2023) that managed to identify the types of language styles with in-depth contextual analysis, this study has limitations in a narrow range (one song), a lack of comparisons in various phases of Swift's career, and also a lack of discussion on theoretical and practical implications. Instead, this study addresses these shortcomings with a comprehensive analysis of the four songs that represent the evolution of Swift's style, identification of more diverse types of language styles, and a description of connotative meanings that have theoretical and practical implications.

Previous research conducted by Aziz and Yuwita in (2023) showed that figurative language plays a role in expressing heartbreak through description. However, their study only focused on the theme of heartbreak and did not include a complete classification. In addition, the study lacks theoretical and practical implications and does not include an analysis of the development of Taylor Swift's writing style. This research is here to complement these shortcomings by analyzing four songs that represent Taylor Swift's career stages more comprehensively. This research also introduces different types of figurative language, explains connotative meanings, and provides useful suggestions for teaching literacy and developing creativity in music.

The findings of this study have several important meanings both in theory and practice in the field of language and literature. In terms of theory, the results show that song lyrics can be an appropriate stylistic study material because they contain poetic elements, symbols, and rhetoric that are equivalent to other literary texts. This strengthens the position of song lyrics in modern linguistic studies because the popular text is a rich medium of language and deserves to be analyzed using stylistic theory and connotative semantics.

This research confirms that understanding figurative language is very important in interpreting meaning. In Taylor Swift's

lyrics, the use of metaphors, similes, allusions, personifications, and symbolism suggests that these elements create a deeper meaning compared to ordinary language. Based on this conclusion, understanding the text requires knowledge of the rhetorical elements and the implicit meanings in them. These findings are also in line with the development of critical reading theory. Therefore, this study reinforces the role of cognitive linguistics and stylistics as a method for analyzing literary works and popular texts.

Practically, this research opens up opportunities to apply the results of figurative language analysis in the world of education, especially in teaching literary literacy, appreciating creative works, and analyzing texts. Understanding that figurative language is able to build emotional and aesthetic images can help teachers design learning programs that improve students' ability to understand and think critically. In addition, this research is also beneficial for songwriters, creators, and creative writers who want to produce stronger emotional effects by using the right language style.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of four Taylor Swift songs, namely Blank space , Love story, All too well, and Cardigan It shows that language style is crucial in creating emotional meaning, aesthetic value, and lyrical depth. Taylor Swift often uses language styles such as metaphors, similes, personifications, hyperbole, allusions, symbolism, and imagery to portray emotions such as nostalgia, inner conflict, and complicated relationships. These results are in line with Layalia & Anshory (2023), which emphasizes that figurative language enhances emotional nuances in Taylor Swift songs. They are also in line with Wahyudi et al. (2025), who stated that language style has an aesthetic effect in addition to clarifying meaning.

In particular, the song All too well uses similes and imagery to evoke a sense of nostalgia. The song Love story uses metaphors and allusions to describe romance like in a fairy tale. Blank space highlights the criticism of self-image that appears in the media. Meanwhile, Cardigan uses metaphors and symbolism to explain the dynamics of love in adolescence.

The connotative meaning of these four songs describes an emotional journey filled with pain, disappointment, hope, and an attempt to heal. Therefore, it can be concluded that language style is an important component that enhances and intensifies the meaning of Taylor Swift's lyrics.

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