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Figurative Language as a Conveyor of Meaning in Coldplay X&Y Album

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the types of figurative language, their semantic functions, and their contribution to meaning construction in Coldplay's *X&Y* album. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this research analyzed the lyrics of twelve main songs and one bonus track from the album using document analysis and qualitative content analysis. Data analysis followed Miles et al.'s (2014) interactive model, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was guided by Knickerbocker and Reninger's (1963) classification of figurative language, Perrine's (1992) theory of figurative language functions, and Leech's (1981) framework of meaning. The findings revealed 88 instances of figurative language categorized into eight types: metaphor, symbolism, hyperbole, personification, simile, irony, synecdoche, and metonymy. Metaphor emerged as the dominant type with 43.18%, followed by symbolism (17.05%) and hyperbole (15.91%), demonstrating that Coldplay predominantly uses metaphorical expressions to convey existential, emotional, and philosophical themes. Furthermore, figurative language functions to express conceptual, connotative, affective, and thematic meanings, allowing abstract concepts such as hope, alienation, identity, and human relationships to be communicated more vividly and effectively. The study also highlights the pedagogical value of *X&Y* as an authentic material for teaching Semantics, particularly in understanding figurative expressions, contextual meaning, and the relationship between linguistic forms and semantic interpretation. Therefore, this research

contributes to the study of figurative language in song lyrics and provides meaningful insights for English Language Education, especially in the development of semantic learning materials.
Keywords: Coldplay, figurative language, meaning, semantics, song lyrics, X&Y album

Introduction

This research effort meticulously examines the use of figurative language as a means of conveying meaning in the lyrical compositions of the songs featured on Coldplay's album X&Y, their third studio release, which debuted on June 6, 2005, under the auspices of the Parlophone record label. The selection of this album as the subject of investigation is not only based on its widespread recognition but also on the intricate and nuanced nature of its lyrical content, which is filled with sophisticated and profound expressions of figurative language that warrant rigorous linguistic examination. The album X&Y encapsulates universal themes of existential character, with the title itself alluding to puzzles, the search for explanations, the dichotomy between rationality and emotion, and the juxtaposition of technology and humanity. The lyrics contained in the album avoid literal interpretation, instead being conveyed through various figurative language devices, including metaphors, similes, hyperbole, personification, and symbolism, making the album a highly relevant and rich corpus of text for scientific investigation in the domain of style and semantics.

In the field of linguistic research, figurative language represents one of the most intriguing abstraction phenomena due to its inherent inability to be interpreted in a literal sense. Figurative language is essentially a way of using language whose significance is indeed difficult to understand when only analyzed through the denotative meaning of the lexicon used. Puspitorini & Hamdani (2021) argue that figurative language, which includes techniques such as metaphors, similes, and personification, empowers songwriters to go beyond the literal interpretation of words and articulate thoughts and emotions in a more nuanced and artistic manner. In the domain of song lyrics specifically, the use of figurative language serves as a channel that connects the songwriter's subjective emotions with the audience's emotional experience. Gunawan et al. (2021) suggest that the song, as a prominent artistic expression, often uses figurative language to convey messages with greater emotional resonance and aesthetic appeal; however, not all listeners have the ability to distinguish the underlying meanings embedded in the lyrics, especially when figurative language is used extensively. This phenomenon makes the exploration of figurative language in song lyrics not only academically relevant but also practically significant within the framework of linguistic understanding and contemporary literary appreciation.

The phenomenon of using figurative language in popular music is an undeniable reality in contemporary linguistic studies. Music and song lyrics have long been considered one of the most influential means of cultural expression in modern human life. Teja et al. (2022) state that the use of songs as literary works can expand language understanding and the ability to interpret meaning. Therefore, the analysis of figurative language in song lyrics using a cognitive semantic approach can uncover how emotions and ideas are combined and conveyed artistically. Moreover, the study of song lyrics as literary texts has gained increasing recognition in the academic world, particularly since

the tradition of lyric analysis began in earnest in the 1960s. Aras et al. (2024) in their research analyzed several songs from the

Spotify Top 30 Hit Songs list found up to 200 examples of figurative language use in a corpus consisting of only 8,352 words, indicating a very high level of figurative language use in English songs. This information clearly shows that songs are not just mere entertainment, but also rich and complex linguistic texts.

The existence of Coldplay as one of the most influential alternative rock bands in the world underscores the importance of this research. After its release, the album X&Y successfully topped the charts in 32 countries, with sales of over 150,000 copies on the first day in the UK, making it the best-selling global album in 2005 with total shipments reaching 8.3 million copies. This extraordinary commercial success demonstrates a significant impact on millions of listeners across various parts of the world. Anggoro (2024) notes that the themes explored in Coldplay's albums, including X&Y, revolve around existential concerns, alienation in the modern era, and interpersonal relationships, all of which are manifested in songs with strong nuances like "Fix You" and "Speed of Sound." These grand themes are not conveyed directly and simply, but rather through the use of carefully layered figurative language, resulting in lyrics with meanings that are much deeper than what appears on the surface. Therefore, the album X&Y in particular becomes a very interesting subject and has not been extensively studied in-depth linguistic research, unlike other Coldplay albums that have already attracted academic attention.

Besides its commercial value, the album X&Y stands out due to its unique themes and language use compared to other Coldplay albums. Barung et al. (2023) state that Chris Martin, the main songwriter of Coldplay's songs, creates a strong concept of duality in each of his works. Here, the style of language not only serves as an ornament but also as a tool to convey meaning that can create thematic tension felt by the listeners. The concept of duality that forms the foundation of the entire XandY album directly influences the use of figurative language within it, making this album a rich place to examine how figurative language not only makes the lyrics more engaging but also fundamentally shapes and conveys meaning (Astuti & Astuti, 2020)

It is also important to understand the social background that underlies the significance of this study in the field of language education. In the current era of English language learning, the ability to understand and interpret figurative language has become one of the most important yet challenging linguistic skills. Aras et al. (2024) emphasize that types of figurative language should be taught and learned by EFL students to enhance their understanding when encountering popular literary works, such as songs they often hear in their daily lives. In line with this opinion, Haliza et al. (2025) in her research on Taylor Swift's album Folklore shows that popular music can be a valuable and relevant object of literary study in language and literature education. Through contextual interpretation and narrative reading, students can explore how language is used to tell stories, reflect social or personal experiences, and express more abstract emotions. In this context, Coldplay's album X&Y, rich in meaningful figurative language, can serve as authentic, relevant, and culturally significant teaching material for English language learners.

Various previous studies have provided a strong foundation for research on figurative language in song lyrics, as well as identifying gaps that still need to be

addressed. In the study conducted by Puspitorini & Hamdani (2021) titled "An Analysis of Figurative Language on The Lyrics of Coldplay's Selected Song," published in the International Journal of English and Applied Linguistics (IJEAL) Volume 1, Number 3, they found that the most frequently occurring type of figurative language in the Coldplay songs examined was hyperbole. This hyperbole serves to emphasize a point in a dramatic way, and the meanings derived from these songs are classified into connotative meanings related to aspects of human social life, such as love, sadness, happiness, spirit, and others. However, this research has significant limitations because it only selects a few songs from various albums without a deep focus on a single album, and the analysis conducted tends to lean more toward the identification of types of figurative language rather than an in-depth exploration of the role of figurative language in conveying meaning within the context of an integrated album (Ogolekwu et al., 2026)

Another related study is a research published in the Scientific Journal Langue and Parole Volume 4 Number 1 Year 2020 titled "Analysis of Figurative Language in the Album Parachutes by Coldplay." This study identifies 35 types of figurative language found in the lyrics of songs from Coldplay's album Parachutes, which consist of 2 similes, 3 repetitions, 9 metaphors, 8 hyperboles, and 13 rhetorical devices, with rhetoric being the most frequently occurring type of figurative language. The research makes a significant contribution in describing the use of figurative language in Coldplay's debut album, but it does not include an analysis of the function and meaning conveyed by each discovered style of language, leaving this gap open for further investigation by future studies.

An important study worth note is the research publish in the Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics Review Volume 5 Number 2 in September 2024, titled "Metaphor Analysis in the Album A Head Full of Dreams by Coldplay." This study finds 37 metaphorical expressions scattere throughout the album A Head Full of Dreams and categorizes them into three groups: structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors, based on the theory propose by Lakoff and Johnson. The research results show that ontological metaphors dominate with a percentage of 43.25%, followed by structural metaphors at 35.14%, and orientational metaphors at 21.61%. The strength of this research lies in the application of a more complex conceptual metaphor theory compared to the commonly used typology, although its focus is solely on one category of figurative language, namely metaphors. This results in the research not providing a comprehensive understanding of the variation in figurative language and the interaction between different types within an album as a whole.

The fourth study that should be noted is the research conduct by Barung et al. (2023) titled "Types of Figurative Language in Coldplay's Song Lyrics," published in ELYSIAN: Journal of English Literature, Linguistics, and Translation Studies Volume 3 Number 1. This study identifies five types of figurative language in Coldplay's songs, namely simile, metaphor, personification, metonymy, and hyperbole, with hyperbole being the most frequently occurring, and also considers the presence of connotative meanings as explained by (Leech, 1981). Although this research has applied Leech's semantic theory in meaning analysis, the study still uses songs from various Coldplay albums without limiting the focus to a specific album, resulting in a less in-depth meaning analysis, as it does not take into account the thematic and artistic context of a complete and integrated album.

Based on the analysis of previous research, there are several important and urgent gaps that need to be addressed. First, there is no research that specifically and exclusively reviews the album X&Y by Coldplay as a whole corpus from the perspective of figurative language analysis. Existing studies, whether focusing on Coldplay or other popular songs like those conducted by (Swarniti, 2023). Hulu et al. (2021) as well as Simarmata et al. (2021) generally take data from various albums or only examine one type of figurative language, thus failing to illustrate how the entire system of figurative language in one album synergistically functions to build themes and convey meaning. Second, many existing studies are taxonomic in nature, focusing only on identifying types of figurative language without analyzing in depth the mechanisms and functions of meaning delivery in the context of the album's theme. Third, although the album X&Y has a distinctive theme of existentialism, alienation, and the search for meaning, it has never been the subject of an in-depth linguistic study, despite being thematically and linguistically rich. This research explicitly aims to address all three gaps simultaneously, thereby clarifying its position within the landscape of lyric-based linguistic research and ensuring it does not overlap with prior work.

Based on the explanation provide earlier, the study titled "Figurative Language as a Conveyer of Meaning in Coldplay's X&Y Album" aims to identify various types of figurative language find in the lyrics of the X&Y album as a whole and to analyze in detail how this figurative language serves as a medium for convey meaning within the overall context of the album's theme. This research is expected to offer a dual contribution, namely, theoretically enhancing the understanding of the relationship between figurative language and meaning formation in popular song lyrics, as well as practically providing references and sources of analysis that can be used in English language teaching, particularly in the development of literary literacy and text interpretation skills for EFL students. Therefore, this study is not only significant for the advancement of linguistic and stylistic sciences but also highly relevant for the application of English language education in Indonesia.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the use and meaning of figurative language in the lyrics of Coldplay's *X&Y* album. The qualitative method was selected because it enables an in-depth interpretation of linguistic phenomena within their natural textual context. The analysis was guided by the interactive qualitative analysis model of Miles et al. (2014), including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while emphasizing interpretation rather than statistical generalization (Sugiyono, 2022). The research focused on the complete lyrics of Coldplay's *X&Y* album, consisting of twelve main songs and one bonus track (*Til Kingdom Come*). The album was selected through purposive sampling because of its thematic richness, extensive use of figurative language, limited prior linguistic studies, and its cultural significance. The primary data were the official song lyrics obtained from verified sources, while secondary data included books, journal articles, official album documents, and linguistic references supporting the analysis.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by a coding sheet for systematically identifying, classifying, and interpreting figurative language. Data collection was conducted through document analysis, qualitative content analysis, and

library research. The coding process involved four stages: open coding, axial coding, meaning interpretation, and pattern identification, using the figurative language framework of Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963), the functions of figurative language proposed by Perrine (1992), and Leech's (1981) theory of meaning. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), involving data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion verification. Figurative expressions were categorized, interpreted contextually, and analyzed to identify patterns of meaning across the album. Findings were presented through descriptive narratives, analytical tables, and thematic interpretations to explain how figurative language contributes to meaning construction in the lyrics. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied theoretical triangulation by integrating three complementary theoretical frameworks and source triangulation through cross-verification of lyrics using official album booklets, Genius, and Spotify. Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transparency were strengthened by systematic documentation of coding procedures and the use of textual evidence to support each interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Findings and Discussion

Overall Distribution of Figurative Language in the X&Y Album

Table 1 below is the total frequency of each type of figurative language identified across the thirteen songs in the X&Y album, arranged in descending order from the highest to the lowest frequency. This table provides a macro-level overview of the album's typological landscape before the song-level analysis presented in the following subsection.

Table 1. Overall Frequency Distribution of Figurative Language in the X&Y Album

No.	Types of Figurative Language	Frequency	Precentage (%)	Songs Found In
1.	Metaphor	38	43.18%	All 13 songs
2.	Symbolism	15	17.05%	What If, Fix You, The Hardest Part, X&Y, Til Kingdom Come, Speed of Sound
3.	Hyperbole	14	15.91%	Fix You, Talk, X&Y, Speed of Sound, Swallowed in the Sea, Til Kingdom Come
4.	Personification	8	9.09%	White Shadows, A Message, Low Twisted Logic, Square One
5.	Simile	5	5.68%	What If, Speed of Sound, Talk Swallowed in the Sea, Til Kingdom Come
6.	Irony	4	4.55%	What If, The Hardest Part, Low, Twisted Logic
7.	Synecdoche	2	2.27%	Square One, X&Y
8.	Metonymy	2	2.27%	Talk, A Message
Total		88	100%	

As shown in Table 1, metaphor is the most frequently used type of figurative language in the album X&Y, accounting for 43.18% of all identified findings and appearing in all thirteen songs without exception. This finding reflected a consistent stylistic pattern in which abstract emotional states, existential struggles, and relational interactions are concretely expressed through metaphorical constructions. Symbolism ranks second at 17.05%, while hyperbole ranks third at 15.91%. These two types indicate that the album consistently employs associative and intensive rhetorical strategies to enhance the communicative power of its lyrics. Personification ranks next at 9.09%, whereas simile, irony, synecdoche, and metonymy appear with progressively lower frequencies.

Findings Per Song: Identification and Classification

The followed subsection presented the results for each song in separate coded tables. Each table includes lyric excerpts, the type of figurative language identified, and the layers of meaning conveyed, in accordance with the application of Leech's (1981) analytical framework. The lyric data were verified through three official sources: the physical album booklet (Parlophone, 2005), Genius.com, and Spotify's official lyrics platform, following the source triangulation procedure outlined in the Methods section.

Table 2. Figurative Language in " Square One

No.	Lyrics Expect	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	" The Future's for discovering"	Metaphor	The future is viewed as a territory that remains unexplored and ready to be actively investigated. This implies a connotative meaning concerning the action potential and a variety of opportunities.
2.	" The space in which we're travelling"	Metaphor	Life or temporary existence is represented through the concept of a spatial journey, which conveys connotative meanings about travel and direction.
3.	"You're in control"	Synecdoche	The second-person pronoun represents all human beings who face existential uncertainty, thematically meaning that a personal experience is made universal.
4.	"I can see the world shining in you"	Personification/ Metaphor	The world is likened to the human ability to emit light; emotional meaning a profound sense of awe that radiates outward.

Table 3. Figurative Language in "What If"

No	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"What if there was no light?"	Symbolism	Light represents hope, truth, and existential guidance; its speculative absence carries a connotative meaning of utter despair.
2.	"Nothing wrong, nothing right"	Irony/Symbolism	The absence of light is interpreted as moral uncertainty. This ironic paradox suggests that ethical clarity depends on inner enlightenment.
3.	"No reason, or no rhyme"	Metaphor/Idiom	Reason and rhyme reflect order and meaning in life; their rejection conveys the connotative meaning of existential confusion.
4.	"What if you should decide you don't want me there by your side?"	Irony	The speaker frames a deep fear of being abandoned as a seemingly neutral hypothetical question; the emotional meaning of helplessness is concealed by rhetorical distance.

Table 4. Figurative Language in "White Shadows"

No.	Lyrics Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"Little white shadows"	Metaphor/ Oxymoron	Shadows are culturally associated with darkness; the color white represents a paradox, reflecting vague or ambiguous memories. Connotative meaning: the persistence of something disturbing yet formless.
2.	"Part of a system, a plan"	Metaphor	Existence is portrayed as a predetermined mechanical system; thematic significance: a detachment from spontaneity and personal autonomy.
3.	"And the world is on her way"	Personification	The world is depicted as a woman and endowed with purposeful movement; emotional meaning: an awareness of inevitable cosmic growth beyond human control.
4.	" Comes a time to obey"	Metaphor	Abstract social forces are depicted as instructions; social meaning: an assessment of social compliance that is coercive.

Table 5. Figurative Language in "Fix You"

No	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"Stuck in reverse"	Metaphor	The movement of life is directed toward

No	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
			a vehicle; connotative meaning: emotional decline, an inability to recover or grow.
2.	"Lights will guide you home"	Metaphor/ Symbolism	Light reflects hope and love as a guiding force; thematic meaning: even in darkness, emotional safety can still be attained.
3.	"Ignite your bones"	Hyperbole/ Metaphor	Physical compulsion used to express optimal emotional vitality; affective meaning: renewed strength of purpose and happiness.
4.	" I will try to fix you"	Metaphor (Repetition)	Emotional healing is explained through the concept of mechanical repair; thematic meaning: dedication and care realized through acts of restoration.
5.	"Tears come streaming down your face"	Hyperbole	The torrent of tears intensifies the image beyond ordinary crying; its emotional meaning is profound, uncontrollable sorrow that surpasses its usual expression.
6.	"When you lose something, you can't replace"	Symbolism	Something unique and nameless symbolizes love, identity, or meaning; connotative meaning: an irreparable loss.

Table 6. Figurative Language in " Talk"

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning
1.	"Climb a ladder up to the sun"	Hyperbole/ Metaphore	A physical action that is impossible, reflecting lofty ideals; connotative interpretation: a desire to transcend human limitations.
2.	"Write a song nobody has sung"	Metaphor	Songwriting reflects an effort to contribute something unique and leave a personal mark; thematic meaning: the need for genuine self-expression.
3.	" Tell me your own secret"	Metonymy	A hidden alternative to the idea of personal truth; social meaning: a desire for authentic connection beyond performative interactions.
4.	"Are we part of the human race"	Metaphor/ Simile	That rhetorical question connects individual identity with our shared humanity; its thematic meaning is the search to feel a sense of belonging and a shared existential condition.

Table 7. Figurative Language in “X&Y”

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	“Fighting with my weak hand”	Metaphor	Internal conflict manifests as weakness in physical combat; emotional meaning: feelings of inadequacy and the fragmentation of inner unity.
2.	“Floating on a tidal wave”	Metaphor/ Hyperbole	The explosion of emotions is described as an immense force of nature; connotative meaning: the inability to control oneself when facing a deeply profound situation.
3.	“Drifying through the outer space”	Metaphor	Existential alienation is depicted as a directionless journey through the cosmos; thematic meaning: separation from meaning, community, and identity.
4.	“You and me were never meant to be”	Synecdoche	That pair of pronouns represents all mismatched relationships; thematic meaning: the universality of love's incompatibility.

Table 8. Figurative Language in “Speed of Sound”

No	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	“ Mountain of mine”	Metaphor	Individual obstacles and existential journeys are illustrated as a mountain; thematic meaning: a character of self-discovery that is full of challenges yet has direction.
2.	“Birds go flying at the speed of sound”	Hyperbole	Natural movement is accelerated to a physically impossible speed; connotative meaning: the urgency and haste of the search for truth.
3.	“Planets are moving at the speed of light”	Hyperbole	The accelerated cosmic movement surpasses the laws of physics; thematic meaning: the vastness and indifference of the universe to human scale.
4.	“All those signs- I knew what they meant”	Symbolism	Signs symbolize moments of existential understanding or divine guidance; connotative meaning: characteristics of self-awareness interpretation.
5.	“Looking for something never quite found”	Metaphor	The search for identity is formulated as a physical quest that has yet to find an answer; emotional meaning: eternal anxiety and longing.

Table 9. Figurative Language in " A Message"

No.	Lyrics Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"My song is Love"	Metaphor	Creative expression is identified with the most fundamental human emotions; thematic meaning: art as the most sincere medium of emotional communication.
2.	"Love the Loveless shown"	Alliteration/ Metaphor	Repeated emphasis on the act of giving affection; social meaning: resistance against emotional loneliness in contemporary society.
3.	"My song is love, is love unknown"	Repetition/ Metaphor	Repetition enhances the connection between artistic expression and unfulfilled love; emotional meaning: longing that has not yet found its target.
4.	" And I'm on fire"	Metaphor	A deep emotional situation is translated into a physical flame; affective meaning: spirit, urgent need, and burning desire.

Table 10. Figurative Language in "Low"

No	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conved
1.	"See what's on the other side"	Metaphor	Death or the undefined is considered a boundary of space; connotative meaning: a curiosity about existence beyond human experience.
2.	"And the sun would shine on Everything"	Personification/ Symbolism	The sun is seen as having planned goodness; its symbolic meaning: hope, warmth, and universal grace.
3.	"Nobody said it was easy"	Irony	A confession that seems to hide a deeper fatigue; emotional meaning: giving up but still fighting against life's challenges.
4.	"No one ever said it would	Hyperbole/ Irony	The excess of challenges accompanied by the irony of unfulfilled hopes; emotional meaning: disappointment due to the gap between hope and reality.

Table 11. Figurative Language in " The Hardest Part"

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"Waiting for that bell to ring"	Symbolism/ Metaphor	The bell signifies a crucial moment of change, closure, or disappearance; the theme's meaning: hope for change.
2.	"And the hardest part was letting go"	Metaphor	Emotional release is mapped into the concept of physical release; affective meaning: deep difficulty in ending attachment.
3.	"Not taking part"	Irony	Passive non-participation is displayed without clear criticism; the sarcastic meaning: the price of emotional withdrawal in life.
4.	"Could I have been a parking lot?"	Irony/Metaphor	The speaker associates himself with a changing vacuum; connotative meaning: self-deprecating and feeling afraid of weakness.

Table 12. Figurative Language in " Swallowed in the Sea"

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"You cut me down a tree"	Metaphor	A significant emotional loss is viewed as a destructive act against something that is already rooted and alive; its connotative meaning: a devastating effect on development and stability.
2.	"Put me on a shelf"	Metaphor	Being turned into storage items reflects emotional marginalisation and neglect; social meaning: more considered as objects rather than as humans.
3.	"Write a song a hundred miles long"	Hyperbole	The grandeur of creative results is exaggerated to reflect boundless feelings; emotional meaning: the magnitude of sensory experience that defies common expression.
4.	"Swallowed in the sea"	Metaphor/ Hyperbole	Total emotional destruction is depicted as being drowned by the ocean; thematic meaning: losing oneself completely in extreme conditions.
5.	"Oh, what good is it to live with nothing left to give"	Irony/ Metaphor	Rhetorical questions reflect existential despair; affective meaning: the meaninglessness experienced from a hollow life due to loss.

Table 13. Figurative Language in " Twisted Logic"

No	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"Twisted logic"	Metaphor/ Oxymoron	Rational thinking has transformed into something contradictory; thematic meaning: the incongruity of the modern social system or individual perspectives.
2.	"The seasons change and so do I"	Metaphor/ Simile	Human emotional changes are similar to cyclical changes in nature; the connotative meaning: change as something natural, inevitable, and universal.
3.	"You who started it all"	Personification	An unreal source or individual is considered the perpetrator causing systemic disorder; emotional meaning: the accusation is aimed at covering up deeper sorrow.
4.	"Coming back, and I don't know how"	Metaphor	Once again presented as a spatial movement with uncertain mechanisms; thematic meaning: the ambiguity of resilience and recovery.

Table 14. Figurative Language in "Til Kingdom Come"

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type	Meaning Conveyed
1.	"Steal my heart"	Metaphor/Idiom	Love is likened to a theft; its connotative meaning: the sudden, unexpected capture of affection that changes one's life.
2.	"Hold my tongue"	Metaphor/Idiom	Physical restraint in the statement reflects emotional pressure or conscious acknowledgement; social meaning: the consequences of unexpressed emotions.
3.	"Wheels just keep on turning"	Metaphor/Symbolism	The wheel depicts the inevitable and cyclical passage of time; thematic meaning: the persistence of life's rhythm regardless of personal desires.
4.	"Wait ' til kingdom come"	Hyperbole/Idiom	An eternity is revealed in a religious allusion; connotative meaning: total and unconditional loyalty.
5.	"For your love to reign in me"	Metaphor	Love is viewed as a government with sovereignty; thematic meaning: the desire to have emotional control over others in managing someone's inner life.

Discussion

Types of Figurative Language Found in the X&Y Album

Metaphor as the Dominant Rhetorical Strategy

The study found that metaphor was the dominant type of figurative language in the X&Y album, with 38 occurrences (43.18%), consistent with previous studies on songs by Billie Eilish, Taylor Swift, and Coldplay. Unlike earlier research, this study showed that metaphors are distributed consistently across all thirteen songs, making them a defining structural feature of the album. These metaphors connect abstract emotions with concrete imagery, such as "stuck in reverse" and "gliding through space," enabling listeners to understand complex emotional experiences through tangible concepts. In addition, many songs employ extended metaphors, particularly Fix You, where the theme of emotional healing is sustained through interconnected metaphorical expressions. This coherent metaphorical framework distinguishes X&Y from previous studies that found metaphors to be used more independently across different songs.

Symbolism and Thematic Function

Symbolism was the second most dominant figurative language, accounting for 17.05% (15 examples), distinguishing X&Y from previous Coldplay studies. Symbols such as light in Fix You and What If represent hope, guidance, and existential meaning, while wheel and bell symbolize the passage of time and hope for change. These findings show that the album uses culturally shared symbols to convey deeper philosophical meanings, supporting Leech's (1981) concept of connotative meaning and aligning with Tonwong and Punkasirikul's (2024) view that figurative language in popular music communicates broader cultural values beyond personal emotions.

Hyperbole as an Instrument of Emotional Intensification

Hyperbole ranks third in frequency with 15.91%, a finding that slightly differs from the results of Puspitorini and Hamdani (2021), who identified hyperbole as the most dominant type in the Coldplay songs they studied, as well as Barung et al. (2023), who also noted hyperbole as the most frequently appearing type in Coldplay songs from various albums. The lower ranking of hyperbole in this study, compared to previous findings, is likely due to the albumic focus of this research. Because this study examined the thirteen songs from the X&Y album as a cohesive whole rather than sampling from various albums, the distribution of figurative forms reflected the distinctive thematic character of the album. The main concerns of the X&Y album regarding existential questions and relational authenticity seemed to prioritise the precision of metaphors and the depth of symbolism over the dramatic amplification of hyperbole, which is more closely associated with direct emotional-declaration songs like Fix You and Swallowed in the Sea.

However, the hyperbole identified in this study is renowned for its affective intensity. The phrase "Writing a song a hundred miles long" in Talk constructs a spatial hyperbole to convey the magnitude of the desire for authentic creative expression, while "Drowning in the sea's function" in the same song extends the hyperbole to the point of total self-destruction as a metaphor for the immersion in emotions. These findings support Perrine (1992) argument that the primary function of hyperbole in literary texts is to enhance emotional intensity, a function that is particularly effective in the context of song lyrics, where the auditory dimension of performance further amplifies its rhetorical power.

Personification, Simile, Irony, Synecdoche, and Metonymy

Personification was present at a rate of 9.09%, especially in songs that involve nature or social systems as agents. The personification of nature in "White Shadows" ("And the earth is on its way") illustrates what Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) describe as attributing human traits to non-human entities, creating an emotional meaning of cosmic purpose related to the album's existential themes. Simile, although the least frequently appeared type of definition with a percentage of 5.68%, was present in contexts that require explicit comparisons for clarity of communication, such as in the framework of comparing individual identity to humanity in Talk ("Are we part of the human race?"). Irony, which appears in four examples, serves in all cases to create a difference between the position expressed by the speaker and their actual emotional state, reflecting the definition of verbal irony by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) as an expression of meaning that contradicts its literal utterance. Synecdoche and metonymy each appear twice, serving as focused associations where certain elements or related

concepts are used to symbolise a larger entity, in accordance with Perrine (1992) classification of figurative associations.

Figurative Language as an Effective Conveyor of Meaning

Conceptual Meaning as Analytical Foundation

Based on Leech's (1981) framework, the analysis of meaning in the X&Y album begins at the level of conceptual meaning, which Leech identifies as a key element in linguistic communication that forms layers of denotative and literal meaning. For each recognised figurative language unit in this study, the conceptual meaning acted as the foundation from which more complex layers of meaning are created. The lyrics "Lights will guide you home" (Fix You) have a conceptual meaning that is geographically literal: real light illuminates the path to a physical dwelling. However, as revealed through further analysis, the layers of connotation, emotion, and themes builded upon this conceptual foundation was the true communicative burden of the lyrics.

Connotative Meaning and the Construction of Emotional Depth

The analysis shows that connotative meaning is the main communicative function of figurative language in X&Y, enriching lyrics with emotional, cultural, and associative meanings beyond their literal sense. For example, “Lights will guide you home” symbolizes hope, love, and emotional support rather than physical light. These findings support previous studies that identified connotative meaning as dominant in popular music and further demonstrate that the figurative expressions in X&Y form a coherent system that reinforces the album’s themes of duality, existential reflection, and human connection.

Affective Meaning and the Emotional Communication of Lyrics

Affective meaning, as described by Leech (1981) as the speaker's emotional feelings or attitudes conveyed through word choice, is the layer most quickly felt by the listeners of the X&Y album. The figurative language style in this album is consistently designed to express certain emotional states with a precision that cannot be achieved by literal language. The hyperbole "tears stream down your face" (Fix You) not only depicts crying; it conveys a certain emotional intensity of deep and extraordinary sadness that creates an emotional context for the speaker's subsequent offer of comfort. The metaphor "struggling with my weak hands" (X&Y) does not merely reflect an inner conflict; it conveys a certain affective quality of inadequacy and self-doubt that characterises the existential condition explored in the album.

Barung et al. (2023) also noted that figurative language in Coldplay's songs creates connotative meanings related to the dimensions of human social and emotional life. This study reinforces and expands on this observation by showing that affective meaning is not merely a byproduct of figurative expression in the album X&Y, but rather the primary communicative goal. The strategic use of hyperbole for emotional reinforcement, metaphor for emotional representation, and symbolism for emotional resonance demonstrates a rhetorical orientation aimed at optimising affective impact. This view aligns with the argument put forth by Aras et al. (2024) that contemporary popular music utilises figurative language as an effective means for emotional communication with cross-cultural appeal.

Thematic Meaning and the Duality of the Album

The concept of thematic meaning by Leech (1981), which is related to how a writer organises and emphasises a message through structural and compositional choices, is very important for the analysis of the X&Y album as an integrated collection. The main philosophical idea of the album focuses on duality, reflected in its name and outlined by Barung et al. (2023) as a fundamental principle in Chris Martin's songwriting, manifested in thematic meaning through the use of figurative language found in this study. The simultaneous occurrence of metaphors of progress and metaphors of stagnation in various songs (for example, "The Future's for Discovering" in Square One compared to "Stuck in Reverse" in Fix You) forms a dialectical thematic structure where existential hope and existential despair are maintained in productive tension throughout the album.

In addition, the symbolic antithesis between light and its absence, established throughout What If and Fix You, becomes a thematic organising principle that provides internal consistency to the album as a single text. This result confirms the methodological decision outlined in the Methods section, to analyse the thirteen songs as a single cohesive unit rather than as separate texts. The thematic meaning demonstrated by the figurative language in the album X&Y can only be fully assessed at the album level, a conclusion that aligns with the methodological arguments put forth by Santika and Syafryadin (2023) as well as Sa'idah and Permatasari (2024), who support the approach of analysing the entire album in popular music lyric research.

Social Meaning and the Album's Cultural Context

The analysis found that social meaning in X&Y reflects the social and cultural context of the early 21st century. Metaphors in songs such as White Shadows and A Message express concerns about technological control, social isolation, and modern existential anxiety. These findings indicate that the album's figurative language conveys not only personal emotions but also broader cultural values and social identity, supporting Tonwong and Punkasirikul's (2024) findings.

Figurative Language as Relevant Material for the Semantics Course

The third research question relates to the pedagogical relevance of metaphorical language recognised as a teaching example for the Semantics course in the English Language Education program. This subsection provides an answer to the question by linking the specific metaphorical language findings from this research with the main conceptual domains discussed in the undergraduate Semantics course, including denotative versus connotative meaning, semantic ambiguity, the influence of context on meaning, and metaphorical meaning as a category in semantic analysis.

Illustrating Denotative and Connotative Meaning

The findings demonstrate that figurative language in X&Y effectively illustrates the distinction between denotative and connotative meaning, making it a valuable resource for teaching Semantics. For example, "Lights will guide you home" can help students identify literal meaning before exploring its deeper emotional and cultural interpretations. Supported by previous studies, the album provides authentic and culturally relevant examples that can enhance EFL students' understanding of figurative language, contextual interpretation, and literary analysis.

Developing Skills in Contextual Semantic Analysis

The figurative language in X&Y also helps students develop contextual semantic analysis by interpreting meaning through context rather than literal definitions. Irony and symbolism in the lyrics require cultural knowledge and contextual inference, making the album a valuable teaching resource for strengthening critical semantic analysis and literary interpretation in undergraduate Semantics courses.

Introducing Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Several metaphors found in this study can be effectively utilised as introductory examples for Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980), an issue that is increasingly being integrated into the Semantics curriculum for advanced undergraduate programs. The metaphor "A future to explore" (Square One) illustrates the broad conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, while "Riding the tidal wave" (X&Y) illustrates EMOTION IS PHYSICAL, and "Caught in a landslide" (Fix You) illustrates CHANGE IS MOTION. By discovering these conceptual metaphors in the familiar and engaging lyrics of Coldplay, students can deepen their intuitive understanding of how metaphorical thinking influences human conceptualisation before encountering the more abstract theoretical tools of Lakoff and Johnson. Pardede et al. (2024), who used the Lakoff and Johnson framework on the Coldplay song "A Head Full of Dreams," found that students find it easier to engage with conceptual metaphor theory when explained through familiar song lyrics, a finding that directly supports the teaching method proposed here.

Comparative Analysis with Prior Studies

This study extends previous research by comparing its findings with earlier studies on figurative language in song lyrics. Unlike Puspitorini and Hamdani (2021), who found hyperbole to be the dominant type in Coldplay's songs, this study identified metaphor as the most dominant. The difference is likely due to the album-based approach used in this research, which analyzed all songs in X&Y, revealing metaphor as a consistent structural feature across the album rather than a characteristic of only selected songs.

Barung et al. (2023) also revealed that hyperbole is the most commonly encountered type in multi-album studies of Coldplay's lyrics, while applying Leech's (1981) semantic framework for meaning analysis. This research confirms Barung et al.'s findings that the connotative meanings in Coldplay's lyrics relate to aspects of human social life, but expands the analysis by showing that these connotative meanings form a consistent thematic system at the album level rather than being separate elements of each song. This expansion is the main analytical contribution of this research compared to Puspitorini and Hamdani (2021) and Barung et al. (2023).

Astuti and Astuti's (2020) study on the album Parachutes found 35 examples of figurative language, with rhetoric as the predominant type, whereas this research notes 88 examples with metaphor as the predominant type. This difference may reflect the distinct typological uniqueness of the two albums: Parachutes, which is Coldplay's first album, employs a simpler lyrical style both structurally and rhetorically, whereas X&Y, as the third and most commercially ambitious release, showcases higher metaphorical complexity and conceptual depth. The higher frequency in this study (88 compared to 35) may also reflect the more thorough coding procedures used, which recognise

metaphorical examples at the word and phrase level rather than just at the full sentence level.

The dominance of metaphor in X&Y aligns with previous studies on Billie Eilish, Taylor Swift, and Ed Sheeran, showing that metaphor is a fundamental element in contemporary pop lyrics. This study confirms that metaphorical expressions in X&Y are not incidental but support the album's themes of duality, existential questions, and human relationships. Overall, the album demonstrates rich rhetorical structures where figurative language functions not only as artistic decoration but also as a key tool for conveying layered meanings through various semantic dimensions.

Conclusion

This study identified 88 instances of figurative language in Coldplay's X&Y album, classified into eight categories: metaphor, symbolism, hyperbole, personification, simile, irony, synecdoche, and metonymy. Metaphor was the most dominant type (43.18%), followed by symbolism (17.05%) and hyperbole (15.91%), indicating that the album primarily employs metaphorical expressions to communicate existential, emotional, and philosophical themes. These findings demonstrate that X&Y represents a linguistically rich work in which figurative language functions as a central stylistic feature. The analysis further revealed that figurative language effectively conveys meaning through multiple semantic dimensions, particularly conceptual, connotative, affective, and thematic meanings, as explained in Leech's semantic framework. Metaphors, symbols, and hyperboles enable abstract ideas such as hope, alienation, identity, and human relationships to be expressed more vividly, emotionally, and efficiently than literal language. The findings also support Perrine's view that figurative language enhances imagination, emotional impact, clarity of expression, and economy of language, while simultaneously reflecting broader social and cultural issues. From an educational perspective, the findings indicate that the X&Y album provides authentic and pedagogically valuable materials for teaching Semantics, particularly in explaining denotative and connotative meanings, contextual interpretation, and the relationship between figurative forms and semantic functions. The identified metaphorical patterns also offer accessible examples for introducing conceptual metaphor theory in English language education. Therefore, the study contributes both to linguistic research on figurative language and to the development of authentic teaching materials for higher education, especially in English Language Education programs.

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