Metaphorical Expression in the Song Lyrics of Album Evermore by Taylor Swift

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to identify the metaphorical terms included in the lyrics of Taylor Swift's album "Evermore." Using the theoretical framework offered by Lakoff and Johnson—which highlights the impact metaphorical language has on listeners' perception and comprehension—the study focuses on analyzing these metaphorical statements. The results show that Swift uses a wide range of metaphorical terms to describe both universal and particular experiences, which heightens the emotional impact and relatability of her songs. By highlighting the critical role that metaphor plays in modern song lyrics and providing insights into how metaphorical language can elicit strong imagery and emotional resonance in listeners, this study makes significant advancements in the discipline of linguistic pragmatics. Through an in-depth analysis of contemporary music, the research underscores how songwriters skillfully utilize metaphors to convey complex emotions, experiences, and narratives that might be difficult to express through literal language alone. This not only enriches the listeners' interpretative experience but also enhances their emotional connection to the music.

1. Introduction
The conventional understanding of metaphor as merely language adomment is called into question by Lakoff and Johnson’s seminal work in Metaphor Theory, especially in "Metaphors We Live By" (1980). According to their theory, metaphors are ingrained in cognition and perception and shape our comprehension of abstract ideas by mapping concrete, embodied experiences onto them. This viewpoint emphasizes how language is dynamic and how metaphors are essential to both communication and cognition.

The study of song lyrics, where metaphorical expressions are crucial in expressing feelings, experiences, and cultural narratives, makes Lakoff and Johnson's theory especially applicable (1980). Examining the metaphorical expressions found in song lyrics highlights the pervasiveness and power of metaphorical thinking in many facets of the human experience, demonstrating the significant effect of metaphor on artistic and communicative expression.

Serves as a testament to Lakoff and Johnson's theory, highlighting how metaphors are woven into the fabric of language and thought. By examining the metaphorical expressions within song lyrics, one can discern the profound influence of metaphor on artistic and communicative expression, emphasizing song lyrics, as a captivating form of artistic expression, weave together words and melodies to communicate emotions, stories, and cultural narratives. Embedded within the lyrical tapestry is the profound use of metaphor, which extends beyond the literal meanings of words (Song et al., 2023; Sukmawaty et al., 2022; Adam et al., 2024; Julich-Warpakowski & Pérez Sobrino, 2023). Drawing upon the rich tradition of metaphorical expression, songwriters employ this figurative language to convey complex ideas, evoke vivid imagery, and resonate with listeners on a deeper, emotional level. Metaphors in song lyrics transcend mere linguistic ornamentation; they serve as potent tools for conveying the intangible aspects of human experience, allowing listeners to connect with the music on a personal and imaginative plane (Saleh et al., 2021; Andini et al., 2022; Youngsun et al., 2024; Kövecses, 2023). Whether used to depict love's nuances, articulate societal reflections, or capture the essence of fleeting moments, metaphors in song lyrics enhance the lyrical landscape, transforming it into a realm where words transcend their literal boundaries and invite audiences to explore the depths of meaning and emotion (Panggabean, 2018; Fairuz et al., 2022).
In addition to Lakoff and Johnson's theory, Noam Chomsky's influential linguistic theory (1957), often referred to as transformational-generative grammar, has also revolutionized the understanding of language structure and acquisition. Chomsky proposed the existence of a universal grammar, suggesting that the ability to acquire language is innate to humans. This theory has profound implications for the study of deixis and metaphor. Deixis, the phenomenon where the meaning of a word or phrase depends on the context of its use, aligns with Chomsky's emphasis on the importance of syntactic structures and their role in conveying meaning (Yule, 1996). Chomsky's theory highlights the cognitive processes underlying the creation and comprehension of metaphorical expressions, suggesting that humans possess an inherent capacity to create an infinite array of linguistic expressions, including metaphorical constructions.

Taylor Swift's "Evermore" album, released in 2020, stands as a captivating testament to her storytelling prowess and musical versatility. The album weaves a tapestry of introspective narratives, delving into themes of love, loss, and self-discovery. Tracks like "champagne problems" and "cowboy me" showcase Swift's adept use of vivid imagery and narrative-driven lyrics. Researching metaphorical expressions in Taylor Swift's "Evermore" holds significance for understanding the nuanced layers of meaning embedded in her lyrics, creating a more intimate and relatable experience for listeners.

By scrutinizing deixis in metaphorical expressions, researchers can unravel the intricate relationship between language and emotion in Swift’s songwriting. This analysis contributes not only to the field of linguistics but also sheds light on the artistry of song lyrics, showcasing how deixis enhances the metaphorical richness of expressions. Such research fosters a deeper appreciation for the linguistic craftsmanship inherent in Swift's work and underscores the importance of examining the interplay between language and emotion in the realm of popular music.

The ubiquity and potency of metaphorical thinking in various aspects of human.

2. Methodology

The methodological design in analyzing the song lyrics of album Evermore uses qualitative method. Source of the data outlines where the information for the study is obtained, whether through primary sources like surveys or experiments, or secondary sources like existing databases or literature. Data collection procedures detail the methods and techniques employed to gather information, particularly the descriptive method, this study engages in a systematic examination of Taylor Swift's evermore album. Creswell emphasizes that the descriptive method involves gathering, organizing, and interpreting data to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014). In this context, the descriptive method is chosen because it aligns with the research objective of comprehensively exploring deixis and metaphorical expressions within the album's songs.

The utilization of reading techniques to understand the meanings embedded in the entire album reflects Creswell's emphasis on a holistic and detailed examination of the subject matter. Additionally, the primary data focus of this study centers in analyzing the songs from Taylor Swift's captivating album, evermore which was made available to the public on December 11, 2020. Comprising a total of 17 songs, the album delves into the pop-folk genre, captivating listeners with its enchanting melodies and introspective lyrics. With a collective duration of 60 minutes and 38 seconds, each song on average spans between 3 to 4 minutes, allowing ample time for Swift's lyrical prowess to unfold. Notably, the deluxe version of the album includes two bonus tracks titled "right where you left me" and "it's time to go," adding a delightful surprise for fans. Through the exploration of the songs in "evermore," this study seeks to unravel the artistic brilliance and emotional depth present within Swift's musical creations.

In addition to the primary data sourced from the album evermore this study also relies on secondary data in the form of scholarly journals that explore the topics of deixis and metaphorical expressions within song lyrics. These journals provide valuable insights and theoretical frameworks for analyzing and interpreting the use of metaphorical expressions in musical works. To enhance the understanding of deixis content and metaphorical expressions specifically within the album "evermore," the researcher conducted repeated readings of the lyrics and extensively listened to the songs. By immersing themselves in the album's lyrical content and musical compositions, the researcher aims to uncover the nuances of deixis and metaphorical expressions employed by Taylor Swift, thereby enriching the analysis and interpretation of the album's artistic and linguistic elements.

3. Result and Discussions

Sixty English teachers, exhibiting diversity in age, teaching experience, and gender, participated in completing the questionnaires. The questionnaire responses underwent mathematical computation to derive mean and standard deviation scores. Mean scores for each questionnaire item were utilized to draw conclusions regarding teachers'
perceptions of critical literacy practices, particularly in language learning, with a focus on EFL contexts. Additionally, standard deviation testing was conducted to assess whether the data exhibited a normal distribution.

3.1. Metaphorical Expressions in Willow

"Willow" is the leading single from "Evermore," Swift's second surprise album of 2020 and her ninth album in total. She released the music video for the song on December 11th, 2020, in conjunction with the album "Evermore."

The lyrics contained in the song titled “Willow” written by Taylor Swift and produced by Aaron Dessner:

[Verse 1]
I'm like the water when your ship rolled in that night
Rough on the surface, but you cut through like a knife
And if it was an open-shut case
I never would've known from that look on your face
Lost in your current like a priceless wine

[Chorus]
The more that you say, the less I know Wherever you stray, I follow
I'm begging for you to take my hand
I'm begging for you to take my hand Wreck my plans, that's my man
You know that my train could take you home
Anywhere else is hollow
I'm begging for you to take my hand Wreck my plans, that's my man

[Bridge]
Life was a willow and it bent right to your wind
They count me out time and time again
Life was a willow and it bent right to your wind
But I come back stronger than a '90s trend

[Verse 3]
Wait for the signal, and I'll meet you after dark
Show me the places where the others gave you scars
Now this is an open-shut case
I guess I should've known from the look on your face
Every bait-and-switch was a work of art

[Chorus]
The more that you say, the less I know Wherever you stray, I follow
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I’m begging for you to take my hand Wreck my plans, that’s my man
[Outro]
Hey, that’s my man That’s my man Yeah, that’s my man
Every bait-and-switch was a work of art
That’s my man Hey, that’s my man
I’m begging for you to take my hand Wreck my plans, that’s my man

The following are the metaphors contained in the lyrics of the song “Willow” written by Taylor Swift can be seen in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Num</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I’m like the water when your ship rolled in that night</td>
<td>The metaphorical meaning of the lyric “I’m like the water when your ship rolled in that night” from “Willow” suggests the speaker’s adaptability and supportive nature. The water represents the speaker’s presence and influence, gently guiding and supporting the ship (the person they care about) as it arrives. The imagery conveys a sense of welcoming and calm, emphasizing the strong, nurturing connection between the speaker and the other person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rough on the surface, but you cut through like a knife</td>
<td>The metaphorical meaning of the lyric “Rough on the surface, but you cut through like a knife” from “Willow” suggests that despite any outward difficulties or roughness in the situation or the speaker’s life, the other person has a powerful and penetrating influence. The “rough on the surface” part implies challenges or barriers, while “you cut through like a knife” signifies the other person’s ability to deeply impact and reach the speaker, overcoming any obstacles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lost in your current like a priceless wine</td>
<td>The metaphorical meaning of the lyric “Lost in your current like a priceless wine” suggests a sense of being deeply immersed and carried away by the other person’s influence or emotions, much like being swept away by a strong current. The comparison to “a priceless wine” adds a layer of value and richness, indicating that the experience is precious, intoxicating, and profound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. You know that my train could take you home
Anywhere else is hollow

The “train” represents the singer’s ability to provide comfort, security, and a sense of home to the listener. It symbolizes a journey or passage that leads to a place of belonging and emotional fulfilment. “Anywhere else is hollow” implies that without this connection, other places or situations feel empty and lacking in significance.

5. Metaphorical Expression
Life was a willow and it bent right to your wind

The “willow” tree is often associated with flexibility and resilience because of its ability to bend without breaking in strong winds. Here, “life” is metaphorically compared to a willow tree, suggesting that life itself is adaptable and responsive to external forces or influences, represented by “your wind.”

6. Metaphorical Expression
singer and the subject of their desire.

intimacy and emotional significance of the desire to attain their affection or validation.

the affection or validation of the person addressed.

7. Metaphorical Expression
But I come back stronger than a ’90s trend

The comparison of the singer’s resilience to a “’90s trend” implies that just as trends from the 1990s have had a resurgence or comeback, the singer has the ability to bounce back and thrive after facing setbacks or difficulties. It emphasizes the cyclical nature of trends and the singer’s capacity for renewal and strength.

3.2. Metaphorical Expressions in “Champagne Problems”

Champagne Problems” narrates the tale of a woman who surprises her potential fiancé and their family and friends by rejecting a marriage proposal just before Christmas. In an essay about evermore, Swift explained that the song illustrates "longtime college sweethearts with very different intentions for the same evening—one planned to end the relationship, while the other intended to propose."

The lyrics of the song “Champagne Problems,” written by Joe Alwyn and Taylor Swift and produced by Taylor Swift and Aaron Dessner:

[Verse 1]
You booked the night train for a reason
So you could sit there in this hurt Bustling crowds or silent sleepers You’re not sure which is worse

[Chorus]
Because I dropped your hand while dancing
Left you out there standing Crestfallen on the landing Champagne problems

Your mom’s ring in your pocket My picture in your wallet
Your heart was glass, I dropped it Champagne problems
[Verse 2]
You told your family for a reason You couldn't keep it in
Your sister splashed out on the bottle Now no one's celebrating

[Chorus]
Dom Pérignon, you brought it No crowd of friends applauded Your hometown skeptics called it Champagne problems
You had a speech, you're speechless Love slipped beyond your reaches And I couldn't give a reason Champagne problems

[Bridge]
Your Midas touch on the Chevy door
November flush and your flannel cure "This dorm was once a madhouse"
I made a joke, "Well, it's made for me" How evergreen, our group of friends Don't think we'll say that word again And soon they'll have the nerve to deck the halls
That we once walked through
One for the money, two for the show I never was ready so I watch you go Sometimes you just don't know the answer
'Til someone's on their knees and asks you
"She would've made such a lovely bride
What a shame she's fucked in the head," they said
But you'll find the real thing instead She'll patch up your tapestry that I shred

[Chorus]
And hold your hand while dancing Never leave you standing Crestfallen on the landing
With champagne problems Your mom's ring in your pocket Her picture in your wallet
You won't remember all my Champagne problem

[Outro]
You won't remember all my Champagne problem

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Table 2. lists the metaphors found in the lyrics of the song "Champagne Problems," written by Joe Alwyn and Taylor Swift

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Bustling crowds or silent sleepers You're not sure which is worse</strong></td>
<td>The comparison between &quot;bustling crowds&quot; and &quot;silent sleepers&quot; represents contrasting experiences or environments. &quot;Bustling crowds&quot; symbolize social situations filled with activity and noise, while &quot;silent sleepers&quot; represent solitude and quietness, possibly indicating introspection or isolation. The uncertainty of which is worse suggests a struggle with conflicting emotions or preferences.</td>
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</table>
2 Metaphorical Expression Metaphorical Meaning
Because I dropped your hand while dancing The act of "dropping your hand while dancing" serves as a metaphor for a moment of emotional disconnection or abandonment within the relationship. It symbolizes a lapse in attention, care, or commitment, leading to the partner being "left out there standing," possibly feeling alone or neglected. Overall, the metaphorical meaning of this lyric suggests a reflection on the consequences of moments of emotional distance or neglect within a relationship, highlighting the potential for feelings of isolation and the impact of such actions on the partner's emotional well-being.

3 Metaphorical Expression Metaphorical Meaning
Crestfallen on the landing, Champagne problems "Crestfallen on the landing" paints a picture of someone who is visibly disappointed or dejected, likely after an event or revelation. The landing here could be a physical landing, like a staircase landing, or metaphorically, a moment of pause or realization. "Champagne problems" juxtaposes this image with the idea of luxury or extravagance, suggesting that despite the outward appearance of privilege or success, the individual still grapples with significant emotional challenges or disappointments.

4 Metaphorical Expression Metaphorical Meaning
Your heart was glass, I dropped it The comparison of the person's heart to glass symbolizes its fragility and vulnerability. Glass is delicate and easily broken, suggesting that the person's emotions are similarly fragile and prone to damage. The act of "dropping" the heart implies carelessness or a mistake that leads to harm or hurt.

5 Metaphorical Expression Metaphorical Meaning
Your sister splashed out on the bottle
Now no one’s celebrating

The “bottle” and the act of celebrating symbolize joy, happiness, and the anticipation of positive outcomes. The mention of the sister “splashing out” on the bottle suggests an extravagant or generous gesture in preparation for a celebration. However, the subsequent line “Now no one’s celebrating” implies that something has gone awry, and the anticipated celebration has been disrupted or canceled.

Metaphorical Expression

Dom Pérignon, you brought it
Non crowd of friends applauded

The mention of “Dom Pérignon” represents luxury, celebration, and high expectations. It’s often associated with special occasions and lavish gatherings. “You brought it” suggests that someone made an effort to contribute to the occasion, possibly with the intention of impressing others or creating a memorable moment. However, the absence of applause from a “crowd of friends” implies that the gesture went unnoticed or unappreciated, leading to a sense of disappointment or isolation.

Metaphorical Expression

You had a speech, you’re speechless

This line highlights the stark contrast between expectation and reality. “You had a speech” suggests that the person was prepared, confident, and ready to express themselves, possibly in an important or celebratory moment. However, “you’re speechless” indicates that something unexpected or shocking has happened, rendering the person unable to speak. It captures the disappointment or overwhelming emotion that leaves someone at a loss for words.

Metaphorical Expression

Your Midas touch on the Chevy door

The “Midas touch” refers to the mythological King Midas, who could turn everything he touched into gold. In this context, it implies that the person being addressed has a special ability to make ordinary things valuable or significant. The “Chevy door” represents something mundane or everyday. Thus, the lyric suggests that this person has a transformative effect, making even ordinary moments or things feel extraordinary or precious.

Metaphorical Expression

November flush and your flannel cure

The “November flush” likely refers to the cold, reddened cheeks that come with the chill of November weather, symbolizing emotional or physical intensity. “Your flannel cure” suggests a comforting, warm presence associated with the flannel, a fabric often used for cozy, warm clothing. Together, the lyric paints a picture of someone providing warmth and comfort (“flannel cure”) to counteract the harsh, cold reality (“November flush”),
symbolizing emotional support and care during tough times.

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<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>Metaphorical Expression</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;This dorm was once a madhouse, I made a joke, &quot;Well, it's made for me&quot;</td>
<td>The phrase &quot;This dorm was once a madhouse&quot; suggests that the dorm was previously chaotic, lively, or disorderly, possibly filled with energetic or unruly behavior. The speaker's joke, &quot;Well, it's made for me,&quot; implies self-awareness and a touch of self-deprecation. By acknowledging that a &quot;madhouse&quot; is fitting for them, the speaker might be admitting to their own chaotic nature or mental state, indicating that they feel out of place or overwhelmed but trying to cope with humor.</td>
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<tr>
<th>11</th>
<th>Metaphorical Expression</th>
<th>Metaphorical Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One for the money, two for the show I never was ready so I watch you go</td>
<td>The phrase &quot;One for the money, two for the show&quot; typically signifies the start of an event or performance, implying a readiness to begin something important. Metaphorically, it represents the preparation and anticipation of a significant moment or commitment, such as a relationship milestone. The line &quot;I never was ready so I watch you go&quot; reflects the speaker's realization of their own unpreparedness, leading to the loss of the other person who was ready to proceed. This conveys a sense of regret and the emotional consequences of not being ready for a crucial commitment.</td>
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4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that Taylor Swift in her song lyrics album Evermore demonstrate the widespread and astute application of metaphorical phrases, which are described in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphors. According to this idea, metaphors are more than just decorative language; they are an essential part of our cognitive processes and influence how we see and engage with the outside world.

Swift's ability to use metaphor to create intricate emotional landscapes demonstrates her poetic skill. According to Lakoff and Johnson's theory—which contends that most of our mental system is metaphorical—Swift uses metaphor in Evermore to help readers understand abstract emotions better by tying them to more tangible events.

For example, in the song "willow," Swift captures themes of adaptability and resiliency in love by using the metaphor of a willow tree. Lakoff and Johnson claim that this kind of metaphor works well because it connects the emotional resilience needed in a relationship to the physical qualities of a willow tree, such as its capacity to bend without breaking. With the use of a recognizable and concrete image, this metaphor helps listeners understand the tenacity required in love.

Similar to this, "champagne problems" uses the metaphor of champagne to contrast the joy that society expects from a successful interaction with the anguish that an individual feels from an unsuccessful one. This fits with the theory that abstract ideas like emotional suffering are frequently framed by more tangible, sensory experiences, such in this instance the sharp contrast between the situation's underlying sadness and the joyous nature of the champagne.
Swift's metaphorical portrayal of being just tolerated in a relationship, as opposed to being cherished, in "tolerate it," well captures the sense of abandonment and unrequited love. According to Lakoff and Johnson's theory, this metaphor helps the audience understand how the abstract idea of emotional neglect is mapped onto the more tangible experience of ordinary tolerance, increasing the emotional impact and relatability of the lyrics.

Taylor Swift uses metaphor as a cognitive tool and a stylistic device throughout Evermore, which is consistent with Lakoff and Johnson's theory of how metaphors affect reality. Swift improves the listener's comprehension and empathy for the nuanced emotions she portrays in her songs by converting abstract emotional experiences into relatable and tangible imagery. This method not only highlights the significance of metaphors in human cognition and communication, but it also enhances the narrative complexity of her lyrics.

References


