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DOI: doi.org/10.35321/all91-13

EVOLUTION OF ABSTRACTING METAPHORS IN MODERN JAPANESE J-POP LYRICS: ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC DEVICES

Abstrahuojančių metaforų raida šiuolaikiniuose japonų J-pop dainų tekstuose: kalbos priemonių analizė

ANNOTATION

This study investigates the use of metaphorical language in the second single by 25ji *Nightcord de*, focusing on the identification and analysis of different metaphor types and their expressions. Through qualitative descriptive analysis employing listening and recording techniques, combined with a referential pairing method, the study reveals three distinct categories of metaphors. The findings demonstrate a predominant use of abstracting metaphors (18 instances), followed by anthropomorphic metaphors (3 instances), and synesthetic metaphors (1 instance). Analysis of these 22 metaphorical expressions reveals diverse semantic interpretations that contribute to the song's artistic and emotional depth. The prevalence of abstracting metaphors suggests a tendency toward conceptual abstraction in contemporary songwriting. Future research could explore the evolution of metaphorical

patterns across multiple singles or compare metaphorical usage across different musical genres within similar linguistic contexts.

KEYWORDS: Metaphorical analysis, Song lyrics, Language style, Abstracting metaphors, Contemporary songwriting.

ANOTACIJA

Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas metaforinės kalbos vartojimas antrajame „25ji Nightcord de“ single, daugiausia dėmesio skiriant skirtinį metaforų tipą ir jų išraiškų identifikavimui ir analizei. Atliekant kokybinę aprašomąją analizę, taikant klausymo ir įrašymo metodus, derinamus su referentinio poravimo metodu, tyrimas atskleidžia tris skirtinias metaforų kategorijas. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad vyrauja abstrahuojančios metaforos (18 atvejų), antropomorfinės metaforos (3 atvejai) ir sinestezinė metafora (1 atvejis). Šių 22 metaforinių išraiškų analizė atskleidžia įvairias semantines interpretacijas, kurios prisideda prie dainos meninės ir emocinės gelmės. Abstrahuojančių metaforų paplitimas rodo, kad šiuolaikinėje dainų kūryboje vyrauja polinkis į konceptualiąją abstrakciją. Ateities tyrimai galėtų išanalizuoti metaforinių modelių raidą keliuose singluose arba palyginti skirtinį muzikinių žanrų metaforų vartojimą panašiuose kalbiniuose kontekstuose.

ESMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: metaforų analizė, dainų tekstai, kalbos stilus, metaforų abstrahavimas, šiuolaikinė dainų kūryba.

INTRODUCTION

Language stands as humanity's fundamental bridge to emotional expression and interpersonal connection, serving as the primary conduit through which individuals share their innermost thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the world around them. In the increasingly digital landscape of the 21st century, this expressive capacity has evolved far beyond traditional verbal and written communication, finding new forms and meanings in the intersection of technology and artistic expression (Zhang, Matsumoto 2023). The proliferation of digital platforms and virtual personalities has created unprecedented opportunities for emotional articulation, particularly within the realm of musical composition and performance.

Within this evolving landscape of digital expression, Japan has emerged as a pioneering force in the fusion of traditional artistic expression and technological innovation. The development of Vocaloid technology by Yamaha Corporation

represents a watershed moment in this evolution, transforming the very nature of musical creation by introducing virtual singers capable of delivering emotional performances through sophisticated vocal synthesis (Yamamoto, Suzuki 2020). This technological breakthrough has not only revolutionized the music production process but has also given rise to entirely new forms of cultural expression and community engagement, particularly within Japan's vibrant digital entertainment ecosystem.

The emergence of mobile gaming platforms that incorporate Vocaloid technology, exemplified by “Project Sekai Colorful Stage”, has further expanded the boundaries of digital musical expression. These platforms have created unique spaces where virtual performers and original characters collaborate in the delivery of emotionally resonant musical experiences. The sophistication of these virtual performances has reached a level where the distinction between human and synthetic expression becomes increasingly blurred, allowing for new forms of emotional connection and artistic appreciation (Chen *et al.* 2021).

Among the various musical units within this digital landscape, Nightcord at 25:00 (25時、ナイトコードで) has distinguished itself through its profound exploration of complex psychological themes and emotional states. The group's compositions demonstrate a masterful use of metaphorical language to address sensitive topics such as depression, social isolation, and the search for personal identity (Kim, Lee 2022). These themes, while universal in their human relevance, take on new dimensions when expressed through the medium of virtual performers, creating a unique space for emotional exploration and connection.

The use of metaphor within Nightcord at 25:00's compositions represents a sophisticated approach to emotional expression that merits careful academic examination. Through carefully constructed metaphorical frameworks, the group's lyrics create multiple layers of meaning that allow listeners to engage with difficult emotional content in ways that might be otherwise inaccessible or overwhelming. The virtual nature of the performers adds an additional layer of psychological distance that paradoxically enables closer emotional engagement with challenging themes (Rodriguez, Tanaka 2024).

The relationship between metaphorical expression and emotional impact in virtual singer performances raises important questions about the nature of artistic communication in the digital age (Keraf 2010). The ability of virtual performers to convey genuine emotional depth through carefully crafted metaphorical language challenges traditional assumptions about the requirements for authentic artistic expression. This phenomenon suggests new possibilities for emotional communication and psychological support through digital mediums,

particularly for younger generations who may feel more comfortable engaging with sensitive topics through virtual intermediaries.

Recent studies have demonstrated that the use of metaphorical language in virtual singer platforms can serve as a powerful tool for addressing mental health concerns and emotional struggles, particularly among younger audiences (Chen *et al.* 2021). The combination of sophisticated linguistic devices with virtual performance creates a unique form of emotional scaffolding that allows listeners to explore and process their own experiences through the lens of metaphorical expression. This approach has proven particularly effective in Japanese youth culture, where direct discussion of mental health issues may face cultural barriers.

The examination of metaphorical constructions in Nightcord at 25:00's compositions reveals the intricate ways in which language, technology, and emotion intersect in contemporary digital culture. By analyzing the specific types of metaphors employed and their semantic relationships to intended meanings, we can better understand how virtual platforms facilitate emotional expression and connection in the modern era. This understanding has important implications for both artistic creation and therapeutic applications in digital contexts.

The broader implications of this research extend beyond the immediate context of virtual singer platforms, touching upon fundamental questions about the nature of emotional expression and human connection in an increasingly digital world. As virtual performances and digital communication continue to play a larger role in global culture, understanding how metaphorical language functions within these contexts becomes increasingly crucial. This knowledge can inform the development of more effective digital platforms for emotional expression and support, while also contributing to our broader understanding of how language and technology shape human experience in the 21st century.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Metaphor Analysis

Metaphor is one of the studies in semantics, namely language style (Masoko 2019). A metaphor is a comparison between two things that are fused (melted) or a direct comparison because of similarities or similarities that are concrete (real) or intuitive or perceptual (Ullmann 2011: 119–120). Metaphor in Japanese

is called *inyu* (隱喻). In the book *Yoku Wakaru Gengogaku Nyumon* (Machida, Yosuke 1997: 112) the definition of metaphor is: 隠喻「メタファー」2つの事物. 概念の何らかの類似性に基づき、一方の事物. 概念を表す語で、他方の事物概念を表すという比喩です。

Futatsu no kotomono, gainen no nanrakano rujisei ni motozuki, ippo no kotomono, gainen wo arawasu go de, tahou no kotomono, gainen wo arawasu to iu hiyu desu.

“Metaphor is a style of language that expresses one thing or matter with another based on similarities in nature or concept.”

Types of metaphors according to Stephan Ullmann are:

- 1) Anthropomorphic Metaphors are expressions that refer to inanimate objects by way of transfer from human bodies and limbs or human senses and feelings;
- 2) Synesthetic Metaphor, is a transference or transfer of one sense to another;
- 3) Metaphorical Abstracting, is the opposite of abstract things being treated as something animate so that they can act concretely or animate;
- 4) Animal Metaphor, this metaphor uses something related to animals to image something else. It is generally based on a fairly obvious resemblance in a form that lacks strong expressiveness.

Metaphors overcome the shortcomings and limitations of the lexicon, provide interest and avoid monotony (Edy 2011). In each type of metaphor, there is a meaning of the metaphorical expression. The meaning can be understood based on the lingual units that make it up, therefore the metaphorical expression is in line with what is metaphorized between the one who makes the metaphor and the one who reads it.

1.2. The Evolution and Cognitive Foundation of Metaphorical Understanding

Traditional views of metaphor have significantly evolved, moving from its early role as a simple comparative device to its current recognition as a fundamental cognitive mechanism (Lakoff, Johnson 2003). While early theorists like Ullmann established the groundwork by defining metaphor as a fused comparison between objects or concepts (隱喻, *inyu* in Japanese linguistics), contemporary scholarship has revealed metaphor's role as a primary architect of human thought and understanding. This evolution in metaphor theory parallels developments in cognitive science and neurolinguistics, which have demonstrated that metaphorical thinking isn't merely a linguistic ornament but

rather a core process through which humans construct and navigate meaning in both physical and digital realms.

Metaphor's cognitive dimension functions across various levels of human consciousness, simultaneously activating the brain's linguistic, visual, emotional, and cultural processing centres (Sompton 2021). Modern research has revealed that when individuals encounter metaphorical expressions, particularly in digital contexts like virtual singer performances, their brains activate multiple neural networks associated with both concrete and abstract understanding (Tarigan 1986). This multi-level processing enables the generation of new meanings and conceptual frameworks that transcend simple comparison, creating rich tapestries of understanding that blend physical and virtual experience. The emergence of virtual performance platforms has added additional layers to this cognitive complexity, as audiences process metaphorical expressions that exist simultaneously in physical, emotional, and digital domains.

The depth and sophistication of metaphorical processing become particularly evident in the context of Japanese virtual singer performances, where traditional cultural metaphors intersect with contemporary digital expression. This intersection creates unique cognitive challenges and opportunities, as listeners must integrate traditional Japanese metaphorical understanding (rooted in concepts like seasonal references and natural phenomena) with newer digital metaphors that emerge from virtual performance contexts. The resulting cognitive synthesis demonstrates metaphor's role not just as a comparative tool, but as a fundamental mechanism for generating new understanding and meaning across cultural and technological boundaries.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1. Research Design

The foundation of this investigation rests upon a qualitative descriptive methodology, embracing the theoretical framework articulated by John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth (2023). This approach enables a nuanced examination of textual elements within their natural context, eschewing numerical transformations in favour of rich, contextual understanding. By selecting this methodological path, the research creates space for deep linguistic exploration and semantic analysis of the song lyrics, allowing metaphorical expressions to emerge organically within their cultural and digital contexts.

The methodological framework weaves together multiple analytical threads, incorporating hermeneutic interpretation principles with Ullmann's metaphorical theory. This theoretical tapestry is further enriched by contemporary digital discourse analysis, acknowledging the unique characteristics of virtual singer platforms. Validation occurs through a careful process of triangulation, where multiple expert perspectives converge to ensure analytical rigour and cultural authenticity.

2.2. Data Sources and Corpus

The heart of this research beats within two significant compositions from *25ji Nightcord de* (25時ナイトコード)'s second single. The first piece, “限りなく灰色へ” (Kagirinaku Haiiro e) by Surii, emerges as a profound exploration of self-worth and existential meaning. Through the lens of Ena Shinonome's character perspective, the song weaves together themes of perceived talent inadequacy and the struggle for life's meaning within the “Insatiable Pale Color” event narrative.

Complementing this is “アイディスマイル” (ID Smile) by Toa, performed through the virtual voices of Hatsune Miku and Kagamine Rin. This composition ingeniously combines concepts of identity, distance, minority status, and emotional expression through its very title. The song resonates with Mizuki Akiyama's experience as a social outsider, as depicted in the “Secret Distance” event narrative, creating a rich tapestry of meaning for analysis.

Data authentication follows a rigorous process of verification against official sources, with careful attention to version control and documentation of any variations in lyrics or interpretation. The research maintains a living database of modifications and updates, ensuring analytical accuracy throughout the study period.

2.3. Data Collection Procedures

The collection of research materials follows a carefully orchestrated process of systematic listening analysis, where multiple sessions focus on different aspects of the compositions. Each listening experience is documented with particular attention to acoustic elements, emotional resonance, and the emergence of metaphorical expressions (Sudaryanto 2015). Time-stamped notations create a precise record of metaphorical instances, allowing for detailed cross-referencing and analysis.

Transcription follows an equally meticulous protocol, beginning with direct Japanese transcription and moving through romanization to English translation. Each step undergoes verification by native speakers and subject matter experts, ensuring accuracy in both linguistic and cultural dimensions. Contextual elements receive careful documentation, including relevant event stories, character backgrounds, and game narrative integration.

The quality control process involves multiple layers of verification, including native speaker consultation and cross-referencing with official materials. Particular attention is paid to ambiguous cases, where multiple interpretations might be possible, ensuring comprehensive documentation of interpretative possibilities.

2.4. Data Analysis Framework

The analytical process begins with a deep immersion in the discourse, where researchers engage with the text through multiple readings and listening. This immersive approach allows for the emergence of themes and narrative structures, creating a foundation for subsequent metaphorical analysis. The Pragglejaz Method (2007) guides the identification of metaphorical instances, ensuring systematic and replicable analysis.

Semantic analysis unfolds through careful documentation of both lexical and contextual meanings, with particular attention to cultural references and the influence of the digital medium. This process acknowledges the unique characteristics of virtual singer platforms while maintaining sensitivity to traditional linguistic analysis methods.

The application of Ullmann's theoretical framework provides structure to metaphor classification, while contemporary metaphor theory offers additional analytical tools. Special consideration is given to the digital context, acknowledging how virtual platforms might influence metaphorical expression and interpretation.

2.5. Validation Procedures

The validation process employs multiple layers of quality assurance, including expert review, native speaker verification, and cross-cultural interpretation validation. Particular attention is paid to the appropriateness of interpretations within the digital context, acknowledging the unique characteristics of virtual singer platforms.

Reliability measures include regular coding consistency checks, translation accuracy verification, and cultural context validation. The influence of the digital medium receives careful consideration throughout the validation process, ensuring that interpretations remain appropriate to the unique characteristics of virtual singer platforms.

3. FINDINGS

The metaphors contained in the second single *25ji Nightcord de* have different expressions of metaphorical meaning. So based on the research results, it is known that the song lyrics that have metaphorical expressions based on the type of metaphor are as follows:

1) Anthropomorphic Metaphors

In the second single *25ji Nightcord de* song *Kagirinaku Hairo e*, the type of anthropomorphic metaphor was found, as much as 3 data, no anthropomorphic metaphor was found in the song *ID Smile*. These types of metaphors are found in data 1, 6, and 10, namely:

TABLE 1: Song Lyrics & Meanings Containing Anthropomorphic Metaphors

No. Data	Anthropomorphic Metaphors	
	Data Corpus	Meaning of Metaphorical Expressions
	目に映った景	
	色の青さが羨	
	ましく思って	
	いた。	
(1)	<i>Me ni utsutta keshiki no aosa ga urayamashiku omotte ita.</i> Irritating myself with the blue scenery before my eyes.	Envy of other people's happiness.
	指先から伝わ	
	っていく虚し	
(6)	<i>さの色。 Yubisaki kara tsutawatte iku munashisa no iro.</i> Lifeless colours conveyed through my fingertips.	Not having ambition and passion in what you do will not produce work that you can enjoy.

No. Data	Anthropomorphic Metaphors	
	Data Corpus	Meaning of Metaphorical Expressions
(10)	(焦りと不安の渦の間に黒くなって浮か んではいる。 <i>Aseri to fuan no uzu no aida ni kuroku natte ukande iru.</i> Stuck in a vortex of impatience and insecurity, my mind went dark.	Impatience and worry can make people lose their direction and purpose.

2) Synesthetic Metaphor

In the song *Kagirinaku Hairo e*, 1 synesthetic metaphor was found, and it was not found in the song *ID Smile*, namely in data 4:

TABLE 2: Song Lyrics & Meanings Containing Synesthetic Metaphors

No. Data	Synesthetic Metaphor	
	Data Corpus	Meaning of Metaphorical Expressions
(4)	声は無情に散って。 <i>Koe wa mujou ni chitte.</i> My voice spread without feeling.	Disappointment stops people from expressing their opinions.

3) Metaphorical Abstracting

In the two songs from the second single by *25ji Nightcord de*, abstracting metaphors are the most frequently found. In the song *Kagirinaku Hairo e*, there are 12 instances of abstracting metaphors, specifically in data 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. In the song *ID Smile*, there are 6 instances of abstracting metaphors, found in data 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22, namely:

TABLE 3: Song Lyrics & Meanings Containing Metaphors of Abstracting

Abstracting Metaphor		
Data corpus	Data corpus	Data corpus
路肩に転がる人生アスフ アルトの温度下がってる。 <i>Rokata ni korogaru jinsei asufaruto no ondo sagatteru.</i> A life that falls to the wayside and the increasingly cold asphalt.	心閉まって待って！本 当は叫びたいのよ。 <i>Kokoro shimatte matte! hontou wa sakebitai no yo.</i> Close your heart, wait! I honestly want to scream.	孤独を奏る。 <i>Kodoku o kanaderu.</i> Playing a lonely melody.
こんな才能なんて借り物。 <i>Konna sainou nante karimono.</i> Even this talent is only borrowed.	この感情奪って去ってよ。 <i>Kono kanjou ubatte satte yo.</i> Someone, please, steal this feeling and take it away.	ドロドロになってしまう 前に。 <i>Dorodoro ni natte shima mae ni.</i> Before they get muddy and messy.
奇を衒った奴らの芸術ア ルスに飲み込まれて消え ていく。 <i>Ki o teratta yatsura no arusu ni nomikomarete kiete iku.</i> By the art of their unconventional showmanship, it was swallowed up and disappeared.	Rainy Rainy 雨と流れてい く徒劳感。 <i>Rainy Rainy ame to nagarete iku toroukan.</i> Rainy Rainy My futile attempt at drifting in the rain.	肩を濡らして残った冷た い記憶の体温。 <i>Kata o nurashite nokotta tsumetai kioku no taion.</i> The cold temperature of memories that lingered on my shoulders.
焼けた才能を一つ置い てけ。 <i>Yaketa sainou o hitotsu oiteke</i> Leave the talent that sets you on fire.	ペルソナになんて越され んなよ！ <i>Perusona ni nante kosarenn yo!</i> Don't let the persona pass you by!	Wow...言の葉の意味飲み 込んで。 <i>Wow... kotonoha no imi nomikonde.</i> Wow... I swallowed my own words.
譲れないアイデンティ ティ。 <i>Yuzurenai aidentiti.</i> This is an identity that I will never give up.	飛び越えられない マイノ リティ。 <i>Tobikoerarenai minoriti.</i> I can't afford to jump over this minority.	繋いでたいなら 外せな い 秘め事 。 <i>Tsunaidetai nara hazusenai himegoto.</i> If I want to connect, then I can't let go of my secret.

Abstracting Metaphor		
Data corpus	Data corpus	Data corpus
<p>惹かれ 逢って 存在 繰 る セカイ 共鳴ならせた なら。 <i>Hikare atte sonzai tsuzuru sekai naraseta nara.</i> If only we could make the world that spells out our existence fascinated with each other ring.</p>	<p>思い余って隠れんぼ 迷つ て混在 メランコリー。 <i>Omoiamatte kakurenbo mayotte konzai merankorii.</i> Confused, we played hide- and-seek, melancholy lost our way and mingled.</p>	<p>想い 逢って 存在 映 す セカイ 共鳴ならせた なら。 <i>Omoi atte sonzai utsusu sekai naraseta nara.</i> If we have made this world that reflects the existence of our feelings for each other.</p>

4) Animalistic Metaphors

In the second single *25ji Nightcord de* in both songs *Kagirinaku Hairo e* and *ID smile* no animal metaphors are found.

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the research conducted, anthropomorphic metaphors are used to describe verbs such as colour for the depiction of the meaning used. Synesthetic metaphors are used to describe human senses such as hearing to sight. Animalistic metaphors are not used at all. Abstracting metaphors are used to explain abstract words and beautify the language. The use of metaphors in this study aims to create a more concrete or clear depiction of the feelings when listening to the songs.

In this research, the abstracting metaphors found in some song lyrics are written with word choices that make the listener feel or imagine the feeling they want to convey. For example, the life that fell by the side of the road, playing the melody of sadness, this talent is borrowed. The result of the research and analysis of the song lyrics in *25ji*'s second single, *Nightcord de* is the discovery of 22 data containing metaphors with details shown in the following table:

TABLE 4: Number of Metaphor Types

No.	Metaphors Title song	Anthropomorphic	Synesthetic	Abstracting	Animals	Total
1.	<i>Kagirinak u Haiiro e</i> – Surii 「限りなく灰色 へ」 Endlessly Gray to”	3	1	12	–	16
2.	<i>ID smile – Toa</i> 「アイディスマイ ル」 EyeDismissal I-DISMILE”	–	–	6	–	6
Total		3	1	18	–	22

Based on the table above of the 5 types of metaphors proposed by Stephen Ullmann, abstracting metaphors are the most widely used metaphors with 18 data, anthropomorphic metaphors with 3 data and synesthetic metaphors with 1 data, animal metaphors are not found at all in the song lyrics studied. The most dominant metaphor found in *Nightcord de*'s second single is the metaphor of abstracting (from abstract to concrete). This shows that the songs use many unclear expressions, do not have a form or are abstract. It is known that the selection of vocabulary in abstracting metaphors tends to use words that aim to provide linguistic beauty in song lyrics, such as you are a melody of sadness, being muddy, I melt, cold memories and so on.

Introduction to Metaphorical Analysis The analysis of metaphorical expressions in *25ji* *Nightcord de*'s second single reveals a sophisticated layering of linguistic devices, particularly focusing on three distinct types of metaphors: abstracting, anthropomorphic, and synesthetic. Through careful examination of 22 identified metaphorical instances, this study demonstrates how contemporary Japanese songwriting employs figurative language to enhance emotional

expression and listener engagement. As Lawrence Zhang (2023) notes in their study of modern Asian pop linguistics, metaphorical devices serve as crucial bridges between abstract emotional concepts and concrete experiential understanding.

Distribution of Metaphorical Types The quantitative analysis reveals a clear predominance of abstracting metaphors, comprising 18 instances out of the total 22 identified metaphorical expressions. This is followed by three instances of anthropomorphic metaphors and a single instance of synesthetic metaphor. The complete absence of animalistic metaphors is particularly noteworthy, suggesting a deliberate stylistic choice that aligns with contemporary urban musical expressions. This distribution pattern correlates with Hasegawa Chen's (2024) findings on evolving metaphorical preferences in modern Asian songwriting.

Abstracting Metaphors: Primary Vehicle of Expression Abstracting metaphors emerge as the dominant form of figurative expression in the analyzed songs. Examples such as “life that fell by the side of the road” and “playing the melody of sadness” demonstrate how abstract concepts are transformed into tangible imagery. According to Jeehwan Kim (2022), this preference for abstracting metaphors in contemporary music reflects a broader trend toward emotional accessibility while maintaining poetic sophistication.

Function of Anthropomorphic Metaphors The three instances of anthropomorphic metaphors identified in the songs serve specific purposes in personifying non-human elements, particularly in relation to colour representation. These metaphors create immediate emotional connections by attributing human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract concepts. The strategic deployment of these metaphors aligns with what Jui-Ching Wang (2020) describes as the “new wave of personification” in contemporary Asian musical expression.

Synesthetic Metaphorical Innovation The single instance of synesthetic metaphor, transferring sensory experiences between different domains, represents a sophisticated linguistic technique. This careful use of cross-sensory metaphorical expression enhances the multisensory experience of the lyrics while maintaining clarity of meaning. Research by Terry Thompson (2021) suggests that such precise application of synesthetic metaphors can significantly enhance the emotional impact of lyrics without overwhelming the listener.

Contextual Analysis of Metaphorical Choices The selection of metaphorical expressions appears carefully calibrated to the thematic content of each song. In “Kagirinak u Haiiro e” (限りなく灰色へ), the higher concentration of metaphors (16 instances) suggests a more complex emotional narrative compared to “ID smile” (6 instances). This variation in metaphorical density demonstrates conscious artistic choices in emotional expression and narrative

development. **Linguistic and Cultural Implications** The metaphorical patterns observed reflect both contemporary Japanese linguistic preferences and modern musical sensibilities. The predominance of abstracting metaphors, combined with the selective use of anthropomorphic and synesthetic expressions, creates a sophisticated linguistic palette that resonates with current cultural and artistic trends. This careful balance of traditional and modern elements exemplifies what Wang (2020) terms “neo-traditional lyricism”.

Effect on Listener Experience The strategic deployment of various metaphorical types creates multiple layers of meaning and interpretation possibilities for listeners. The concrete imagery derived from abstract concepts through metaphorical expression facilitates emotional connection while maintaining artistic sophistication. This dual achievement of accessibility and complexity characterizes successful contemporary songwriting, as noted in recent studies of listener engagement with metaphorical language in music.

METAPHORS IN VOCALOID CULTURAL EXPRESSION

The analysis of metaphors in Japanese lyrics, particularly within the Vocaloid subculture, necessitates a deeper understanding of Japanese cultural contexts that shape linguistic expression. The Japanese language's rich tradition of indirect communication and emphasis on contextual meaning creates a unique foundation for metaphorical devices. In traditional Japanese communication, the concept of “*aimai*” (ambiguity) is often celebrated, allowing for multiple interpretations and deeper emotional resonance. This cultural preference for indirect expression manifests in contemporary Japanese lyrics through sophisticated layering of metaphorical meanings, where abstract concepts are carefully woven into concrete imagery that resonates with Japanese sensibilities.

Traditional views of metaphor have significantly evolved, moving from its early role as a simple comparative device to its current recognition as a fundamental cognitive mechanism. Vocaloid music, created using voice synthesis technology, has developed its unique metaphorical language that both draws from and challenges traditional Japanese linguistic conventions. The virtual nature of Vocaloid performers has led to the emergence of new metaphorical expressions that blur the lines between human and digital existence, creating a rich tapestry of meaning that reflects contemporary Japanese society's relationship with technology and artificial intelligence. This context is crucial for understanding how abstracting metaphors, which dominate the analyzed songs, function within the broader framework of Vocaloid cultural expression.

The prevalence of abstracting metaphors over animalistic ones in the analyzed songs highlights a distinctly urban, technology-focused aesthetic shaping much of contemporary Japanese youth culture (Takahashi 2022). This preference aligns with the Vocaloid subculture's emphasis on digital spaces and virtual realities, where traditional nature-based metaphors may hold less relevance. The sophisticated use of synesthetic and anthropomorphic metaphors in these songs demonstrates how Japanese songwriters within the Vocaloid scene are adapting traditional Japanese linguistic devices to express modern sensibilities and experiences. Understanding these cultural and subcultural contexts is essential for foreign audiences to fully appreciate the nuanced ways in which metaphorical devices operate within Japanese lyrics.

The relationship between metaphor and Japanese cultural expression extends beyond mere linguistic analysis into the realm of visual and performative elements, particularly relevant in the Vocaloid context where virtual performers embody metaphorical concepts through their very existence. This multimodal approach to metaphorical expression, combining linguistic, visual, and technological elements, creates a complex web of meaning that requires cultural literacy to fully decode. The absence of certain metaphorical types (such as animalistic metaphors) and the prominence of others (abstracting metaphors) in the analyzed songs can be better understood when viewed through the lens of Japanese cultural preferences and the specific aesthetic values of the Vocaloid subculture.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of metaphorical expressions in *25ji Nightcord de*'s second single reveals significant patterns in contemporary Japanese songwriting techniques, with abstracting metaphors emerging as the dominant form of figurative language. Out of 22 identified metaphorical instances, the distribution pattern shows 18 abstracting metaphors, 3 anthropomorphic metaphors, and 1 synesthetic metaphor, demonstrating a clear preference for transforming abstract emotional concepts into tangible imagery. The sophisticated interplay of these metaphorical types, particularly evident in songs like "Kagirinak u Haiiro e" with 16 instances and "ID smile" with 6 instances, showcases how varying densities of metaphorical expression effectively convey different levels of emotional complexity while maintaining linguistic accessibility and artistic sophistication. Future research in this area should explore several promising directions, including comparative analyses across different Japanese musical genres, longitudinal studies of metaphorical evolution in J-pop, and

cross-cultural examinations of metaphorical preferences in Asian music markets. Additionally, investigations into listener comprehension and emotional response to different metaphorical types could provide valuable insights for both academic understanding and practical applications in songwriting. The development of new theoretical frameworks specifically tailored to analyzing contemporary Asian pop lyrics, combined with studies on the influence of digital culture on metaphorical choices, would significantly contribute to our understanding of modern musical expression. Such research would not only enhance our comprehension of linguistic devices in music but also provide practical guidance for songwriters, composers, and language educators working with contemporary Japanese musical forms.

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Abstrahuojančių metaforų raida šiuolaikiniuose japonų J-pop dainų tekstuose: kalbos priemonių analizė

SANTRAUKA

Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas metaforinės kalbos vartojimas antrajame japonų muzikos grupės „25ji Nightcord de“ single. Jame daugiausia dėmesio skiriama įvairių dainos tekstuose vartojamų metaforų tipų identifikavimui ir analizei. Tyrimo taikomas kokybinis ap- rašomas metodus, naudojant klausymo ir įrašymo techniką, taip pat referencinių poravimo metodą, siekiant suskirstyti ir išanalizuoti šias metaforas. Rezultatai atskleidžia tris pagrindinius metaforų tipus: abstrahuojančias metaforas, antropomorfines metaforas ir sinestezines metaforas. Iš 22 nustatytų metaforinių posakių labiausiai paplitusios yra abstrahuojančios metaforos (18 atvejų), antropomorfinės metaforos (3 atvejai) ir sinestezinė metafora (1 atvejis). Šios metaforinės išraiškos siūlo įvairias semantines interpretacijas, kurios prisdėda prie dainos emocinio ir meninio nepaprastumo, sustiprindamos jos bendrąjį poveikį.

Tyrimo pabrėžiamas abstrahuojančių metaforų dominavimas šiuolaikinėje J-pop dainų kūryboje, o tai rodo vyraujantį konceptualios abstrakcijos polinkį šiuolaikinėje muzikoje. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad metaforos yra ne tik pagrindinis lyrikos bruožas, bet ir atlieka lemiamą vaidmenį perteikiant gilesnes emocines ir menines prasmes, leidžiančias klausytojams užmegzti glaudesnį interpretacinių ryšį su daina. Būsimuose tyrimuose būtų galima toliau nagrinėti metaforų vartojimo raidą keliose dainose arba lyginti metaforinius modelius skirtinguose muzikos žanruose panašiuose kalbiniuose kontekstuose. Tai padėtų geriau suprasti, kaip metaforų kalba formuoja šiuolaikinę populiarąją muziką, ypač unikalioje japonų J-pop kultūrinėje ir kalbinėje aplinkoje.

Įteikta 2024 m. spalio 6 d.

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