



Transitivity Analysis of Taylor Swift's Lyrics in *Midnights* Album

Jonathan Irene Sartika Dewi Max¹, Yofi Irvan Vivian², Bayu Arsiadhi Putra³, Singgih Daru Kuncara⁴,

Mulawarman University¹²³⁴, Indonesia

irenesartika@fib.unmul.ac.id, yoviirvan.vivian@fib.unmul.ac.id,

bayu.arsiadhi@fib.unmul.ac.id, singgih.daru.kuncara@fib.unmul.ac.id

Abstract:

*The research analyzes 20 songs in *Midnights* (3 a.m. version), a record-breaking album by Taylor Swift using Halliday's transitivity framework and Simpson's stylistic approach to the lyrics that are regarded as a form of verbal play. The objective is to prove that the transitivity choice is stylized for supporting the theme building of songs in Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album. The transitivity analysis is taken as the tool to reveal the mind style impregnated in the lyric texts. Three dominant types of processes found are the human experience of the external world (material 41,09%), the internal world of consciousness (mental 16,89%), and the identification and classification to relate one aspect of the experience to another (relational 29,11%). These three dominant processes build the ideational meaning of the music album which reflects the songwriter's view of the world. The songs are found to be taking four subjects of experience which are being in love, being in a bitter relationship, facing self-contempt, and scheming revenge. Such construe of the world is represented by the transitivity processes found in song lyrics enunciating one's outlook on reality through song lyrics. The findings of the result are contributive to English learners who have an interest in examining texts of popular culture.*

*Keywords: *Midnights*, song lyric, stylistic, Taylor Swift, transitivity*

1. INTRODUCTION

This marks the first time in the chart's 64+ year history with just one lead artist holding all 10 slots in the top tier. She is Taylor Swift who takes over the entire area with songs from her most recent album (Unterberger, 2022). Released on October 21st, 2022, her 10th album, *Midnights*, has broken music chart records and is now the biggest debut sales week selling more than one million copies in a single week adding to the list of 5 former Swift's albums which are *Speak Now*, *Red*, *1989*, and *Reputation* (Wickes, 2022). She is also the first and the only female to win 3 Grammys for Album of The Year. Taylor Swift's *Fearless* in 2019, *1989* in 2015, and *folklore* in 2020 have been attributed to this award (Cesaric, 2022). However, apart from being a pop star, Swift also uses the podium for political endorsement through a narrative engagement that influences behavior change among young voters (Nisbett & Dunn, 2019), and has raised split reactions in her fandom (Driessen, 2022). Those researchers intend to show the impact of her narrative ability to the audience even outside the fandom once it has provoked controversy which negates the political attitude of a popular individual. Swift is now entitled as the "Songwriter-Artist of the Decade" by the Nashville Songwriters Association International (Paulson & Dowling, 2022).

With 20 songs in *Midnights (3 a.m. version)*, Swift invites the listeners to the most private contemplation in her diary, a classic way attained in her other records (Cigliano, 2022). She often changes personas to the public to deliver different types of music in every era which attracts fans to support the upcoming stage of her life (Zhang, 2022). In this case, she defines herself as an anti-hero in the song named respectively. The 3rd track, *Anti-Hero*, hits different at "I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror" to mean that someone tends to pay too much attention to the external world but seldom the internal just to find that the problem is in herself. Furthermore, the song broke Spotify's global and U.S. opening-day streaming records with over 17.4 million plays in its first 24 hours, indicating that it was well-received by fans (Uitti, 2022). Therefore, this album is also inviting a linguistic investigation of the song lyrics as *Midnights* offer a distinct nuance in the pop-song genre and probably shows another facade of Taylor Swift's persona in experiencing life events.

In the case of song lyrics, transitivity analysis is the tool used to dissect the way a singer construes the world view too (Rangkuti & Hafifah, 2022; Sulistyawati et al., 2022; Rumaepa & Rangkuti, 2022; Mattison & Suarez, 2021). The action and events are, for example, the matter represented by the material process (Supatmiwati et al., 2022; Purwandari et al., 2022). Some studies previously worked on the similar objects using transitivity analysis and reveal the significance of it in song lyrics' meanings. The physical activity that happens in the social phenomena is found to be the issue of Bon Jovi's selected songs as indicated by the transitivity of material process that is dominant (Siahaan, 2021). The transitivity process of Neck Deep's songs is also found to cause a strong sense of a mixed life experiences in *The Peace and The Picnic* album (Rakhmatullah & Simatupang, 2022). Furthermore, the themes such as divorce, motherhood, fame, heartache, acceptance, and hope are found in Adele's song lyrics where transitivity support the theme building (Prasetyo et al., 2023). Thus, the capacity to influence societal values and mold individuals' sense of self is one force that pop songs have and to achieve that they rely on the use of transitivity process (Abdul-Jabbar et al., 2023). In addition, *Midnights* album has been analyzed for its used of figurative language which found to be one fundamental aspect of its aesthetic (Santika & Syafriyadin, 2023). However, the object of this research has not undergone the transitivity analysis despite the popularity it has gained. This research, then, is aimed to

describe how the transitivity choice is stylized to build the narrative themes of the songs in Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Song Lyrics

Pop music serves several primary purposes, one of which is to temporarily free people from the rigors of daily life. Song lyrics are part of the artist's way to interact with the audience instead of having it said in a speech or direct conversation. Frequently, with some sort of referential function brought by the language, mainstream pop imagery is overused. The comparisons, metaphors, and symbols used in the lyrics are well-known because they either draw on well-worn patterns of poetic symbolism or relate to current issues that people are now aware of (Appen et al., 2016). It is purposed for the people to make sense of the world and this is as important as the poetic function. Popular songs, too, are made for emotive functions which show the addresser's identity because the voice that sings can express a character's power and determination.

Popular songs sometimes need not be understood that much, here, what is needed is attention. Lines in song lyrics may not appear as sentences in formal writing and so may a poem but the grammatical choice are packed with meaning through the creative process. Often done by repetition, it signals a pathic function that keeps listeners interested to span the listening duration (Appen et al., 2016). Song lyrics are, thus, language play working for meaning. Meaning is equally important for music analysts as poetry analysts. The most common interpretive method among music scholars is to detect instances of "word painting," when the music appears to depict or reflect textual elements (BaileyShea, 2021). A person's view of the world is reflected in the language used to signify it. Though a song's meaning cannot be controlled as they reach the audience's mind "because some level of shared experience is generally a precondition for a listener's capacity for personal resonance" (Gracyk, 2022), the language used to produce lyrics is still by design going through the process of choosing out of possibilities by the songwriter to make such experience even more relatable to the audiences. Furthermore, lyrics are one of the strong elements which draw the fans affection to the singer, in this case, Taylor Swift (Hudson, 2022). Therefore, it makes song lyrics resourceful objects of language studies.

2.2 Stylistics

Style is regarded as the deliberate and subconscious selection of specific linguistic forms and structures over alternative options that were possible but not selected (Verdonk, 2013). These choices, which can also be considered as indicators of style, are presumed to be chosen at specific levels of language structure (the text) as they relate to the contextual and communicative circumstances. Moreover, there is an emphasize that Verdonk's stylistic analysis addresses numerous rhetorical and linguistic aspects and structures that constitute the understating style of the persona (Jensen, 2015).

A stylistic approach is applied in this research. To claim that a stylistic method can be retrieved means that the analysis is organized by clear terms and criteria that other stylistics learners agree on (Simpson, 2014). In stylistics, the transitivity model has proven to be an essential methodological tool (Simpson, 2014) with which stylistics use to explore the mind style (Nørgaard et al., 2010). Verdonk emphasizes that mind style is about "the relation between reality and how its experiencer describes it" and "'reality' is 'constructed' by the experiencer based on their knowledge, expectations, prejudices, etc.," so that it is modifiable "under the

influence of their personal emotions”. In addition, style can be defined “as a speaker’s or writer’s, often characteristic, mode of linguistic expression in terms of emotion, effectiveness, clarity, beauty, and the like (2013).

2.3 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), introduced by M.A.K Halliday in the 1960s, holds that language is a social semiotic system utilized by a society to make meaning. The language in use is not abstract. It is motivated by the user's goal or meaning, which is tied to their socio-cultural context (Jeet, 2023). To call it motivated, language in lyrics is also made of choice that makes up its potential meaning. A person intentionally or not, chooses whatever meaning they want no matter if it acts relevantly, appropriately, or conformingly (Hasan, 2013). Such choice works only by the conventionally accepted meaning that is, borrowing Saussure notion, the signified expressed by its signifier which means by its metafunctional foundation (Halliday, 2013). These metafunctions specify the procedure of construing ideational meaning and realizing social interactions (Riyandi, 2022).

As mentioned above, the song lyrics reflect the artist’s thoughts while reminiscing events in life, this is close to the notion of ideational/experiential meaning. The idea that style is a choice, the experiential function is one of the important markers of style (Simpson, 2014). In this case, the human experience is better recognized through the stream of events or doings/happenings rooted in the grammar of the clause, the theoretical framework of transitivity brings human experience apparent (Onoja, 2022). The experience function is embodied by the transitivity system (Wu, 2023). Here, the transitivity system apportions people's real-world experiences into a group of simple process types and aids grammar to classify experience (Guo, 2022). Thus, transitivity analysis prioritizes the features that are used in text with which the meanings are construed to represent reality as perceived by someone.

2.4 Transitivity Analysis

Transitivity analysis has been prolific in descriptively revealing the meaning-making. As part of language's ideational function, various patterns of transitivity are a primary means of expressing our external and internal experiences (Wales, 2011). Therefore, the identification of processes helps the researcher to uncover the grammar choices that distribute meaning (Max and Zamruddin, 2020; Ma’yuuf and Hassan, 2022; and Xiang 2022). The transitivity processes describe events and actions making up the ideational meaning (Eggins, 2004). It can be said, its framework of functionality works intensively to show how various texts fabricate the meaning. Types of transitivity processes are in the table below.

Table 1. Transitivity Process and Participants

Processes	Indicators	Participants
Material	doing or happening	Actor, Goal, Scope, Attribute, Client, Recipient
Mental	Sensing, knowing, seeing, feeling	Senser, Phenomenon
Verbal	expressing, saying, indicating	Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage
Existential	existing: construing existence by an empty <i>there</i>	Existent
Relational	being, possessing, or becoming	Carrier/Attribute, Token/Value
Behavioural	behaving: psychological activity	Behavior, Behaviour

(Adapted from Halliday & Matthiessen) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)

The ideational function is theorized as meaning that stands for a person’s attempt to give meaning to a life experience based on her perception and present it to others who may get

informed or relate to the matter. With this purpose, the transitivity model is used to analyze the ideational meaning in texts with a clear classification of language features. In this instance, the researcher focuses on the verb phrases as they, Webster & Peng (2018) say, bring semantic features making it potential for being selected by language users.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Systematically, the researcher first collects 20 song lyrics from Taylor Swift's *Midnight's* (2022) album specifically *the 3 a.m. version*, noted down from Genius.com, as the source of data. Secondly, the primary data appears in the form of lines containing clause/s where verbs occur as the grammatical realization of the transitivity process. Third, a table is drawn to neatly prepare the identification of the 6 processes.

The analysis first starts with reading thoroughly the lyrics while listening to the songs to catch the main ideas. The second step is the identification of the process types brought by the verb in the verb clause in a single lyric line. The purpose of this step is to find the foregrounding. Foregrounding is a textual patterning driven specifically for literary-aesthetic reasons through repetition or parallelism (Simpson, 2014). Here, a table is also drawn as an instrument to record the number of occurrences of the transitivity processes. The third stage highlights each dominant process used in songs to explain how grammatical choices contribute to the song theme. The context of these lyrics is best represented by the song themes. As a general insight communicated by a work in its wholeness (Mays, 2018). Here, events written in the lyrics are interpreted from which songs' themes are indicated while considering the commentaries on the album from various internet articles. The fourth is to generate a conclusion that answers the research purpose.

4. RESULTS

Through the reading and identifying the process types, the transitivity analysis shows process types that are distributed in the song lyrics. The table below is provided to see the general count. It shows that the material, relational, and mental processes kinds are the most frequently seen ones in song lyrics. This pattern is consistent with the claim that the three categories of processes construing these three sorts of experience make up the main types of processes in the transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These three types of processes are the human experience of the external world (material), the internal world of consciousness (mental), and the identification and classification to relate one aspect of the experience to another (relational).

Table 2. Distribution of Transitivity Processes in *Midnight's Album* Lyrics

No.	Song Titles	Process Types						Sum
		material	behavioural	mental	verbal	relational	existential	
1	<i>Lavender Haze</i>	24	2	17	6	9	0	58
2	<i>Maroon</i>	21	9	6	1	21	0	58
3	<i>Anti-Hero</i>	17	22	3	0	35	0	77
4	<i>Snow on the Beach</i>	36	0	8	2	25	0	71
5	<i>You're On Your Own, Kid</i>	34	2	10	1	15	0	62
6	<i>Midnight Rain</i>	25	1	19	0	10	0	55
7	<i>Question...?</i>	26	1	15	0	23	0	65
8	<i>Vigilante Shit</i>	29	0	5	5	14	0	53

9	<i>Bejeweled</i>	45	2	17	7	13	0	84
10	<i>Labyrinth</i>	22	21	10	0	3	0	56
11	<i>Karma</i>	18	1	13	3	35	0	70
12	<i>Sweet Nothing</i>	18	6	9	8	10	0	51
13	<i>Mastermind</i>	24	1	13	7	18	0	63
14	<i>The Great War</i>	32	4	5	8	16	0	65
15	<i>Bigger Than the Whole Sky</i>	14	1	1	1	38	0	55
16	<i>Paris</i>	20	2	13	1	28	0	64
17	<i>High Infidelity</i>	32	12	19	5	14	2	84
18	<i>Glitch</i>	10	2	9	0	17	6	44
19	<i>Would've, Could've, Should've</i>	46	11	18	0	25	0	100
20	<i>Dear Reader</i>	35	1	7	2	5	0	50
Total		528	101	217	57	374	8	1285
%		41,09	7,86	16,89	4,44	29,11	0,62	100

The data shows that **material processes** occur 528 times and is about 41,09% of the total of 1285 of all types of processes. In the second place, there is a 29,11% portion of **relational processes** from 374 times of appearances in the album. Generated from 217 occurrences of **mental processes**, they fill 16,89% portion making them the third most dominant processes in the album. The rest are **behavioural processes** where 101 occurrences fill 86%, 57 times verbal processes for 4,44%, and 8 times **existential processes** for only filling up 0,62% of the total count.

What can be inferred from having the material process as the prominent feature in song lyrics is that the songwriter exposes her mental style in processing the outer world. In this instance, they are absorbed and represented in the lyric texts conveying what she has dealt with through life experience which is saturated with action and happening as reasoned by the material processes. It later leads to the elucidation of the album's main theme which comes from deep thought of her contemplative moment. As spilled directly by the artist on her personal Instagram and TikTok accounts, the songs in *Midnights* are the stories of 13 sleepless nights scattered throughout her life (Jennings et al., 2022).

"This is a collection of music written in the middle of the night, a journey through terrors and sweet dreams. The floors we pace and the demon we face. For all of us who have tossed and turned and decided to keep the lanterns lit and go searching-hoping that just maybe, when the clock strikes twelve...we'll meet ourselves." (Swift, 2022a).

Swift's explanation of her 10th album contradicts the *terrors* and *sweet dreams*, her metaphor for happenings she has faced. She invites the listeners to make peace with the self by expressing it through the songs. Offering the persona of someone who also suffers from anxiety, she relates to a wider audience by putting credence that it is the expression of a realistic persona. Appen et al., (2016) argue that a realistic persona desires a listener to infer the song narrative as coming straight from the singer. By this means, she is not only narrating her private affair but also manages to relate to the audience emotionally. To support this claim, some songs are explained here which are chosen by three major process types used in the songs.

First is the 19th track of the 3 a.m. version, *Would've, Could've, Should've*. It expresses the compunction from a wrong decision in a past relationship. It has material processes occurring 46

out of 100 times of all types' occurrences. Among other songs, the material process is found dominant here. The quotation below is taken from the second verse.

If you never **touched** me, I would've
Gone along with the righteous
...
And if you never **saved** me from boredom
I could've **gone** on as I was
But, Lord, you **made** me feel important
And then you **tried** to **erase** us
(Taylor Swift - *Would've, Could've, Should've*) (Swift, 2022d).

In this instance, material processes reproduce one's view of the world by the referential function. The excerpt from the lyrics displays how material processes contained in verbs *touched*, *gone*, *saved*, *made*, *tried*, and *erase*. The material processes in this song specifically display actions. The formulated participants in this type of process are the actor and the goal/range. The pronouns 'you' repeated in the above verse is the actor/doer whose actions affect the goal which is 'me' and 'us.' It can be inferred that the narrator is the victim of someone else's deed that is the past lover. Thus, these chosen structures are used to narrate past actions which are regretted. The title itself suggests a supposition of what had turned out depraved. This song highlights a subject of being in a bitter relationship shared with other songs which are *Maroon*, *Labyrinth*, *Midnight Rain*, and *High Infidelity*.

Maroon presents the idea of a short-term relationship as claimed in lines "How the hell did **we** **lose sight of us** again? / **Sobbin'** with your head in your hands / Ain't that the way **shit** **always ends**?" The romance which fails her has also implied in the lines "The **mark** **they saw** on my collarbone / The **rust** that grew between telephones / The **lips I used to call home** / So scarlet, it was **maroon**." By some means, In *Labyrinth*, the singer is in a state of falling in love, however, she has not recovered from the past separation, so it is hard to believe that it begins again. It can be known from "You know **how scared I am of elevators** / Never trust it if **it rises fast** / **It can't last**." In *Midnight Rain*, the outro suggests the aftermath of breaking up when the former couple is forgetting each other. It is the result of having different expectations in a relationship as said that "He wanted a **bride**, I was making **my own name**".

The Second is *High Infidelity* (the 17th track). As mentioned before, it has the subject of a bitter relationship as well. The narrator is into detail about the games that are played in an unsteady relationship as well as the intense pain that unfaithfulness brings to both the dishonest partner and the one being cheated on. See the refrain of the song below.

Do you really want to **know** where I was April 29th?
Do I really have to chart the constellations in his eyes?
You **know** there's many different ways that you can kill the one you love
The slowest way is never loving them enough
(Taylor Swift - *High Infidelity*) (Swift, 2022c).

The song's refrain is emphasizing the addressee should understand that the incident is her design. Therefore, though material processes (used 35 times) are prevalently used in the song, it has the 19 times repetition of mental processes which is the most frequent to appear in the lyrics when compared to the other songs. They have a role in cognitively influencing someone's thoughts. The verb 'know' belongs to the cognitive mental process. It is used here to put the subject 'you' as the senser of the phenomena.

High Fidelity, somehow, reflects an unstable relationship when it says, “You said **I was freeloading** / I didn't know **you were keeping count**.” As well as the mentioned songs, *Would've, Could've, Should've* is about traumatic relationships at a young age. These lines are the highlight of the song “you're **a crisis of my faith**”, “**Give me back my girlhood**, it was mine first”, and “**I regret** you all the time.”

It can be interpreted that the lyric shows how this kind of relationship is about weighing someone's mind with certain happenings or facts that should be part of the reflection on the past. This instance demonstrates *High Infidelity* is the peaking repercussion of the songs which share the theme of *an individual who has been in a contentious relationship endures a psychological imprint that influences how they approach new relationships*.

The third song that shows significant use of the relational process is *Bigger than the Whole Sky*. The relational process appears in 35 uses of verbs from the total of 55 processes found in the lyric. The relational processes in this song appear the most frequently than they do in other lyrics. The lyric is filled with the narrator's attempt to ascribe some qualities to a recollection of a lover who has given a momentous relationship.

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye
You **were** bigger than the whole sky
You **were** more than just a short time
And **I've got** a lot to pine about
I've got a lot to live without
I'm never gonna meet
What could've **been**, would've **been**
What should've **been** you
What could've **been**, would've **been** you
(Taylor Swift - *Bigger than the Whole Sky*) (Swift, 2022b).

The verb ‘be’ functioning as an auxiliary and possessive verb realize the attempt to attach an attribute to a carrier. The carrier, who is assumed to be the narrator's former lover, is attributed with a metaphor for greatness as meant in the adjective phrase “bigger than the whole sky.” The words saying “more than the whole sky” indicates that the person being talked about has a lasting impression compared to the time spent together. Thus, the relational process is vital to express the intended message. This song generally share the subject of being in love along with *Lavender Haze*, *Snow on the Beach*, *Question...?*, *Sweet Nothing*, *The Great War*, *Paris*, and *Glitch*.

Lavender Haze talks about how social media scrutinizes any figure who is in a romantic relationship with someone, especially if they are a public figure. It portrays the pressure of society in someone else's relationship. Taylor Swift, is an attempt to ignore the media commentary by saying the line “I'm **damned if I do give a damn** what people say.” She also refuses the role assigned to women as only a wife or a girlfriend by calling it so outdated as in “The **1950s shit** they want from me”. She wants a woman in herself to be seen as a more important facet than just being someone's spouse while enjoying being in romance as the idiom says in the line “I just wanna stay in that **lavender haze**.”

The state of being in love is reflected in *Snow on the Beach* proven by the verse saying “I've never seen **someone lit from within** / **Blurring out my periphery** / My smile is like **I won a contest**” followed by a chorus that starts with “Now it's **like snow at the beach**.” In *Sweet Nothing*, the willingness to rely on someone's heart when life is hurting is echoed in the chorus. Then, the outro part of *The Great War* singing “I will **always be yours** / 'Cause we **survived the**

Great War" suggests the persistence of commitment after being tested through the predicament. *Bigger Than the Whole Sky* is a song about longing for a lover who left and pondering how things might have turned out differently in the past when it says "And I've got **a lot to pine about** / I've got **a lot to live without** / I'm never gonna meet / What **could've been, would've been** / What **should've been you**." The other two songs, therefore, raise similar emotions of love. In *Paris*, it says "I'm **so in love** that I might stop breathing" and "**Cheap wine**, make believe it's **champagne**" telling that the moment of falling in love makes everything taste special. *Glitch*'s chorus shows the love grows as expected by repeating "I think there's been **a glitch**, oh, yeah / Five seconds later, I'm **fastening myself to you with a stitch**, oh, yeah." Thus, the theme that can be understood from the repetition of the events is that *a person who is in love should focus on the relationship rather than caring about the disruption from the outside*.

The songs above are from those where the subject is about being in love and being in a bitter relationship. Meanwhile, two other subjects also promote the album's main theme, facing self-contempt and scheming a revenge. The researcher chooses two songs from each because both have music videos released last year and the songwriter herself has shared a series of 'behind the song' of them. The first is *Anti-Hero*. This is a combination of a protagonist that people are keen to follow its story but at the same time, by chance, entitled to a troubled past that haunts and influences her conduct in life.

The story of "Anti-Hero" is that it really encapsulates this album and sort of the darkest corners of your mind when you can't sleep. Playing out a dismal version of your very dark future, um, being afraid of what everyone thinks about you. Really exploring your own self-loathing and kind of having a shocking, scary self-awareness about your flaws as a human being, you know? Anxiety, it's, uh, it's all throughout this song. (Taylor Swift - Anti-Hero (Behind the Song), (Swift, 2022a)

Anti-Hero text has 17 material processes, 22 behavioural processes, 3 mental processes, and 35 relational processes. The mental processes as seen in these lines "One day, I'll **watch** as you're leaving" and "Sometimes, I **feel** like everybody is a sexy baby" go in the cognitive of the singer as senser where she passively observes the phenomena of someone's pull-out from her life and how other people fit better than her. *Anti-Hero* contents the issue of self-loathing as the lyrics say "I'll **stare directly at the sun**, but **never in the mirror** / It must be **exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero**" and insecurity about fitting in the social engagement as in "And **I'm a monster on the hill** / **Too big to hang out, slowly lurching** toward your favorite city." This way of noticing reality triggers the way she talks about the happenings in her life using material processes as these lines say, "Midnights **become** my afternoons / When my depression **works** the graveyard shift, all of the people / I've ghosted **stand** there in the room".

The subjects where verbs like *become*, *works*, and *stand* are just happening because the goal is absent. In other words, there is no direct object affected by the events. But because she construes the reality in this way, she identifies that she is the source of the predicament through the relational processes said in "I'm the problem, it's me" and "And I'm a monster on the hill." Using this expression, she voices her self-awareness of her flaws, and this leads to self-tormenting thoughts. The theme also appears in *You're on Your Own, Kid*, and *Dear Reader*.

Similarly, *You're on Your Own Kids* reflects the issue of self-contemplating about life decision which leads to the unwanted condition as the songs say, "I **gave my blood, sweat, and tears for this** / I hosted parties and **starved my body**." In addition, *Dear Reader* portrays self-doubt in making the best of life by saying "You **wouldn't take my word** for / it if you **knew who was talking**". The narrator in this song ends up in solitude when she says, "No one sees when you

lose when you're playing *solitaire*." She leaves a message to readers saying "**Never take advice from someone who's falling apart**" showing that she does not have a perfect life, so nothing is to be taken for granted. Consequently, a theme that can be deduced from the repeating of the instances is that *someone who continuously receives unfair treatment and criticism can foster agony*.

The next is *Bejeweled*. The song narrative metaphorically describes someone who gains the confidence to face criticism and moves forward with the talent she has. Taylor Swift reveals this in the telling of *Bejeweled*'s behind the song. She states,

The song "Bejeweled" is a song that I think it's really about finding confidence when you feel that it's been taken away, for whatever reason. You know, you're feeling insecure, you're feeling taken for granted... One of the things we love to do at night, 'cause we love to go dancing, we love to put on an outfit that makes us feel good, and we love to feel like we're still bejeweled. I think that there are tiny inflections of me pumping myself up to return to pop music after spending these glorious years writing folk songs and being in this metaphorical forest that I've created, which I loved so much, but there was a bit of pumping myself back up to be like, "You can do it, you're still bejeweled!" I'm still bejeweled? We'll see, but that's what the song's about. (Wickett, 2022)

The singer used 45 material processes, 2 behavioural processes, 17 mental processes, 7 verbal processes, and 13 relational processes in this song lyric. Focusing on action is represented by a major use of the material process. These lines reveal the metaphor or conviction when saying, "When **I walk** in the room / **I can still make** the whole place **shimmer**" and "Diamonds in my eyes / ... / **I polish** up real nice". Story-wise, people have not given her the credit that she deserves as implied in "**Did** all the extra credit, then got **graded** on a curve" and she decide to appeal by saying "**I can reclaim** the land". The *land* mentioned here is the music pop sphere where the singer has been absent for about two years being productive in some alternative song genres. Though she has scored several achievements in other genres, she cannot leave one that makes her successful in the industry. It is the pop genre that she is about to claim as her expertise by saying, "What's a girl gotta **do**? / A diamond's gotta **shine**." Thus, with the chosen verbs lie in the song, she willfully maintains the pop artist persona, a mastermind. This theme also packs the songs entitled *Vigilante shit*, *Karma*, and *Mastermind*.

Narratively, *Vigilante Shit* is a story of a woman helping another woman whose husband is unfaithful. However, the strongest lines suggesting this subject are found in the chorus: "Don't get sad, **get even** /.../ Lately **I've been dressin' for revenge**." The next song, *Bejeweled*, is about how somebody realizes that she only gets unfair treatment after being a good person. She schemes a plot that could make the guilty person regret it. She starts with "**I think it's time to teach some lessons**" being confident that she still has the quality to walk by herself as said in "**I polish up real nice**/ Best believe **I'm still bejeweled**."

The next two songs may not have a similar story, but *Karma* and *Mastermind* serve as the unforeseen help which enables her to deal with the plight. In *Karma*, she has faced some kind of betrayal and calumny when she states, "**Trick me** once, **trick me twice** / Don't you know that **cash ain't the only price**?" So, even when the singer has no intention of avenging, karma is coming for them for "**Karma's gonna track you down** / Step by step, from town to town." Meanwhile, if karma is the outside force, *Mastermind* is about inner strength, a result of hardship in childhood as this line show "**No one wanted to play with me** as a little kid / So I've been **scheming like a criminal** ever since / **To make them love me** and make it seem effortless." As a mastermind, the narrator in the song manages to attract the love she wants and make others think it was fate by

saying “I laid the groundwork, and then /.../ And now **you're mine** / It was **all by design** / 'Cause **I'm a mastermind**”. In terms of scheming, this may not be only about revenge but it shows that when she is determined to a prospect, she can plan for it, ahead of time. As a result, the recurrence of this subject can be taken as a theme affirming that *long-term exposure to negative constraints could make a person learn to be better or scheming a revenge*.

Table 3: Subjects and Themes in *Midnights* Album

Subjects	bitter relationship	being in love	self-contempt	revenge
Themes	an individual who has been in a contentious relationship endures a psychological imprint that influences how they approach new relationships	a person who is in love should focus on the relationship rather than caring about the disruption from the outside	someone who continuously receives unfair treatment and criticism can foster agony	long-term exposure to negative constraints could make a person learn to be better or scheming a revenge
Song titles	<i>Maroon, Labyrinth, Midnight Rain, High Infidelity, Would've, Could've, Should've</i>	<i>Lavender Haze, Snow on the Beach, Question...?, Sweet Nothing, The Great War, Bigger Than the Whole Sky, Paris, Glitch</i>	<i>Anti-Hero, You're on Your Own, Kid, Dear Reader</i>	<i>Vigilante shit, Bejeweled, Karma, Mastermind</i>

From a selection of subjects, themes are built accordingly stating the message of the songs compiled in this album. Composers and lyricists of the musical have pursued to construct their themes as contemporary and central so they become pertinent to the interests of their society (Forney et al., 2022). The themes shown above, however, are not only fit for an individual but most likely to have a universal value or, at least, relatable to people who share the same experiences. Thus, the selection of words and phrases are made to reach this matter.

5. DISCUSSION

Done along with a stylistic approach, transitivity analysis has highlighted the types of processes that are proven to be the stand-out features in *Midnights* album. Those features played the biggest role to represent the singer's emotion and adding lyrical aesthetic. As Forney et al., (2022) say, music with emotional associations compellingly links between the artist's most personal thoughts and the realities of the outside world. Therefore, the discussion has now reached the purpose of the research which is to describe how linguistic features play an important role in lyric-making and developing themes. Nevertheless, it may fulfill the gap of study for this album is the latest release for the singer so far.

Previous studies with a comparable approach have been done with different objects. In three selected songs from Taylor Swift's *folklore* album, each is proven to use a different dominant transitivity process to reveal the perspective of different speakers for the song entitled *Betty*, *Cardigan*, and *August* in Taylor Swift's *folklore* (Max, 2022). Even with the same analytical method as applied to the previous research, this study on Taylor's *Midnights* has different results for there are different themes raised in this record. For the same album, structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors are detected to be used to deliver denotative, connotative, and affective meanings (Frida & Zuraida, 2022). More figurative language in songs in Swift's *Red* (2012) album is proven to contain the emotions of the singer (Fatikha & Masykuroh, 2022) and

metaphors in Swift's *Reputation* (2017) album demonstrate the lyrics vitality to express meaning using the comparable semantic properties of denotative and connotative meaning (Tanujaya & Purnomo, 2023). These two findings reflect creative impulse of the songwriter but have the limitation in showing a person's view of experience.

The creative urge also appears in the way Swift's use metonymy from words in the domain of 'car' to create symbols of life events (Max, 2022). This idea is more relatable to those who are interested in examining song's specific stylistic devices but not in the way where stylistic approach is applied to see how the choices also emerge from one person's perception of the world. In *Midnights* album, force is found to be the main graduation system of the interpersonal meaning in five songs (*Anti-Hero*, *Lavender Haze*, *Karma*, *Mastermind*, and *Midnight Rain* examined with the appraisal approach (Assidiqi SP & Cahyono, 2023). However, this notion has not related such style to the themes framing the lyric texts as this article does. A corpus based study on ten Swift's albums finds that 'you and I' and 'I don't Know' are the most used lexical bundles in her song lyrics so it becomes salient choices to narrate her wonder of life experiences (Kendong et al., 2023). The result of this study is fruitful for showcasing the richness of lexical choices but not in terms of its functions in terms of metafunctions.

As this article is limited to exploring the transitivity processes, it works for the recognition of ideational meaning. Then, a chance is open to explore the textual meaning as part of language metafunctions and also the interpersonal meaning from more song lyrics other than mentioned in the previous paragraph. In addition, there is room to explore more rhetorical device employed in the album song lyrics. Work to examine this feature was done by Zainuddin and Anuar (2022) who find the use of metaphor and simile in Taylor Swift's *All Too Well (10-minute version)*. Their approach can be used for this album as well because this album is also rich in rhetorical devices. However, the findings above may lead to further interest to study *Midnights* with other approaches. For example, Harrison & Ringrow (2022) have shown that disnarration plays a significant role in world-building within Taylor Swift's *folklore* and *evermore* albums. The use of transitivity analysis can reveal a complex narrative building if combined with the actantial analysis because "actantial models give a language to 'discussing' social and recounted varieties in how storytellers build these relations and conditions" (Max et al., 2023). Their method is fruitful to examine the schemes that foreground certain themes within the songs of the album as a means of storytelling.

6. CONCLUSION

The result of this research finds that lyrics in *Midnights* album construct the meaning by a careful choice of language features which brought an ideational meaning of singer's personal anxiety resulting from experiences that have brought her to the current stage of life. It is done with transitivity analysis on 20 songs from the *3 a.m. version* of the album. Their main processes which are material, mental, and relational processes appear to be the most salient features in delivering the songs' themes. First is that a person who is in love should focus on the relationship rather than caring about the disruption from the outside. Second is that an individual who has been in a contentious relationship endures a psychological imprint that influences how they approach new relationships. Third is that someone who continuously receives unfair treatment and criticism can foster agony. The fourth message is that long-term exposure to negative constraints could make a person learn to be better or scheming a revenge.

Thus, *Midnights* are experiences shared by internalizing the happenstance and events that influence one's judgments of oneself in dealing with the outer world. Stylistic approach to the lyric texts exposes the mind style of the writer where transitivity process works to develop the themes. Transitivity analysis on lyrics in this album gives a contribution to the study of the language of popular content and specifically to the vitality of the SFL theory in terms of its application of the method and as references for the language learners. It conveys the quality brought by today's pop songs which are capable to reach the audiences' deepest sentiments, the same appeal that one can endure when assessing other forms of literary works.

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