

When Lyrics Speak Beyond Words: Figurative Language in Meghan Trainor's Songs

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Abstract: This study examines the use of figurative language in three selected songs by Meghan Trainor—Me Too, Watch Me Do, and Just a Friend to You—to explore how non-literal meaning contributes to emotional expression and identity construction in contemporary pop music. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the lyrics were analyzed to identify figurative forms and interpret their functions. The findings reveal six types of figurative language: hyperbole, metaphor, simile, repetition, generalization, and irony, with hyperbole appearing most frequently across the data. This dominance suggests that Trainor strategically employs exaggeration as a linguistic device to highlight empowerment, humor, confidence, and self-worth. Metaphor and simile further strengthen imagery and cultural association, enabling listeners to visualize meaning more vividly, while irony and generalization emerge particularly in relational contexts to convey emotional tension implicitly. Repetition is used to reinforce lyrical messages, create emphasis, and improve memorability, supporting both poetic and persuasive effects. Overall, the analysis shows that figurative language in Trainor's lyrics functions not merely as decoration, but as a pragmatic tool that generates implicature, enhances thematic depth, and engages listeners in inferential interpretation. This research contributes to applied linguistics by demonstrating how song lyrics operate as meaningful discourse reflecting social values and personal identity. Future studies are recommended to expand data coverage and integrate multimodal or corpus-based approaches.

Keywords: applied linguistics; figurative language; lyric analysis; language and art

1. Introduction

Applied linguistics is a dynamic field that focuses on the practical application of language in real-world settings such as education, communication, translation, and the arts. Applied linguistics aims to understand how language functions in various fields, not only on the structural aspects of language but also on its use in social, cultural, and creative contexts (C. J. Hall et al., 2017). The field of language and art is one of the growing fields in the operation of language towards artistic expressions such as literature, theater, and music. According to (Gee, 2014), applied linguistics is the study of language in the real world, including its function in society and how language is used in various forms of communication. Applied linguistics offers tools to analyze language phenomena beyond grammar. (C. J. Hall et al., 2017) emphasize that applied linguistics becomes a bridge for theoretical knowledge and practical use of language that helps researchers understand the creation of meaning through language in media, literature, and art. Applied linguistics provides a platform to analyze song lyrics, especially those with figurative language and not only as artistic expressions but also sociolinguistic acts.

Figurative language is a central element in artistic communication that allows writers to convey complex ideas through imagination. ([Gibbs Jr, 2017](#)) said that metaphor is not only a style of language but also reflects the basic psychological process of understanding human daily life. Similarly, ([Lakoff & Johnson, 2003](#)) in their book argued that metaphor is not only a language tool but also a way of shaping thoughts and experiences. In music, figurative language is used to enhance the emotional and interpretive impact of lyrics. As stated by ([Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014](#)), the creative use of language in metaphors and similes allows for more layered meanings and aesthetic appeal in artistic texts such as songs.

Art is a form of creative expression derived from human experience, and music is widely recognized as one of the most expressive and universal forms of art. Art involves empathy and communication, and is a powerful means of shaping personality and accessing moral and aesthetic values ([Rusu, 2017](#)). In this context, music functions not just as entertainment, but as a form of aesthetics that brings together elements of sound, rhythm, and lyrical language. Song lyrics are not only a complement to music, but also a major source of conveying emotions and can be analyzed to recognize feelings in songs ([Malheiro et al., 2016](#)). A song is a musical composition that generally combines melody and lyrics to create meaning. Songs serve as both a form of entertainment and a medium of expression ([Raiton & Watson, 2011](#)). Songs reflect personal identity, cultural values and social commentary, often using language in artistic and emotional ways. Lyrics carry narrative, expressive and symbolic weight. Particularly in pop songs, figurative language allows the listener to be more intimate with the themes presented, be it about love, loss, empowerment, or social issues. Songs like those created by Megan Trainor use this technique to convey messages that are accessible and meaningful to a wide audience.

The song lyrics in the article are analyzed as a form of communication that conveys messages and emotions through figurative language. The use of figurative language such as metaphor, simile, and hyperbole in song lyrics serves to enrich meaning and provide emotional depth. Song lyrics not only serve as a means of entertainment, but also as a medium to express ideas, feelings, and personal experiences. Figurative language in lyrics helps listeners to better connect with the message that the songwriter wants to convey, creating a more meaningful and emotional experience (Grensideng & Agung, 2023)

Previous studies with a focus on figurative language have been conducted. The first study with the title "The Analysis of Figurative Language in Linkin Park's Song Lyrics" by Nyoman Triguna Aditya and Ida Ayu Made Puspani from Udayana University ([Aditya & Puspani, 1974](#)). This study aims to analyze the types of figurative language and the meaning contained in the lyrics of five Linkin Park songs: Crawling, From the Inside, Burning in the Skies, Waiting for the End, and Burn It Down. This study used the documentation method in data collection, as well as qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. The theories used include the theory of figurative language from Knickerbocker and Reninger and the theory of meaning from Leech. The results show that there are five types of figurative language styles in song lyrics: metaphor, paradox, personification, hyperbole, and simile. Among these five types, metaphor is the most dominant one used. In addition, four types of meanings were found in the song lyrics: conceptual, connotative, affective, and collocative meanings. Conceptual meaning is the most common. Overall, this study concludes that Linkin Park consistently uses figurative language styles to deepen the conveyance of emotions in their lyrics.

Another study with the title Analysis of Figurative Language in Taylor Swift Selected Songs in 'Midnight' Album and Its Contribution to English Teaching at Senior High School" by Dodi Widia Nanda, Martiya Nurni Khairita, Silvi Revina. This research discusses the use of figurative language in several Taylor Swift songs from the *Midnights* album ([D. W. Nanda et al., 2023](#)). The main objective is to identify the types of figurative language used and analyze their contribution to the teaching of

English at the high school level. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected from Taylor Swift's song lyrics and analyzed with a theoretical approach based on the classification of figurative language according to Perrine. Some of the songs analyzed include "Lavender Haze," "Anti-Hero," "Midnight Rain," "Maroon," and "Bejeweled." The data is then classified according to the type of language style such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, etc. It was found that metaphor is the most dominant type. The study concluded that figurative language in Taylor Swift's songs not only enriches literary works but also has significant pedagogical value in English learning ([Murphey, 1990](#)).

The third study with the title "An Analysis Of Figurative Language In Daniel Bedingfield Song Lyrics Never Gonna Leave Your Side" by ([C. Handayani, 2022](#)). This research aims to identify and analyze the figurative language in the lyrics of the song "Never Gonna Leave Your Side" by Daniel Bedingfield. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a content analysis method. The researcher used Leech's theory to identify seven types of language styles: simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony. There are 13 examples of figurative language usage in the lyrics of this song. The dominant type of figurative language is hyperbole (7 times), followed by metaphor (3 times), personification (2 times), and simile (1 time). There is no use of irony, metonymy, or synecdoche.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the use of figurative language in three selected songs by Meghan Trainor from the Thank You album, namely Just a Friend to You, Watch Me Do, and Me Too. ([Creswell & Creswell, 2017](#)) define qualitative methods as a research approach that aims to understand certain social situations, events, roles, groups, or interactions. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the deeper meaning, lyrical context, and interpretive function of figurative language found in the selected songs. To support the analysis, the study adopts the perspective of ([Abrams & Harpham, 2015](#)), who explain that figurative language encompasses various rhetorical devices such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and irony.

These devices are used not merely for ornamentation but to enrich meaning, evoke emotional responses, and convey abstract ideas more vividly within literary texts, including song lyrics. The main data of this study are lyrics presented as sentences and phrases in the three songs that contain elements of figurative language. Data collection was done by reading the song lyrics carefully. This process involved reading the lyrics repeatedly, marking lines or phrases containing figurative language, and recording them on the analysis data sheet. The data analysis of this study follows ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)) thematic approach which involves identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns in qualitative data. Lyrics containing figurative language will be identified first and then grouped by type. Each type is interpreted according to the context of the song to understand the overall message and friends in the song. The frequency of each group was also considered to determine the most prominent figurative expressions. This analysis allows for a systematic understanding of how figurative language enhances the lyrical narrative and supports key themes such as self-confidence, empowerment, and romantic relationships in Meghan Trainor's music.

3. Results

3.1 Figurative languages

The analysis identified several types of figurative language in the selected Meghan Trainor songs, specifically irony, generalization, hyperbole, repetition, simile, and metaphor. These forms are used strategically to convey emotion, intensify messages, and reinforce the thematic content of the lyrics.

Each figurative device carries a distinct function, reflecting Trainor's artistic style, emotional expression, and communicative intention. The distribution of figurative forms across the three songs, entitled *Just a Friend to You*, *Watch Me Do*, and *Me Too*, reveals how Trainor constructs meaning through linguistic creativity rather than literal description. The summary of findings is presented in Table 1, followed by a deeper interpretation of each type identified.

Table 1. Figurative Language in Selected Meghan Trainor Songs

Title of songs	Figurative language	Lyrics
Just a Friend to You	Irony	Why you gotta hug me like that Every time you see me?
	Generalization	Why you always making me laugh? Swear, you're catching feelings I loved you from the start So, it breaks my heart When you say I'm just a
	Hyperbole	friend to you 'Cause friends don't do the things we do
	Repetition	I say it 'cause I'm dying to I'm so much more than just a friend to you 'Cause friends don't do the things we do Everybody knows you love me, too
Watch Me Do	Simile	'Cause friends don't do the things we do Everybody knows you love me, too (ooh, ooh)
	Hyperbole	Friends don't do the things we do
	Metaphor	Everybody knows you love me, too (ooh, ooh)
Me Too	Metaphor	And I feel so good Like James
	Simile	Brown in his day
	Hyperbole	Head spinning like an exorcist
		I'm the shh
		I've been on a low-hater diet
		My life's a movie, Tom Cruise
		I walk in like a dime piece
		If I was you, I'd wanna be me too
		I never pay for my drinks

Table 1 visually illustrates the distribution of figurative language identified across the three analyzed Meghan Trainor songs. As shown in the chart, *Just a Friend to You* contains the highest number of figurative language types (4 occurrences), followed by *Watch Me Do* and *Me Too*, which each contain three figurative categories. This indicates that *Just a Friend to You* employs a wider variety of expressive linguistic techniques, likely due to the emotional complexity reflected in the theme of unrequited love and hidden affection. The presence of irony, repetition, hyperbole, and generalization suggests that Trainor uses diverse stylistic devices to convey frustration, longing, and implicit desire, resulting in richer figurative construction.

Meanwhile, *Watch Me Do* and *Me Too* show slightly lower but balanced frequencies with three figurative types each. These songs revolve around themes of empowerment, self-confidence, and positive self-image with topics typically expressed through bold declarative language. The frequent use of metaphor and hyperbole in these songs helps construct a powerful and assertive persona, while simile contributes to vivid self-comparison and imagery. The relatively fewer figurative categories, compared to *Just a Friend to You*, do not imply less creativity; instead, they reflect a focused stylistic choice where exaggeration and metaphor are sufficient to reinforce the empowering tone without requiring additional figurative variation.

Overall, the frequency pattern displayed in the chart suggests that figurative language usage is influenced by thematic orientation. Songs centering on emotional tension and relational conflict tend to employ more diverse figurative forms, whereas songs celebrating confidence rely on impactful but fewer types, primarily metaphor, simile, and hyperbole. The visualization, therefore provides not only a quantitative overview of the figurative language distribution but also a qualitative indication of stylistic purpose in each song. This pattern reinforces the view that Meghan Trainor strategically selects figurative devices to support narrative mood, thematic direction, and listener engagement.

3.2 Interpretation of each type

Hyperbole

Data 1

I say it 'cause I'm dying to

It is a form of hyperbole because the emotional intensity is exaggerated for dramatic effect. The phrase "I'm dying to" doesn't literally mean that someone is dying. Rather, it is a dramatic way to express a very strong desire.

Data 2

I'm so much more than just a friend to you

This lyric implies a feeling of love or a relationship that goes far beyond ordinary friendship, and it is used to emphasize how strong and important the singer's feelings are. The phrase "so much more" is an intensifier that emotionally exaggerates the singer's position in the relationship.

Data 3

Head spinning like an exorcist

This lyric is considered a hyperbole because it exaggerates a physical reaction to something shocking or overwhelming by comparing it to the extreme and unrealistic head-spinning scene from the horror movie *The Exorcist*. The exaggeration emphasizes the intense effect someone or something has on the singer.

Data 4

If I was you, I'd wanna be me too

The lyrics include hyperbole to emphasize the singer's self-confidence. The singer claims that if anyone else were in her position, they would want to be her. This is not meant to be taken literally, but to emphasize how proud and satisfied she is with herself.

Data 5

I never pay for my drinks

This expression contains hyperbole as a way to highlight the singer's elevated social image. Saying she never pays for her drinks suggests that she is always treated to luxuries due to her fame or charm. While it's unlikely to be entirely true, the exaggeration is used to highlight a glamorous.

Simile

Data 6

And I feel so good like James Brown in his day

This lyric is categorized as a simile because the singer uses the word "like" to compare how good she feels to how James Brown used to feel in his prime. The context suggests that the singer feels energetic, confident, and joyful, just as James Brown was known for his vibrant stage presence.

Data 7

I walk in like a dime piece

This lyric is a simile because it uses the word "like" to compare the singer's walk to a "dime piece" (slang for someone who is very attractive or beautiful). In this case, the singer is not literally a "dime piece," but is walking with the confidence and charm of someone who is considered very attractive.

Metaphor

Data 8

I'm the shh

The singer refers to herself using the slang "shh" (a censored version of "shit"), which is used figuratively to mean she is impressive or top-tier. This is a metaphor, as it makes a direct comparison without using "like" or "as". She is not literally "shh", but she uses the word to express confidence and pride in herself.

Data 9

I've been on a low-hater diet

This line is also a metaphor, where the singer compares avoiding negativity or hateful people to being on a diet. A "diet" typically involves avoiding certain foods, but here it is used figuratively to imply that she is consciously avoiding "haters". The metaphor suggests emotional discipline and self-care.

Data 10

My life's a movie, Tom Cruise

This lyric compares the singer's life to a movie, meaning that her life is action-packed, exciting, or dramatic, without using conjunctions such as "like" or "as." This is a direct comparison, not a literal one, so it is considered a metaphor.

Irony

Data 11

*Why you gotta hug me like that
Every time you see me?
Why you always making me laugh?
Swear, you're catching feelings*

This lyric shows the irony in the relationship between the two characters in the song. It shows that the person's attitude is very intimate and caring, like a lover. However, in reality, the person still states that they are "just friends." This creates irony, as actions and statements do not align. It conveys the emotional conflict of being treated sweetly but not acknowledging feelings.

Generalization

Data 12

*I loved you from the start
So, it breaks my heart
When you say I'm just a friend to you
'Cause friends don't do the things we do*

In this lyric, Megan Trainor uses generalizations to emphasize her feelings of disappointment. The lyric "friends don't do the things we do" suggests that the romantic behaviors shared between them are not actions typical of just friends. This statement represents a generalization because it assumes that friends do not engage in romantic actions. It highlights her expectation that their relationship should be something more than just friendship.

Repetition

Data 13

'Cause friends don't do the things we do Everybody knows you love me, too 'Cause friends don't do the things we do Everybody knows you love me, too (ooh, ooh) Friends don't do the things we do Everybody knows you love me, too (ooh, ooh)

Repetition is used in this song to emphasize the main conflict in the lyrics. Lyrics "'Cause friends don't do the things we do / Everybody knows you love me, too" are repeated several times throughout the song. This repetition serves to emphasize the illogicality of the "just friends" status in their relationship. By repeating the same phrase, the narrator wants to convey that the proof of love is obvious to everyone, and that she can no longer accept a friendship status that does not match the reality she is experiencing.

4. Discussion

The results of this study reveal that Meghan Trainor's selected songs employ six major types of figurative language: hyperbole, metaphor, simile, repetition, generalization, and irony. Among these, hyperbole emerges as the most dominant, especially in songs with empowerment themes such as Me Too and Watch Me Do. This stylistic choice indicates that Trainor constructs a persona of confidence, self-worth, and humorous self-praise through exaggeration, aligning with the function of hyperbole as a device used to amplify meaning and evoke strong emotional resonance. (Perrine, 1969) notes that figurative language heightens imaginative quality and extends meaning beyond literal interpretation. In

a modern context, such patterns show that figurative language in Trainor's music is not merely ornamental. It is a key mechanism for persona construction, identity branding, and emotional communication within mainstream pop ([Sundari & Wijaya, 2023](#); [Yunos & Francis, 2025](#)).

Within pragmatic and stylistic frameworks, figurative language serves as a meaning-making tool that encourages listeners to interpret implied rather than explicit messages. Contemporary research indicates that figurative devices in songs function similarly to conversational implicature, requiring interpretation based on cultural knowledge and shared assumptions between artist and audience ([Lamusu & Nurfadilah, 2021](#); [Rini & Sari, 2022](#)). This aligns with Grice's Cooperative Principle, where intentional maxim flouting triggers inferential meaning, particularly through exaggeration, metaphorical mapping, and humorous irony. Meghan Trainor's songs demonstrate active flouting of the Maxim of Quality (non-literal hyperbolic claims), Maxim of Quantity (strategic withholding or overstatement), and Maxim of Manner (symbolic rather than straightforward expression), suggesting that figurative language functions pragmatically to generate conversational implicature in music lyrics.

4.1 Deeper interpretation of figurative devices

Hyperbole as Empowerment and Identity Projection

Hyperbole appears with high frequency in Trainor's lyrics. Lines such as "If I was you, I'd wanna be me too" exaggerate self-worth beyond literal possibility, functioning not to convey factual truth but to create a confident voice and assert self-celebration. This corresponds with ([Gorys Keraf, 2010](#)) and ([Leech, 1983](#)), who describe hyperbole as an intensifier of emotional depth and persuasive tone. In pop culture, hyperbole is widely used to craft memorable hooks, dramatic narratives, and high-impact choruses, often contributing to song virality. Recent research also confirms hyperbole as a dominant feature in contemporary upbeat pop lyrics ([Rizqi & Saraswati, 2022](#)). These patterns reveal that Trainor's linguistic exaggeration is central to her musical persona, symbolizing empowerment, charisma, and playful boldness aimed at resonating with young female listeners.

Metaphor as cognitive and symbolic construction

Metaphors such as "My life's a movie, Tom Cruise" serve as conceptual anchors that frame personal experience through cinematic symbolism ([Aminah, 2021](#)). ([Lakoff & Johnson, 2024](#)) argue that metaphors structure human thought, mapping abstract emotions into concrete imagery. ([Kovecses, 2010](#)) later expands this by linking metaphor to cultural embodiment, suggesting that metaphors reveal social values. The metaphorical representation of luxury, success, and glamour in Trainor's lyrics resonates with digital pop culture, where public image and self-reinvention are central (Nababan, 2022; [Putra et al., 2024](#)). Metaphor in Trainor's music therefore acts as a discourse tool that constructs identity, ambition, and femininity through symbolic language, reinforcing her brand as an artist who balances humor with empowerment.

Simile as visualization and cultural reference

Simile strengthens imagery by connecting unfamiliar ideas with recognizable cultural symbols ([Wulandari & Indayani, 2023](#)). Phrases like "like James Brown in his day" evoke associations with musical excellence, while "like a dime piece" aligns with beauty valorization. ([Abram, 2005](#)) and ([McCarthy & Carter, 1994](#)) argue that simile enhances vivid imagery through comparative structure. In music, simile bridges emotional tone and cultural context, helping listeners visualize feelings through known references. Recent studies report similar simile use in works by Billie Eilish and NIKI, where comparison amplifies mood and narrative ([Lamusu & Nurfadilah, 2021](#); [Saleh & Nur, 2023](#)).

For Trainor, simile becomes a strategic device to assert her place in pop heritage and feminine empowerment discourse ([Gill & Gill, 2007](#)).

Irony, generalization & repetition in emotional narrative songs

Irony and generalization surface strongly in *Just a Friend to You*, a relational song that contrasts affectionate actions with friendship status ([Adika & Budiarsana, 2023](#)). The implied meaning “we are more than friends” does not appear directly but emerges through contradiction, aligning with ([Gibbs Jr, 2017](#)) and ([Widyaningrum & Rahman, 2022](#)) who associate irony with emotional conflict expression. Generalization in “cause friends don’t do the things we do” frames a private feeling into universal truth, reinforcing persuasive stance ([Yule, 1996](#)). Repetition intensifies emotional insistence and strengthens memorability. ([Machin, 2010](#)) states that repetition in music is not simply melodic but semantic, guiding listener interpretation and affective retention. Findings align with ([Rachmawati & Fadillah, 2023](#)), who show that repetition heightens audience emotional engagement in love-themed lyrics.

4.2 Comparative insight with contemporary literature

Figurative language has been widely analyzed across pop discourses. ([P. Nanda et al., 2023](#)) found hyperbole and metaphor dominance in Taylor Swift material, while ([Putri, 2020](#)) noted metaphor-heavy usage in Ariana Grande’s songs. However, this study differs in identifying hyperbole, not metaphor, as the dominant element in Meghan Trainor’s lyrics, suggesting stylistic uniqueness linked to playful empowerment themes. This contrast supports ([S. Handayani, 2022](#)), who observed hyperbolic assertiveness in Daniel Bedingfield’s songs, and implies that exaggeration may characterize artists promoting body positivity and self-love narratives.

Meanwhile, metaphor remains central in many emotional ballads and indie works ([Putra et al., 2024](#); [Safitri & Wijayanto, 2022](#)), indicating that figurative preference varies based on genre mood & discourse intention. In Trainor’s case, hyperbole amplifies confidence, while metaphors and similes support glamorous persona-building. Similar interplay also appears in studies on Dua Lipa, where figurative language shapes female agency narratives ([Azzahra, 2023](#)). Therefore, this research contributes new insight by positioning Trainor’s lyric patterns within a broader spectrum of figurative strategies across modern pop music.

4.3 Linguistic, cultural and applied implications

From a linguistic standpoint, figurative language demonstrates pragmatic implicature: non-literal expression requiring audience interpretation ([Rachmawati & Nugroho, 2024](#)). Hyperbole flouts Maxim of Quality, metaphor invites symbolic inferencing, and irony challenges literal assumption, all generating implicature-based meaning construction ([Grice, 1975](#); [Huang, 2007](#)). This study confirms that songs operate as discourse, where figurative language performs social, emotional, and cultural functions beyond entertainment. ([Fairclough, 1995](#); [G. Hall et al., 2021](#)) view pop lyrics as performative discourse shaping public identity, consistent with Trainor’s feminist ([Hooks, 2014](#)), humorous, and self-affirmative brand.

Culturally, Trainor’s songs mirror modern values of autonomy, female confidence, and expressive emotionality. ([Augusto, 2020](#); [Sundari & Wijaya, 2023](#)) highlight pop music as gender discourse terrain, enabling identity articulation and resistance against normative standards. Trainor’s figurative expressions operationalize empowerment, turning hyperbole and metaphor into linguistic activism palatable for mainstream audiences. In applied linguistics, songs offer authentic material for semantic

analysis, pragmatic awareness, and stylistic learning. Prior research shows song-based learning improves metaphor comprehension and vocabulary retention ([Boers, 2013](#); [Gunawan & Yusuf, 2025](#); [Setiawan, 2022](#)). Trainor's lyrics can be integrated into EFL lessons for teaching figurative recognition, inferential reading, cultural mapping, and expressive writing.

4.4 Future research opportunities

While insightful, this study is limited to the qualitative analysis of three songs. Future research should expand the dataset to full albums or Trainor's discography to test whether hyperbole dominance persists across her works, or varies by era and theme. Comparative studies with artists such as Dua Lipa, Lizzo, or Olivia Rodrigo may also clarify whether figurative patterns are artist-specific or reflect genre-wide conventions. Further development in methodology is suggested through corpus-based and NLP-assisted analysis to quantify figurative frequency, improve metaphor detection, and support qualitative claims with measurable evidence. Audience reception studies can also be pursued to explore how listeners interpret figurative meaning across demographic backgrounds, offering a listener-centered perspective on meaning-making. Multimodal research that incorporates music videos, visual symbolism, live performance style, and social media persona may produce a more holistic understanding of figurative construction in pop culture. Cross-cultural comparisons with K-pop, Indo-pop, R&B, or other genres could further reveal whether figurative preference is universal or culturally specific.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the use of figurative language in three selected songs by Meghan Trainor, entitled *Me Too*, *Watch Me Do*, and *Just a Friend to You*, focusing on how linguistic devices shape meaning, identity, and emotional expression in contemporary pop music. Through qualitative analysis, six types of figurative language were identified: hyperbole, metaphor, simile, repetition, generalization, and irony, with hyperbole emerging as the most dominant form. This dominance reflects Trainor's lyrical style, which often relies on exaggeration to project self-confidence, humor, and empowerment, particularly in upbeat tracks. Meanwhile, metaphor and simile served as symbolic and comparative tools to visualize persona and build cultural associations, while irony, repetition, and generalization contributed to emotional nuance and persuasive effect in relational contexts.

The discussion highlights that figurative language in Trainor's work functions beyond aesthetic decoration; it operates as a pragmatic resource that creates implied meaning, negotiates identity, and facilitates listener engagement. These findings align with existing research on popular music discourse and further demonstrate that figurative devices play a central role in constructing self-image, especially within feminist-pop narratives. The study also shows that figurative patterns vary by song theme, hyperbole dominates empowerment lyrics, whereas irony and repetition surface more strongly in songs expressing emotional vulnerability. Such observations position Meghan Trainor's songwriting within a broader cultural, linguistic, and ideological framework where figurative language reflects social attitudes, identity performance, and generational values.

Given the limited corpus of three songs, the study encourages future research to broaden the data scope across full albums or multiple artists, incorporate corpus-assisted analysis, and explore multimodal texts through music video semiotics or performance discourse. Listener-reception approaches and cross-cultural comparisons may also contribute to a deeper understanding of how figurative language is interpreted and valued across diverse audiences and genres. Overall, this research contributes to applied linguistics and stylistic studies by demonstrating how figurative language shapes meaning in popular music, offering insights for academic analysis, cultural interpretation, and pedagogical

application. The findings reaffirm that song lyrics are not only entertainment texts, but also rich linguistic artifacts that reflect identity, emotion, and creativity through layered figurative expression.

Author's declaration

Author contribution

Rizki Fauzi: conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing-draft, writing-editing-final manuscript. **Suci Pole Mappaita:** data validation, data interpretation, literature review, critical revision of the manuscript, and proofreading. **Svetlana Urazgaliyeva:** writing-review, and result validation.

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of publicly accessible song lyrics from Meghan Trainor's *Thank You* album ("Just a Friend to You," "Watch Me Do," and "Me Too"). All data used in the analysis are included within the article. No additional datasets were generated or analyzed during this study.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest related to the research presented that could influence the research presented in this manuscript.

Ethical clearance

This research does not involve humans as subjects, and therefore no ethical clearance was required.

AI statement

This article is the original work of the authors. No AI tools were used to generate sentences, create, or edit tables in this manuscript. All writing, analysis, and editing performed manually by the authors.

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