

Advancing semantic and pragmatic theoretical frameworks through an analysis of Taylor Swift’s “Look What You Made Me Do”

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ABSTRACT: Semantics and pragmatics, as theoretical frameworks, continue to prove their appropriateness in the examination of literary texts and conversations, as well as in songs and music. This denotes that the two theoretical frameworks cannot solely be constricted within the parameters of general linguistics; instead, they are applicable to other disciplines or subject areas. In view of this fact, this article aims to uncover the covert meanings in Taylor Swift’s “Look What You Made Me Do” lyrical song. To do this, semantic and pragmatic theoretical frameworks are applied, while the song itself is acknowledged as a primary source of data. The objective of this article is to demonstrate the development of semantics and pragmatics, as theoretical perspectives, and the ways in which meaning can be explicated using these theoretical perspectives in the chosen song and other areas of interest. Ultimately, the overall objective is to demonstrate how words, phrases and sentences may be understood differently by language users. The results and discussions validate that Taylor Swift uses different linguistic techniques, as well as metaphorical expressions to communicate her message to her audience. Nevertheless, such abilities of this singer and songwriter may not always be clear to everyone, hence the necessity to apply semantic and pragmatic theoretical lenses. The closing remarks underline the importance of continuing to develop the two theoretical perspectives beyond the limitations of general linguistics. In addition to this, the closing remarks underscore the synergetic relationship that exists between language and music.

KEYWORDS: analysis; meaning; pragmatics; semantics; Taylor Swift

1. Contextual background and introduction

Analyzing a song through semantic and pragmatic frameworks involves delving into the meaning of the lyrics and understanding the purposive messages and implications. Semantic analysis, in particular, focuses on the literal meaning of the words and phrases used in the song (Agung et al., 2016). It comprises identifying the subject matter, themes and central ideas conveyed through the lyrics (Dumais, 2004). This denotes that semantic analysis begins by determining the main topic or subject matter of the song. It further comprises comprehending what the song is primarily about, such as love, politics, personal experiences, social issues and many other subjects. Over and above this, it explores the themes that the song touches upon, such as freedom, hope, heartbreak or resilience. Among other issues, semantic analysis involves a straightforward explication of the lyrics without considering any implied or covert meanings (Gunner, 1979). This means that it concentrates on understanding the concrete and explicit meanings of the words, phrases and sentences used in the song. In other words, semantic analysis can be

viewed as superficial in nature since it does not consider the context in which a song was written and produced. As a result of this, there may be problems and challenges if researchers focus solely on the superficial analysis of songs as other significant meanings may be overlooked, thereupon making defective presumptions about the songs. That is the reason, Dumais (2004) claims that focusing exclusively on semantic theoretical framework when analyzing a song may downplay the profound layers of meaning communicated through figurative language, metaphors and other poetic devices, limiting the comprehension of the song's emotional impact and artistic expression. By the same token, a semantic-only analysis might neglect the broader context and ethnological complexities surrounding the song, potentially missing the purposive social commentary and the artist's intention behind the composition.

Pragmatic analysis, on the other hand, goes beyond the literal meanings and unearths into the implicit meaning, context and purposive effects of the lyrics (Pande and Bhagat, 2023). This signifies that it considers how the language is used to achieve specific communicative goals (Ward et al., 1991). Pragmatic analysis explores the implied meanings or connotations of the words, phrases and sentences used in the song. It critiques the fundamental messages that may not be explicitly stated but can be inferred based on context, cultural references and figurative language. Bearing this in mind, pragmatic analysis takes into account the broader context in which the song was written and performed (Pande and Bhagat, 2023). In other words, it considers the cultural, social and historical context, as well as the artist's justifications for creating the song. It is for this reason that understanding the artist's purpose helps to uncover the song's intended impact on the audience. When one knows what the artist intended to convey, one can better grasp the intended meaning and emotional impact of the song.

The development of semantic and pragmatic theoretical frameworks has been significantly influenced by the analysis of songs and other forms of discourse (McNally, 2013; Igwedibia, 2018). Accordingly, analyzing songs provides a distinct opportunity to explore how meaning is manifested, how context configures interpretation, and how language functions in various social and ethnological contexts. The semantic and pragmatic analysis of songs is of paramount importance as it provides profound perspectives into the multifaceted components of human communication and expression. For example, through semantic analysis, researchers may unravel the literal meaning and thematic content of the lyrics, elucidating the central ideas and emotional messages evinced by the song. This helps humans understand how language constructs meaning and how artists and songwriters use linguistic devices, such as metaphors and polysemy, to evoke powerful imagery and emotions (Li et al., 2021). Similarly, pragmatic analysis conducts investigations into the implicit meaning, cultural context and purposive effects of the song, unmasking the artist's purpose and the communicative goals behind the composition. It offers a broader understanding of how language is used to perform actions, influence attitudes and connect with the audience on an emotional and societal level. Together, these analyses or theoretical frameworks amplify human appreciation of music as a profound form of artistic expression, reflecting the complexities of human thought, emotion and social interaction.

With the above contextual background in mind, this article aims to analyze how meaning is delivered in Taylor Swift's "Look What You Made Me Do". The objective of this article is to understand the song's lyrics, themes and the artist's purposive messages and implications, as well as its impact on the audience and its cultural significance. The semantic and pragmatic examination of Taylor Swift's "Look What You Made Me Do" is significant for developing the theoretical components of semantics and pragmatics as it offers a real-world example to explore the complexities of meaning, figurative language and implied messages within the lyrics, while also providing insights into how language is utilized to express emotions, engage with cultural references and communicate with the audience,

enriching the theoretical frameworks of language and communication. It is similarly important to understand that there is an existing body of knowledge concerning the phenomenon of interest herein, hence the section below.

2. Literature review

2.1. The importance of analyzing songs

Analyzing songs holds significant importance as it offers a multifaceted and captivating window into the human experience, culture and language. For instance, songs serve as cultural artifacts that reflect the values, belief systems and emotions of society (Al-Smadi, 2020). Indeed, they serve as cultural artifacts that provide an exclusive perspective through which one can probe the values, belief systems and emotions prevalent in society. This is against the reality that they are products of their time and culture, and thus, they recurrently incorporate themes and narratives that resonate with the collective consciousness. Protest songs, for example, as argued by Dumais (2004), capture the prevailing social and political sentiments, reflecting the convictions, frustrations and aspirations of the people. This suggests that by analyzing the lyrics and musical styles of songs, researchers and historians can gain valuable insights into the prevailing ideologies, social norms and historical events that shape a society's identity. In addition to this, songs play a significant role in transmitting cultural traditions and narratives (Pfukwa, 2008). Folk songs, in particular, carry oral histories and cultural heritage, passing down stories, rituals and customs from one generation to another. These songs recurrently hold profound significance in preserving cultural identities and creating a sense of continuity amidst societal changes. That is the reason Guerra et al. (2020) determine that by probing such songs, scholarly critics can delve into the roots of a culture and understand the collective memory that sustains it.

Emotions are another essential component revealed through songs (Vambe, 2000). This is because music has the remarkable ability to evoke a wide range of emotions, from delight and adoration to sorrow and anger. Through their melodies and lyrical content, songs evince not only individual emotions but also collective emotional experiences of a society. According to Dukes (2003), love songs, for instance, express universal emotions of romance and affection, while songs of protest may channel collective anger or frustration over social injustices. Analyzing the emotional expressions in songs enables researchers to explore the human condition and the ways in which music serves as a vehicle for emotional catharsis and connection. Through the analysis of song lyrics, researchers can potentially absorb valuable insights into the historical, social and political contexts in which the music was created, providing an affluent tapestry of cultural understanding. In fact, the meaning of songs cannot be divorced from the social, political and historical context given that they mirror these crucial components of human existence. In support of this view, Vambe (2000) remains optimistic that songs cannot be divorced from social realities owing to the fact that they are products of human experiences and emotions, inveterated in the social and cultural contexts in which they are created. The themes, narratives and emotions conveyed in songs mirror the real-life struggles, joys and complexities of individuals and societies. As artistic expressions, songs often serve as vehicles for social commentary and reflection on the human condition, making them inherently intertwined with the realities they pursue to capture and communicate (Katic et al., 2022).

In a similar vein, songs are a potent form of artistic expression, allowing artists to convey complex emotions and ideas through the use of language and music. This implies that by analyzing the themes, figurative language and narrative structures in songs, one can appreciate the depth of human emotions and the power of storytelling, nurturing empathy and understanding among diverse audiences (Claerr and Gargan, 1984; Marler and Peters, 1988). Effectively, songs are an exceptional platform for exploring

linguistic phenomena (Richards, 1969). This denotes that the use of metaphors, wordplay and poetic devices in songs provides realistic examples for scrutinizing semantics and pragmatics. As a matter of fact, Garcia (2018) states that the importance of songs in language lies in their ability to enhance communication and expression through music and poetry. Songs employ linguistic devices such as metaphors, similes and rhythmic patterns, ameliorating language with emotional depth and evocative imagery. Among other crucial matters, songs have a distinct power to transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries, acting as a universal language that connects people across varied backgrounds and fosters a shared human experience through the beauty of music and lyrics. In respect of this view, researchers can examine how language is creatively employed to evoke emotions, engage listeners and communicate messages through implicit meanings and subtle implications.

In the same fashion, songs advance cross-cultural dialogue and appreciation (Savage et al., 2022). This is against the fact that the analysis of songs from different cultures allows humans to explore the similarities and differences in language use, symbolism and storytelling, promoting intercultural understanding and dismantling obstructions between varied communities. Ultimately, songs have a significant impact on society, acting as a catalyst for social change and collective movements (Garcia, 2018). In particular, examining songs that address social issues or advocate for positive change allows humans to comprehend the role of music in shaping public opinion, advancing activism and inspiring individuals to engage with important social causes. In essence, the significance of analyzing songs lies in their ability to illuminate the interplay of language, culture and emotions, providing an affluent source of insights into the human condition and facilitating cross-disciplinary exploration. As cultural artifacts, songs enable humans or researchers to connect with history and tradition, while their artistic expression and linguistic elements offer an opportunity to assess semantics and pragmatics in a dynamic and evocative context.

2.2. Conceptualizing semantics and pragmatics

This article views it as significant to conceptualize two crucial concepts that will underpin its overall discourse. The two concepts are semantics and pragmatics. First, is semantics. Semantics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the assessment of meaning in language (Nakatani et al., 2023). This branch of linguistics focuses on how words, phrases, sentences and discourses transmit meaning and how the meaning of language elements is related to the subjects and concepts they represent (Matsui et al., 2022). In addition to this view, semantics explores the rules and principles that govern the interpretation of language, including how context, syntax and pragmatics influence the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. Semantics plays a central role in understanding how language users comprehend and convey information, as well as how they convey emotions, express intentions and engage in communication effectively.

In contrast to this, pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the assessment of language in context and how meaning is constructed through communication (Harris, 1995). This branch of linguistics deals with the ways in which language users utilize and interpret language in realistic situations, considering factors such as the speaker's intentions, the listener's inferences, the social and cultural context, and the shared knowledge between participants in a conversation (Lau et al., 2023). This makes it clear that pragmatics goes beyond the literal meaning of utterances and explores how language is used to attain specific goals, convey social meaning, perform speech acts and manage the interaction between speakers and listeners. It plays a fundamental role in understanding how communication functions effectively and how language configures human social interactions and relationships. On account of this,

these two branches of linguistics demonstrate a considerable amount of inter- and intra-relationship. They both offer complementary perspectives on language meaning. Semantics deals with the systematic, structural dimensions of meaning, providing a foundation for understanding how words and sentences relate to the world. Pragmatics, on the other hand, accounts for the dynamic and context-dependent aspects of meaning, explaining how language adapts and functions in social or verbal interactions. In any event, it is important to note that this article follows a particular research methodology and theoretical framework, hence the next section.

3. Research methodology and theoretical framework

This article uses Taylor Swift's "Look What You Made Me Do" as a primary source of data. The selected song is three minutes, and thirty-two seconds in length and can be accessed publicly from different musical platforms such as YouTube, Play Music, and many other streaming platforms. Considering a song as a primary source of data in a semantic and pragmatic discourse holds significant importance as it provides a unique and multifaceted context for exploring the complexities of language, meaning and communication. Effectively, considering songs as a primary source of data is crucial owing to the fact that they encapsulate a fusion of linguistic, musical and cultural elements, offering an exclusive lens to examine how these components interact to deliver emotions, narratives and societal commentary in a captivating and relatable format, thus intensifying our understanding of human expression and communication.

This article applies semantic and pragmatic perspectives as a theoretical framework in its examination and discussions. In the analysis of a song, both semantic and pragmatic theoretical frameworks play central roles in understanding the meaning and communicative dimensions of the lyrics and how they interact with the music. In song analysis, semantic theory involves identifying the subject matter, themes and central ideas expressed through the lyrics (Ma et al., 2021). This step includes examining the denotative meanings of words, phrases and sentences, as well as any figurative language used, such as metaphors, similes and symbolism. Understanding the semantic dimensions of a song helps uncover the concrete message and the specific emotions or ideas the songwriter intends to convey to the audience. In the song "Imagine" by John Lennon, semantic analysis uncovers the central themes of peace, unity and the vision of a better world (Armando, 2018). The word "imagine" itself conveys the idea of envisioning a different reality, and lyrics like "Imagine all the people living life in peace" express the song's call for global harmony.

In parallel, in the analysis of a song, the pragmatic theoretical perspective involves considering the implied meanings, the speaker's intentions and the interaction between the artist and the audience. It examines the socio-cultural context surrounding the song's creation and performance, as well as the emotional impact and reactions it evokes from listeners. Pragmatic analysis helps understand how language is used to achieve specific communicative goals and the intended effects on the audience. In the song "Someone Like You" by Adele, pragmatic analysis considers how the lyrics evoke emotions of heartbreak and longing (Afri and Maulina, 2021). With this in mind, the artist's intention is to connect with the audience on an emotional level and the song's performance and production contribute to this effect (Afri and Maulina, 2021, p. 35). The emotional response of listeners to the song demonstrates its pragmatic impact. On the grounds of this, the integration of both semantic and pragmatic theoretical frameworks is essential for a comprehensive understanding of a song. This is proven in the next section.

4. Results and discussion

On 24 August 2017, Taylor Swift, a grammy award-winning musician, released her highly popular song “Look What You Made Me Do,” which set a new record with 43.2 million views in its first 24 hours, surpassing other superstar artists’ achievements such as Beyoncé, Adele, Nicki Minaj, Rihanna and many others (McIntyre, 2017; Alek et al., 2020). In the song, Taylor Swift presented herself as a villain character in the music industry, symbolically addressing real conflicts she encountered throughout her career. This depiction intrigued her fans, leaving them inquisitive about the true basis behind the lyrics and the music video and who the song might be directed towards. The song’s surprising and entertaining elements captivated teenagers in particular, making it the most-watched video among this demographic (Alek et al., 2020). Taylor Swift’s exceptional songwriting and delivery have solidified her position as an influential female musician adored by teenagers who idolize her. This phenomenon presents a thrilling opportunity for exploration; and it is crucial to examine the implications of the pop culture boom among teenagers to circumvent any unexpected effects on their behavior. And as such, the following lyrics are observable:

I don’t like your little games
Don’t like your tilted stage
The role you made me play of the fool
No, I don’t like you
I don’t like your perfect crime
How you laugh when you lie
You said the gun was mine
Isn’t cool, no, I don’t like you (oh!)

In the semantic analysis of the given lyrics, the focus is on the literal meaning of the words, phrases and sentences used by the singer and songwriter. The song expresses strong feelings of aversion and resentment towards someone. The repetition of the phrase “I don’t like” underscores the intensity of the emotions being conveyed. The use of negative language, such as “don’t like,” “fool,” “lie” and “isn’t cool,” highlights the disapproval and dissatisfaction the speaker has towards the subject of the song. The lyrics also describe specific actions and behaviors that contribute to the negative perception of the person being addressed. Lyrical phrases like “your little games,” “tilted stage,” and “perfect crime” suggest that the subject engages in manipulative and deceitful behavior. In view of this reality, the phrase “the role you made me play of the fool” insinuates that the singer feels used and manipulated by this person, which intensifies their dislike.

In the pragmatic analysis of the aforementioned lyrics, the broader contextual and communicative elements of the song are taken into consideration. The repeated use of the phrase “I don’t like” serves as a direct speech act, explicitly bearing the singer’s feelings of dislike towards the subject. It suggests that the singer desires to assert her negative stance and distance herself from the person being addressed. The use of strong language, such as “perfect crime” and “lie,” indicates that Taylor Swift is making forceful implicatures, implying that the subject’s actions are morally objectionable and deceitful. These implicatures aim to create a negative impression of the subject and strengthen Taylor Swift’s emotional appeal. The exclamation “oh!” at the end of the lyrics adds an emotional and confrontational tone to the song, further underscoring the artist’s intense feelings and emphasizing their refusal to accept the subject’s behavior. Pragmatically, the lyrics can be regarded as an act of self-expression and assertiveness, with the artist voicing her feelings and denouncing the subject’s actions. The song serves as a platform for the

speaker to communicate their emotional response and establish a boundary with the subject, making it clear that they do not approve of the subject's behavior. As the song progresses, the following lyrics are observable and worthy of analysis and discussion:

But I got smarter, I got harder in the nick of time
Honey, I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time
I got a list of names, and yours is in red, underlined
I check it once, then I check it twice, oh!
Ooh, look what you made me do
Look what you made me do
Look what you just made me do
Look what you just made me...
Ooh, look what you made me do
Look what you made me do
Look what you just made me do
Look what you just made me do

Through the application of a semantic theory to the lyrics, it becomes patent that the singer describes her personal growth and transformation, emphasizing her increased intelligence and resilience. The phrases "But I got smarter, I got harder in the nick of time" and "Honey, I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time" deliver a sense of magnification and self-improvement. The metaphorical language of "rose up from the dead" promulgates a metaphorical rebirth, indicating a renewed sense of strength and determination. The next lines, "I got a list of names, and yours is in red, underlined," evoke a perception and feeling of revenge or retaliation. In fact, the use of colors, such as "red" and "underlined," adds emphasis and signifies a significant target. The repetition of "Look what you made me do" stresses the idea that the actions of others have caused the singer and songwriter to change or respond in a certain way. Thus, the semantic analysis reveals a narrative of personal growth, resilience and a hint of retribution in response to the actions of others.

By the same token, pragmatic analysis explores the implied meaning and communicative intent behind the lyrics. In this part of the song (lyrics above), Taylor Swift adopts a confrontational and resounding tone, suggesting that her transformation and actions are a response to someone else's behavior. The phrase "Look what you made me do" implies that the singer and songwriter is holding the addressee responsible for her actions, reproducing herself as a changed person as a result of their actions. The repetition of "Look what you made me do" serves a pragmatic function by intensifying the message and conveying a sense of resolution or defiance. The line "I check it once, then I check it twice, oh!" may further imply meticulous monitoring of the list of names, buttressing the idea of taking control and seeking justice or accountability. The pragmatic analysis also uncovers the singer's desire to communicate her transformation and resilience to her audience. By presenting herself as a stronger and more assertive individual, she pursues to convey a message of empowerment and self-assertion to her fans. As the song progresses, the following lyrics prove to be pertinent hereunder:

I (I) don't (don't) like your kingdom keys (keys)
They (they) once belonged to me (me)
You (you) asked me for a place to sleep
Locked me out and threw a feast (what?)
The world moves on, another day another drama, drama
But not for me, not for me, all I think about is karma

And then the world moves on, but one thing's for sure
Maybe I got mine, but you'll all get yours
But I got smarter, I got harder in the nick of time (nick of time)
Honey, I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time (I do it all the time)
I got a list of names, and yours is in red, underlined
I check it once, then I check it twice, oh!

In terms of semantics, the lyrics above suggest a narrative of betrayal and revenge. Taylor Swift expresses her displeasure with someone (“you”) who has taken something from her (“kingdom keys”) that once belonged to her. The phrase “They once belonged to me” indicates a sense of ownership or entitlement to something that has been taken away. The phrase “You asked me for a place to sleep, locked me out and threw a feast” is simply a deceitful act by the person in question. The contrast between being asked for help and then being excluded and replaced at a feast signifies an infidelity of trust. It is for this reason that Taylor Swift uses the phrase “all I think about is karma” to deliver the idea of pursuing justice or retribution for the perceived wrongs done to her. Taylor Swift further depicts herself as someone who has learned from past experiences and has become stronger and more assertive as a result. The phrase “I got a list of names, and yours is in red, underlined” suggests that Swift has identified those who have persecuted her and marked them for accountability.

Applying a pragmatic theoretical lens to Taylor Swift’s aforementioned lyrics, the pragmatic components illuminate the emotional impact and the relationship between the artist (Taylor Swift) and the implied addressee (“you”). The emotions conveyed in the song, such as anger, treason and a desire for retribution, evoke a strong sense of defiance and empowerment. Swift’s performance and tone likely play a role in amplifying these emotions, shaping the audience’s response to the song. The use of direct address (“you”) throughout the lyrics denotes a personal connection between Taylor Swift and the subject of the song. This creates a perception of intimacy and urgency in her message, making the addressee more directly involved in the narrative. The repetition of phrases like “I do it all the time” and “yours is in red, underlined” serves a rhetorical function, advancing the speaker’s determination and confidence in her actions. This repetition may also resonate with the audience, making the message more memorable and impactful. The use of figurative language, such as “kingdom keys” and “rose up from the dead,” adds depth and vividness to the storytelling, creating a sense of drama and theatricality in the lyrics. The final lyrics of the song, as presented below, are also worthy of being examined:

I don't trust nobody and nobody trusts me
I'll be the actress starring in your bad dreams
I don't trust nobody and nobody trusts me
I'll be the actress starring in your bad dreams
I don't trust nobody and nobody trusts me
I'll be the actress starring in your bad dreams
I don't trust nobody and nobody trusts me
I'll be the actress starring in your bad dreams
I'm sorry
But the old Taylor can't come to the phone right now
Why? Oh, 'cause she's dead (oh)

Through the application of a semantic theoretical lens, one can explicate the repeated lines “I don't trust nobody and nobody trusts me” as conveying a perception of distrust and isolation. The phrase “I'll be the actress starring in your bad dreams” suggests that Taylor Swift will play a role in someone’s

nightmares, metaphorically implying a negative influence or haunting presence. The phrase “the old Taylor can’t come to the phone right now” denotes a change in the singer’s identity or persona, and the subsequent explanation “Oh, ‘cause she’s dead” means a metaphorical death of the previous version of the singer and songwriter. Conversely, when utilizing a pragmatic theoretical framework, the examination emphasizes the latent significance and the overarching contextual environment of the lyrical presentation. The repetition of the lines “I don’t trust nobody and nobody trusts me” suggests a sense of vulnerability and a desire for connection, even though trust is lacking. The statement “I’ll be the actress starring in your bad dreams” can similarly be interpreted as a form of empowerment or self-assertion, where the artist takes control of the narrative and positions herself as a dominant figure in someone else’s fears or regrets. The explanation for the absence of the “old Taylor” adds an element of mystery and intrigue, leaving the listener inquisitive about the reasons behind the singer’s transformation. The use of the metaphorical death of the “old Taylor” indicates a significant change in the speaker’s identity or public persona, possibly signaling a new phase in her career or personal life.

In a nutshell, semantics and pragmatics are essential in the analysis of songs owing to the fact that they provide a comprehensive understanding of how language is used to convey meaning, emotions and social interactions in the context of music. Semantics helps unveil the literal meaning, themes and poetic devices employed in song lyrics, enriching the human appreciation of the songwriter’s message and artistic expression. Pragmatics, on the other hand, delves into the suggested meaning, the speaker’s intentions and the broader context, allowing analysts to explore the song’s intended impact on the audience and its cultural significance. Juxtaposed, semantics and pragmatics buttress human insights into the profound interplay of language and music, enhancing the understanding of songs as powerful forms of communication and artistic representation.

5. Conclusion: Bridging linguistics and music

Analyzing Taylor Swift’s song “Look What You Made Me Do” from both a linguistic and musical perspective offers a captivating opportunity to explore the interplay between lyrics, semantics, pragmatics and the emotional impact of music. The comprehensive semantic and pragmatic analysis of Taylor Swift’s “Look What You Made Me Do” has uncovered the intricate interoperability between linguistics and music within the realm of contemporary popular culture. This article illuminated how linguistic elements, such as lexical choices, syntactic structures and discourse markers, collaborate with musical components like rhythm, melody and harmony to construct a multifaceted communicative experience. In consummation, the integration of linguistics and music in this analysis underscored the song’s capacity to convey emotions, attitudes and narrative nuances beyond the explicit lyrics. The examination of prosodic features demonstrated how musical accents and vocal variations aligned with specific lexical choices to buttress key thematic elements. Over and above this view, the scholarly investigation of pragmatic mechanisms illuminated how the song leverages implicatures and context-driven inferences to evoke a more profound understanding of the lyrical content. Thus, this article’s findings underscore the significance of bridging linguistics and music, exhibiting how these disciplines synergistically contribute to the creation and reception of artistic works. The analysis of Taylor Swift’s “Look What You Made Me Do” further serves as a certification of the richness and complexity that emerges when linguistic and musical dimensions intertwine. Additionally, this article opens avenues for further explorations into the ways in which other popular songs employ similar strategies to convey intricate layers of meaning.

As music continues to evolve as a powerful medium for self-expression and social commentary, the perspectives gained from this article offer valuable views for linguists, musicians and enthusiasts alike.

By amplifying the comprehension of the multifarious connections between linguistic and musical features, one can foster a more nuanced understanding of how artistic endeavors configure and reflect the human cultural landscape. Ultimately, this scholarly discourse paves the way for future endeavors that delve into the symbiotic relationship between language and music, enriching an appreciation of both domains. Therefore, for future research, several avenues present themselves for further exploration and refinement of the intricate relationship between linguistics and music, as illuminated by the analysis of Taylor Swift's "Look What You Made Me Do." For instance, conducting comparative analyses of multiple songs from diverse genres and artists can provide a broader understanding of how linguistic and musical elements interact within varying contexts. Similarly, comparing songs with different emotional tones, themes and cultural backgrounds can help identify recurring patterns and shed light on the universality or uniqueness of certain linguistic-musical strategies. In contrast to this, exploring how linguistic and musical complexities interact in songs across different languages and cultures can also uncover how these elements are adapted to fit various linguistic and cultural contexts. Investigating whether similar pragmatic and semantic mechanisms apply universally or whether they are culturally contingent can offer insights into the adaptability of these strategies.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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