

The Figurative Language found in Taylor Swift's Song in the Folklore Album

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the use of figurative expressions in selected songs from Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album. It focuses on identifying and interpreting the various literary devices found in six songs: *Cardigan*, *The 1*, *Mirrorball*, *My Tears Ricochet*, *The Last Great American Dynasty*, and *Invisible String*. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, using the song lyrics as the primary data source. Data were collected through documentation from official lyric sources and analyzed by identifying, classifying, and interpreting the rhetorical devices based on relevant literary and linguistic theories. The findings reveal the presence of several types of figurative expression, including metaphor, hyperbole, personification, symbolism, simile, and irony. Among these, metaphor is the most dominant, reflecting emotions, memories, relationships, and life experiences through symbolic imagery. Hyperbole and personification are also frequently employed to intensify emotional expression and create vivid mental images, while symbolism, simile, and irony enrich the depth of meaning and narrative complexity of the lyrics. Overall, these literary devices play a significant role in enhancing the album's aesthetic quality, emotional resonance, and storytelling. The findings demonstrate that contemporary song lyrics can be examined as literary texts and provide valuable insights into the creative use of language in modern music.

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INTRODUCTION

This Music is one of the most influential and widely consumed forms of artistic expression in human life. Beyond functioning as entertainment, music also serves as a powerful medium for communicating emotions, experiences, and social messages (Deviani & Hendar, 2024). Within a song, lyrics play a crucial role because they become the primary channel through which songwriters convey ideas, feelings, and stories to listeners. To make these messages more vivid and meaningful, songwriters often employ various stylistic devices, including figurative language. Figurative language allows writers to express ideas indirectly through comparisons, imagery, and symbolic expressions, which enrich the emotional and artistic value of the lyrics. As a result, listeners are not only hearing words but also experiencing deeper emotional and imaginative meanings embedded within the song (Rohmiyati et al., 2023).

In linguistic and literary studies, figurative language refers to the use of words or expressions that go beyond their literal meanings. Instead of communicating ideas directly, figurative expressions rely on comparisons, exaggerations, or symbolic meanings to create deeper interpretations. Common types of figurative language include metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, and irony (Sandjaja & Afriana, 2025). These devices help writers present complex emotions and abstract ideas in a more creative and expressive way. In song lyrics, figurative language is particularly important because it helps transform

simple statements into poetic expressions that resonate emotionally with the audience. Through figurative expressions, listeners can visualize situations, feel the intensity of emotions, and connect more deeply with the narrative presented in the song.

Among various types of figurative language, metaphor is considered one of the most powerful stylistic devices in song lyrics because it does not merely decorate the language but transforms abstract feelings into tangible and relatable images. Through metaphorical expressions, songwriters are able to express complex emotions in ways that are vivid, imaginative, and meaningful for listeners. Consequently, metaphors help bridge the personal experiences of the songwriter with the audience's interpretation, allowing songs to communicate emotional and cultural meanings more effectively (Nathania Priskila Maharani et al., 2025).

In the modern music industry, many artists are recognized not only for their vocal abilities but also for the depth and creativity of their songwriting (Nasution et al., 2025). One of the most prominent artists known for her strong lyrical storytelling is Taylor Swift. Throughout her career, she has gained international recognition for her ability to craft detailed narratives and emotionally rich lyrics. Her songs often explore themes such as love, heartbreak, personal growth, and life experiences. What makes her songwriting particularly notable is the frequent use of figurative language to illustrate these themes. By using metaphors, symbolism, and vivid imagery, Swift is able to transform personal experiences into universally relatable stories that resonate with a wide audience.

The uniqueness of Taylor Swift's songwriting lies in her ability to build emotional narratives through imaginative and symbolic language. Many of her songs use objects, colors, seasons, or situations as metaphors to represent feelings and experiences. For instance, certain elements such as rain, fire, or specific colors are often used symbolically to represent emotional states or stages of relationships. This narrative technique allows listeners to interpret the meaning of a song in multiple ways depending on their own personal experiences. As a result, her music creates a strong emotional connection with listeners because the figurative language invites them to engage with the lyrics on a deeper interpretative level (Deviani & Hendar, 2024).

Recent studies have increasingly examined figurative language in contemporary song lyrics, highlighting its role in conveying emotions, constructing narrative meaning, and enriching listeners' interpretation of musical texts. Studies of Taylor Swift's songs have shown that metaphors, symbols, personification, hyperbole, simile, irony, and other figurative devices are frequently employed to express complex emotions, convey messages, and enhance the meaning of song lyrics (Gustsa & Laili, 2022; Taufik & Cahyati, 2022). Other researchers have similarly demonstrated that figurative language contributes to the literary and stylistic qualities of song lyrics by creating deeper meanings and encouraging listeners to interpret the lyrics beyond their literal meanings (Dewi, 2024; Nasution et al., 2025). However, most previous studies have focused on identifying individual types of figurative language in popular songs or examining selected songs, with relatively limited attention given to the integrated use of multiple literary devices in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album, particularly in relation to their functions in meaning construction, emotional expression, and storytelling. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the types and functions of figurative expressions in selected songs from *Folklore* to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how literary devices contribute to meaning construction, emotional expression, and storytelling in contemporary music.

Furthermore, the global popularity of Taylor Swift has made her work an interesting subject for linguistic and literary analysis. Researchers and scholars have studied her lyrics to understand how figurative language contributes to storytelling and emotional expression in popular music. Analyzing figurative language in song lyrics can reveal how specific linguistic devices are used to shape meaning, evoke imagery, and intensify emotional impact. Studies of *Folklore* have demonstrated that figurative language not only enriches the artistic quality of the lyrics but also helps convey deeper messages and emotional experiences. In this context, song lyrics are no longer seen merely as entertainment but also as meaningful texts worthy of

academic exploration. Based on these considerations, examining figurative language in the songs of Taylor Swift becomes an interesting and valuable topic for study. This research aims to describe how different types of figurative language are used in her lyrics and how these stylistic devices contribute to the emotional depth and narrative quality of her songs.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the use of figurative language in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to identify and interpret the meanings of figurative expressions embedded in the song lyrics rather than to measure them quantitatively. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring meanings, interpretations, and textual phenomena within their contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research focused on textual analysis, treating song lyrics as literary texts that could be examined from linguistic and stylistic perspectives. Six songs, namely *Cardigan*, *the 1*, *Mirrorball*, *My Tears Ricochet*, *The Last Great American Dynasty*, and *Invisible String*, were selected through purposive sampling because they contain rich examples of figurative expressions and are recognized for their narrative and poetic characteristics. Purposive sampling allows researchers to deliberately select data sources that are considered relevant and information-rich for the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The primary data consisted of the official lyrics of the selected songs obtained from verified lyric sources and official album publications. Data were collected using documentation techniques, as the study relied exclusively on textual materials and did not involve human participants. Documentation is an appropriate qualitative data collection technique when researchers analyze existing textual or documentary materials relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Bowen, 2009). The researcher served as the primary research instrument by identifying, recording, and organizing the figurative expressions found in the lyrics. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the identified expressions were continuously compared with the theoretical definitions of figurative language proposed in literary and linguistic studies. Such systematic comparison is important in qualitative research because it helps establish consistency between the interpretation of data and the theoretical framework guiding the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The data analysis followed an interactive qualitative analysis process consisting of data reduction, coding, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, the researcher carefully read the lyrics several times and selected words, phrases, and lines containing figurative expressions that were relevant to the research objectives. Each expression was then assigned a code according to its type, such as metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, or irony. Coding enables qualitative researchers to organize textual data systematically and identify meaningful patterns within a dataset (Saldaña, 2021). After coding, similar expressions were grouped into categories based on established theories of figurative language, enabling systematic identification of recurring patterns across the selected songs.

In the final stage, each categorized expression was interpreted by considering both its literal and contextual meanings within the narrative of the song. The researcher analyzed how each figurative expression contributed to emotional expression, imagery, characterization, and storytelling while comparing patterns across the six songs to identify the dominant stylistic features. The interpreted data were then synthesized into broader themes and presented descriptively to explain how figurative language enhances the aesthetic quality and narrative depth of Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album. This interpretive process is consistent with qualitative analysis, in which researchers move beyond description to develop meanings and patterns from the collected textual data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes figurative language found in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift, which was released in 2020. The album is widely recognized for its storytelling style and poetic lyrics that contain rich figurative expressions. In this research, six songs are selected as the main data sources because they demonstrate various types of figurative language such as metaphor, simile, symbolism, hyperbole, irony, and personification. The songs analyzed in this study are *Cardigan*, *The 1*, *Mirrorball*, *My Tears Ricochet*, *The Last Great American Dynasty*, and *Invisible String*. These songs are chosen because their lyrics contain strong imagery and figurative expressions that illustrate emotions, memories, and life experiences. Therefore, analyzing these songs helps reveal how figurative language is used to convey deeper meanings and emotional narratives within the album.

The analysis of six selected songs from Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album identified fifteen instances of figurative language, consisting of metaphor, simile, hyperbole, symbolism, personification, and irony. The figurative expressions were found in the songs *Cardigan*, *The 1*, *Mirrorball*, *My Tears Ricochet*, *The Last Great American Dynasty*, and *Invisible String*. Among these types, metaphor appeared most frequently, indicating Taylor Swift's tendency to express emotions, memories, and interpersonal relationships through symbolic imagery.

In *Cardigan*, four figurative expressions were identified. The lyric "When I felt like I was an old cardigan under someone's bed" represents both simile and symbolism, comparing the speaker to an old cardigan to illustrate feelings of neglect and emotional abandonment. Another simile appears in "I knew you'd linger like a tattoo kiss," where memories of love are compared to a permanent tattoo, emphasizing that emotional experiences remain deeply imprinted. In addition, the metaphor "Chasing shadows in the grocery line" symbolizes the speaker's longing for someone who is no longer present.

The song *The 1* contains two figurative expressions. The lyric "Roaring twenties, tossing pennies in the pool" functions as symbolism, representing youth, hope, and nostalgic memories, while "If my wishes came true, it would've been you" is categorized as hyperbole because it exaggerates the speaker's regret and longing for an unrealized relationship.

Three examples were identified in *Mirrorball*. The metaphor "I'm a mirrorball" portrays the speaker as someone who constantly reflects the expectations of others. Another metaphor, "I'm still on that tightrope," symbolizes the struggle to maintain emotional balance under pressure. Meanwhile, the hyperbolic expression "When I break it's in a million pieces" exaggerates the speaker's emotional vulnerability and fragility.

In *My Tears Ricochet*, two figurative expressions were identified. The hyperbole "You had to kill me, but it killed you just the same" exaggerates the emotional destruction caused by betrayal, whereas the metaphor "You can aim for my heart, go for blood" symbolizes severe emotional pain and conflict rather than physical violence.

The song *The Last Great American Dynasty* contains three types of figurative language. The expression "There goes the last great American dynasty" is categorized as hyperbole because it exaggerates the family's social reputation. The ironic statement "She had a marvelous time ruining everything" sarcastically criticizes society's tendency to blame the woman for every problem, while "Holiday House sat quietly on that beach" is an example of personification because the house is described as possessing human qualities.

Finally, *Invisible String* contains two figurative expressions. The phrase "Invisible string tying you to me" represents both metaphor and symbolism by describing fate as an unseen connection between two people. Additionally, "Time, curious time" is categorized as personification because it attributes human characteristics to the abstract concept of time.

Overall, the findings indicate that metaphor is the dominant figurative language in the selected songs, followed by hyperbole, symbolism, personification, simile, and irony. These figurative devices enable Taylor Swift to express complex emotions, construct vivid imagery, and strengthen the narrative quality of the *Folklore* album.

Metaphor in the Songs

Metaphor is one of the most dominant types of figurative language found in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things without using connecting words such as “like” or “as.” In literary and linguistic studies, metaphors are often used to convey abstract emotions or complex ideas through symbolic images that are easier to visualize. In song lyrics, metaphors function as an important stylistic device that allows the songwriter to present emotional experiences in a more poetic and imaginative way. Through metaphorical expressions, feelings such as love, heartbreak, nostalgia, and destiny can be communicated more effectively because listeners are invited to interpret the meaning behind the symbolic images used in the lyrics.

The album *Folklore* is particularly known for its narrative storytelling style and poetic lyricism, which includes extensive use of metaphorical language. In this album, metaphors are used not only to describe emotions but also to build narrative imagery that allows listeners to visualize the story behind each song. Rather than explaining feelings in a direct and literal manner, the songwriter frequently uses symbolic objects, actions, and situations to represent deeper emotional meanings. This technique strengthens the artistic quality of the songs and creates a layered interpretation in which the audience can find different meanings depending on their own personal experiences and perspectives.

One clear example of metaphor can be found in the song *Cardigan* through the lyric “*Chasing shadows in the grocery line.*” In this line, the speaker describes herself as “chasing shadows in the grocery line,” which is not meant to be taken literally. The “shadows” symbolize something that is intangible and impossible to grasp, such as fading memories, lost feelings, or someone who is no longer present. By using this metaphor, the songwriter illustrates the emotional experience of trying to hold on to something that is already gone, even in the middle of an ordinary daily activity like waiting in a grocery line. The contrast between the mundane setting and the act of “chasing shadows” effectively emphasizes how intrusive and persistent these lingering thoughts are, suggesting that the speaker is still emotionally occupied by something she cannot recover.

Metaphorical expressions are also found in the song *Mirrorball*, particularly in the lyric “*I'm a mirrorball.*” In this line, the speaker directly compares herself to a mirrorball, which is an object commonly found in dance halls that reflects light in many directions. This metaphor symbolizes a person who constantly reflects the expectations and emotions of others. Just as a mirrorball spins and reflects light to entertain people in a room, the speaker suggests that she continuously tries to adapt herself to meet the expectations of those around her. The metaphor highlights feelings of vulnerability and pressure, as the speaker feels responsible for maintaining attention and approval from others.

Another metaphor in the same song can be observed in the lyric “*I'm still on that tightrope.*” The image of walking on a tightrope symbolizes the difficult effort of maintaining balance under pressure. In a literal sense, walking on a tightrope requires extreme concentration and careful movement because one small mistake can lead to falling. When used metaphorically in the song, the tightrope represents the emotional challenge of trying to keep relationships, personal identity, and public expectations balanced at the same time. Through this metaphor, the songwriter illustrates the ongoing struggle of trying to maintain stability while facing uncertainty and external pressure.

Metaphor is also strongly present in the song *My Tears Ricochet* through the lyric “*You can aim for my heart, go for blood.*” In this line, the speaker uses the imagery of being attacked physically — “aim for my heart” and “go for blood” — to express emotional vulnerability rather than literal violence. The “heart” symbolizes the speaker’s deepest emotions and feelings, while “blood” represents the most intense level of harm that can be inflicted. By using this metaphor, the songwriter illustrates the experience of being emotionally hurt in a relationship to such an extreme degree that it feels like a deliberate attack on one’s core being. The imagery of targeting the heart and going for blood effectively emphasizes the speaker’s willingness to endure deep emotional pain, suggesting both fragility and resilience in facing emotional conflict.

A powerful metaphor related to destiny and connection can be found in the song *Invisible String* through the lyric *"Invisible string tying you to me."* In this expression, the invisible string symbolizes an unseen force that connects two individuals across time and circumstances. The metaphor suggests that despite past relationships, mistakes, and unexpected life events, there has always been a hidden connection guiding the two people toward each other. The concept of an invisible string creates a visual image of fate or destiny, reinforcing the idea that certain relationships are meant to happen regardless of the obstacles encountered along the way.

The findings of this study indicate that metaphor is the most dominant figurative language used in the analyzed songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. This finding supports the view that metaphors in song lyrics function not merely as stylistic ornaments but as conceptual tools that enable artists to construct deeper layers of meaning and emotional expression within their narratives (Maharani et al., 2025). Metaphors are frequently used to represent emotional experiences, personal memories, and complex relationships through symbolic imagery. By transforming abstract feelings into visual and imaginative expressions, the songwriter creates lyrics that are both emotionally powerful and artistically meaningful. Therefore, the results of this analysis support previous studies which suggest that metaphor is one of the most commonly used figurative devices in contemporary song lyrics, particularly in works that emphasize storytelling and poetic expression.

Hyperbole in the Songs

Hyperbole is another important type of figurative language found in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. Hyperbole refers to the use of deliberate exaggeration to emphasize strong emotions, dramatic situations, or intense experiences. In literary works and song lyrics, hyperbole is not intended to be interpreted literally but rather to strengthen the emotional impact of a statement. Through exaggerated expressions, songwriters can highlight the depth of feelings such as heartbreak, disappointment, nostalgia, or longing. In the context of songwriting, hyperbole often functions as a stylistic device that intensifies the storytelling aspect of the lyrics, allowing listeners to better understand the emotional state of the speaker.

The songs in the album *Folklore* frequently use hyperbolic expressions to portray emotional conflicts and dramatic experiences. The storytelling style of the album includes many moments where feelings are described in extreme or exaggerated ways in order to emphasize the intensity of the narrative. Rather than describing situations in a neutral or literal manner, hyperbole allows the songwriter to amplify the emotional atmosphere within the songs. This technique makes the lyrics more expressive and helps listeners connect with the emotional depth of the story being told.

One example of hyperbole appears in the song *Mirrorball* in the lyric *"When I break it's in a million pieces."* This expression exaggerates the idea of emotional fragility by suggesting that when the speaker breaks, she shatters into "a million pieces." In reality, a person cannot literally break into millions of fragments, but the exaggeration emphasizes how deeply the speaker feels emotionally vulnerable. The lyric illustrates the pressure of constantly trying to meet expectations and the fear of emotional collapse when those expectations become overwhelming. Through this hyperbolic statement, the songwriter highlights the fragile emotional state experienced by the speaker.

Another hyperbolic expression can be observed in the song *My Tears Ricochet* in the lyric *"You had to kill me, but it killed you just the same."* In this line, the word "kill" is used as an exaggerated metaphorical expression to represent the emotional destruction caused by betrayal or conflict. The lyric does not refer to physical death but rather emphasizes the severity of emotional pain experienced by both individuals involved in the relationship. By exaggerating the emotional consequences, the songwriter communicates how deeply the betrayal has affected the speaker's feelings and identity.

Hyperbole is also present in the storytelling elements of the song *The Last Great American Dynasty*. One example can be found in the lyric *"There goes the last great American"*

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dynasty." This statement exaggerates the social reputation and dramatic legacy associated with the character in the story. The phrase "last great American dynasty" suggests a grand and powerful family legacy, even though the lyric primarily refers to a wealthy social figure. By exaggerating the status of the family, the songwriter emphasizes how society perceives the character as larger than life, surrounded by rumors, scandals, and public judgment.

Hyperbole can also be observed in the reflective tone of the song The 1. For example, the lyric "*If my wishes came true, it would've been you*" expresses an exaggerated emotional longing for a relationship that did not happen. While the statement is not literally impossible, it intensifies the sense of regret and nostalgia felt by the speaker. The hyperbolic tone emphasizes how strongly the speaker once believed that the relationship could have been meaningful. By presenting the emotion in an exaggerated manner, the lyric highlights the depth of the speaker's reflection on past possibilities.

Furthermore, hyperbolic expressions help create a dramatic emotional atmosphere throughout the songs. The exaggeration of emotions allows listeners to feel the intensity of the experiences described in the lyrics. Rather than presenting emotions in a restrained or subtle manner, hyperbole amplifies the emotional message of the song and makes the storytelling more engaging. This technique is particularly effective in music because listeners often respond strongly to vivid and emotionally charged expressions.

The findings of this study indicate that hyperbole plays a significant role in emphasizing emotional intensity in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. The use of exaggerated language helps illustrate feelings of vulnerability, regret, betrayal, and social judgment within the narratives of the songs. By exaggerating certain expressions, the songwriter is able to highlight the emotional depth of the experiences being described. Therefore, the results of this analysis support previous studies which state that hyperbole is commonly used in song lyrics to intensify emotional expression and strengthen the dramatic impact of storytelling.

Personification in the Songs

Personification is another type of figurative language identified in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. Personification refers to the literary device in which non-human objects, abstract ideas, or natural elements are given human characteristics or abilities. This figurative expression allows songwriters to describe emotions, situations, or environments in a more vivid and imaginative way. By giving human qualities to objects or concepts, the songwriter can create a stronger emotional connection between the narrative of the song and the listener. In many poetic lyrics, personification is often used to represent emotional states, the passage of time, or the atmosphere surrounding certain events.

One example of personification appears in the song *Invisible String* in the lyric "*Time, curious time.*" In this expression, time is described as if it has human curiosity. In reality, time is an abstract concept that does not possess human traits or emotions. However, by portraying time as "curious," the songwriter suggests that time plays an active role in shaping life events and relationships. The lyric implies that time slowly reveals connections and experiences that may not have been understood in the past. Through this personification, the song presents time as something dynamic and influential in guiding the speaker's life journey.

Another example can be found in the song *The Last Great American Dynasty* in the lyric "*Holiday House sat quietly on that beach.*" In this line, the house is described as if it has the ability to sit quietly like a human being. Houses, as physical objects, cannot literally sit or behave silently like people. This personification emphasizes the sense of stillness and emptiness after the dramatic events associated with the house have passed. The lyric symbolically portrays the house as a silent witness to the stories and memories that occurred there. By giving the house human-like qualities, the songwriter strengthens the narrative atmosphere and highlights the historical significance of the place.

Personification can also be indirectly observed in the way abstract experiences and environments are described throughout the songs. For instance, in several lines within *Folklore*, emotions and memories appear to act almost like living entities that influence the

speaker's thoughts and actions. These expressions contribute to the storytelling style that characterizes the album. By animating non-human elements, the songwriter creates imagery that helps listeners imagine emotional experiences more clearly. As a result, personification becomes an effective stylistic tool that enhances the poetic quality of the lyrics.

The presence of personification in these songs demonstrates how non-human elements are creatively transformed into expressive narrative devices. Through this figurative language, abstract concepts such as time, memory, and place appear more vivid and meaningful within the song lyrics. The use of personification enriches the storytelling aspect of the songs and allows listeners to interpret emotional experiences in a more imaginative way. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that personification plays a significant role in strengthening imagery and narrative depth in the lyrics of Taylor Swift, and these findings are consistent with previous research which states that personification is frequently used in poetic song lyrics to create stronger emotional and descriptive effects.

Symbolism in the Songs

Symbolism is another important type of figurative language found in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. Symbolism refers to the use of objects, colors, actions, or situations that represent deeper meanings beyond their literal sense. In song lyrics, symbolism allows the songwriter to express complex emotions and ideas through simple images that carry broader interpretations. Rather than explaining emotions directly, the songwriter uses symbolic elements to represent experiences such as love, destiny, memory, and personal growth. This technique makes the lyrics more poetic and allows listeners to interpret the meaning in different ways depending on their own perspectives and experiences.

One example of symbolism appears in the song *Invisible String* in the lyric *"Invisible string tying you to me."* In this line, the *"invisible string"* symbolizes destiny or fate that connects two people across time and different life experiences. The string itself cannot literally be seen, but it represents the unseen forces that guide relationships and life events. The lyric suggests that despite past relationships, mistakes, or unexpected circumstances, there was always a connection that eventually led the two individuals to each other. Through this symbolism, the songwriter portrays love as something guided by fate rather than coincidence.

Another symbolic element can be found in the song *Cardigan* through the image of the *"cardigan"* itself. In the lyric *"When I felt like I was an old cardigan under someone's bed,"* the cardigan symbolizes feelings of neglect and emotional abandonment. A cardigan is a simple piece of clothing that can easily be forgotten or left unused. By using this object symbolically, the songwriter illustrates how the speaker once felt unimportant or overlooked in a relationship. However, when the cardigan is later *"put on"* and described as someone's favorite, it symbolizes emotional validation and acceptance. Thus, the cardigan becomes a powerful symbol representing both rejection and appreciation in the relationship.

Symbolism is also present in the song *The 1*, particularly in the lyric *"Roaring twenties, tossing pennies in the pool."* In this expression, the act of tossing pennies into a pool symbolizes hope, wishes, and nostalgic memories of youth. The phrase *"roaring twenties"* represents a period of excitement, freedom, and possibility in life. Together, these images symbolize the speaker's reflection on past experiences and the dreams that once existed in a relationship that ultimately did not last. Through this symbolism, the songwriter expresses the bittersweet feeling of remembering what could have been.

Symbolism plays a significant role in shaping the emotional depth and narrative meaning within these songs. By using objects, colors, and actions as symbolic representations of deeper ideas, the songwriter creates layered meanings that enrich the listening experience. Symbolism allows listeners to connect personal interpretations with the lyrics and encourages deeper reflection on the themes presented in the songs. Therefore, the findings of this study show that symbolism is an important stylistic element used by Taylor Swift to convey emotional complexity and narrative meaning, and this finding is consistent with previous research which suggests that symbolism is widely used in song lyrics to represent abstract emotions and life experiences in a poetic form.

Simile in the Songs

Simile is another type of figurative language identified in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. A simile is a figure of speech that compares two different things using connecting words such as “like” or “as.” This type of figurative language helps describe emotions, situations, or experiences more clearly by relating them to familiar images. In song lyrics, similes are often used to create vivid imagery and allow listeners to visualize the feelings or situations being described. Through simile, abstract emotions such as love, regret, and memory become easier to understand because they are compared to concrete or recognizable objects.

One example of simile can be found in the song *Cardigan* in the lyric “*I knew you'd linger like a tattoo kiss.*” In this line, the word “like” indicates a comparison between a lingering memory and a tattoo. A tattoo is something permanent and difficult to remove, and by comparing a memory to a tattoo, the songwriter emphasizes how the emotional experience remains deeply imprinted. This simile effectively illustrates how certain relationships leave lasting impressions that continue to stay in someone's mind even after the relationship has ended. Through this comparison, the lyric conveys the idea that emotional memories can be just as permanent as physical marks.

Another example of simile can be found in the song *Cardigan* in the lyric “When I felt like I was an old cardigan under someone's bed.” In this line, the word “like” indicates a comparison between the speaker's emotional state and an old cardigan that has been left under someone's bed. An old cardigan is an ordinary piece of clothing that is often forgotten or no longer used, and by comparing herself to it, the songwriter emphasizes feelings of being neglected, unappreciated, and emotionally discarded. This simile effectively illustrates how the speaker feels as if she has lost her value in someone's life and has been pushed aside like something no longer needed. Through this comparison, the lyric conveys the idea of emotional abandonment and the sense of being forgotten in a relationship.

Another example related to simile can also be interpreted from the imagery found in the narrative storytelling style of the album *Folklore*. Although not all comparisons are explicitly marked with “like” or “as,” the storytelling elements often create comparisons that function similarly to similes. These comparisons allow listeners to imagine emotional experiences in a more concrete way. By connecting feelings with visual or physical images, the songwriter builds a stronger emotional atmosphere within the songs.

The presence of simile in these lyrics demonstrates how simple comparisons can enhance the expressive quality of a song. By relating emotional experiences to familiar objects or sensations, the songwriter helps listeners better understand the intensity of the feelings being described. Similes also contribute to the poetic structure of the lyrics by adding descriptive richness and imagery. As a result, the songs become more engaging and emotionally resonant for the audience.

Overall, the findings of this study show that simile is used as an effective stylistic device to express emotional memories and lasting impressions within the lyrics. Although it may appear less frequently compared to metaphors, simile still plays an important role in strengthening imagery and emotional clarity in the songs. Therefore, the use of simile in the lyrics of Taylor Swift supports the idea that figurative comparisons help convey deeper meanings and emotional experiences, and this result is consistent with previous studies which suggest that simile is commonly used in song lyrics to create vivid imagery and emphasize emotional expression.

Irony in the Songs

Irony is another type of figurative language identified in several songs from the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. Irony refers to a situation in which the intended meaning of a statement is different from, or even opposite to, its literal meaning. In literary and lyrical contexts, irony is often used to express criticism, sarcasm, or emotional contradiction. Songwriters frequently employ irony to highlight social judgments, misunderstandings, or the

difference between public perception and personal reality. Through irony, the lyrics can communicate deeper meanings while also revealing the complexity of emotions and situations experienced by the characters in the songs.

One clear example of irony appears in the song *The Last Great American Dynasty* in the lyric *"She had a marvelous time ruining everything."* At first glance, the phrase *"marvelous time"* suggests something joyful or positive. However, the statement becomes ironic because it is paired with the phrase *"ruining everything,"* which implies destruction or chaos. The lyric sarcastically reflects how society blamed the character, Rebekah, for many problems and scandals associated with her lifestyle. Instead of describing her actions literally, the songwriter uses irony to criticize how the community exaggerated her reputation and portrayed her as someone who deliberately caused trouble.

Irony also contributes to the storytelling style that characterizes the album *Folklore*. Many of the narratives within the songs present contrasts between appearance and reality, or between public judgment and personal experience. By incorporating irony into the lyrics, the songwriter reveals how characters are often misunderstood or unfairly judged by others. This technique allows listeners to question the surface meaning of certain statements and to consider deeper interpretations behind the narrative events described in the songs.

Overall, the use of irony in these songs highlights the complexity of social perception, personal reflection, and emotional contradiction. Through ironic expressions, the songwriter is able to communicate subtle criticism and layered meanings within the narrative of the lyrics. The presence of irony enriches the storytelling aspect of the songs and encourages listeners to interpret the lyrics beyond their literal meanings. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that irony functions as an important stylistic device in conveying hidden meanings and social commentary in the lyrics of Taylor Swift, and this finding is consistent with previous research which suggests that irony is commonly used in song lyrics to emphasize contrast between expectation and reality.

Figurative Language in the Selected Songs

Figurative language plays a significant role in shaping the lyrical and narrative style of songs in the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. In general, figurative language refers to the use of words or expressions that go beyond their literal meanings in order to create deeper emotional, imaginative, or symbolic interpretations. According to scholars in linguistics and literary studies, figurative language is commonly used in poetry and song lyrics because it allows writers to communicate abstract emotions and complex experiences through symbolic imagery. Fatikha & Masykuroh (2022) explains that figurative language functions to expand meaning and enrich literary expression, while Aras et al. (2024) argues that figurative expressions help readers or listeners visualize emotions that may be difficult to express through literal language. Therefore, figurative language becomes an essential stylistic element in music, especially in songs that emphasize storytelling and emotional depth.

In contemporary popular music, figurative language is often used to create a more poetic and expressive lyrical structure. Scholars such as Gladys et al. (2022) suggest that song lyrics share many similarities with poetry because both forms rely heavily on imagery, symbolism, and figurative expressions to communicate meaning. Within this context, the songs in the album *Folklore* demonstrate how figurative language can function as a central tool for narrative construction. The album is widely recognized for its storytelling approach, where each song presents a narrative perspective, emotional journey, or fictional scenario. Through the use of figurative language, the songwriter transforms personal reflections and imagined stories into vivid lyrical experiences that resonate with listeners.

Previous studies on song lyrics have also emphasized the importance of figurative language in creating emotional engagement between the songwriter and the audience. According to (Yasmina Frida & Zuraida, 2022), figurative language in song lyrics helps listeners interpret deeper meanings and emotional messages beyond the literal interpretation of words. Similarly, a study by Nanda et al. (2023) explains that figurative language strengthens the aesthetic quality of literary texts because it allows authors to present ideas in

a more imaginative and symbolic manner. In the context of music analysis, these perspectives suggest that figurative language is not merely decorative but functions as a crucial element that shapes how listeners understand the themes and emotions conveyed in a song.

Another important aspect of figurative language in songs is its ability to represent complex emotional experiences. Music scholars have noted that emotions such as nostalgia, heartbreak, hope, and longing are often expressed through figurative imagery because literal language may not fully capture the intensity of these feelings.

Furthermore, figurative language contributes to the creation of narrative depth in storytelling songs. Several studies in music and literary analysis have shown that songwriters often use figurative expressions to construct characters, settings, and emotional conflicts within a narrative structure. As noted by El Sawati et al. (2022), figurative language enhances the interpretative richness of lyrical texts by allowing multiple layers of meaning to exist within a single expression. This layered meaning encourages listeners to actively interpret the lyrics rather than simply receiving information in a literal form. As a result, songs that utilize figurative language often provide a more engaging and immersive listening experience.

The use of figurative language also reflects the artistic identity and stylistic choices of the songwriter. In modern songwriting, artists frequently employ figurative expressions to develop a distinctive lyrical voice that sets their work apart from others in the music industry. According to research by Bouti et al. (2023), figurative language not only enhances the aesthetic quality of song lyrics but also contributes to the emotional authenticity perceived by listeners. When figurative expressions are used effectively, they can create a strong emotional connection between the song and its audience. This connection is particularly important in narrative-driven albums where storytelling and emotional resonance play central roles in the overall artistic concept.

Figurative language serves as a fundamental element in shaping the lyrical complexity and emotional richness of songs in the album *Folklore* by Taylor Swift. Through the use of metaphors, hyperbole, symbolism, personification, simile, and irony, the songwriter is able to transform ordinary experiences into meaningful narratives that capture listeners' attention. Previous research in linguistics, literature, and music analysis consistently supports the idea that figurative language enhances both the aesthetic and interpretative dimensions of song lyrics. Therefore, analyzing figurative language in these songs provides valuable insight into how lyrical storytelling functions in contemporary music and how symbolic expressions contribute to the emotional impact of musical works.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the use of figurative expressions in six selected songs from Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album. The analysis identified six major types of literary devices, namely metaphor, hyperbole, personification, symbolism, simile, and irony, with metaphor emerging as the most dominant. The predominance of metaphor demonstrates how emotions, memories, relationships, and personal experiences are communicated through symbolic and imaginative language, while hyperbole, personification, symbolism, simile, and irony enrich the emotional intensity and narrative depth of the lyrics. These findings indicate that the creative use of literary devices contributes significantly to the album's aesthetic appeal and storytelling by enabling listeners to interpret meanings beyond the literal level. As such, this study reinforces the view that contemporary song lyrics can be examined as literary texts that reflect sophisticated language use and artistic expression. Future research is encouraged to investigate figurative expressions in other albums by Taylor Swift or compare her songwriting style with that of other contemporary artists to provide broader insights into the role of figurative language in modern music.

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