

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

Nguyen Huu The¹, Tran Thanh Du², Le Thi Thanh Thao³

¹Ba Ria – Vung Tau College of Education

^{2,3}Thu Dau Mot University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: As a rhetorical device, hyperbole is essential in song lyrics, intensifying emotions and creating vivid and relatable impressions on listeners. This study investigates the manifestation, similarities, and differences in the use of hyperbole in English and Vietnamese song lyrics. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study examines 14 hit songs (7 in English and 7 in Vietnamese) from various genres and analyzes the use, forms, and functions of hyperbole. The results demonstrate that hyperbole is employed in both languages to emphasize universal themes such as love, nostalgia, gratitude, and resilience. However, English lyrics often use hyperbole in a direct and dramatic manner, visual phrases like "a million years" or "going to the ends of the earth." In contrast, Vietnamese lyrics tend to be more poetic and metaphorical, incorporating expressions inspired by nature and rooted in cultural traditions. These differences reflect distinct cultural perspectives and aesthetic sensibilities in each language. Our findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of hyperbole's role in lyrical composition and its impact on emotional expression, providing a foundation for further research on figurative language in music.

KEYWORDS: hyperbole, lyrics, figurative language, cultural expression

INTRODUCTION

Language is essential for communication, promoting social ties, and knowledge sharing. Beyond its practical functions, language also plays a creative role, especially in the arts, where it expresses emotions, ideas, and imagination. As Croft (2000) notes, language can be symbolic or metaphorical, often transcending literal meanings to convey deeper sentiments. Similarly, Verdonk (2003) emphasizes the use of figurative language as a significant aspect of stylistics, enriching both spoken and written forms of expression. Nowadays, a pop song has become overly popular. Due to factors related to recognition, consumption, broadcasting, and societal array, the term "popular" is dominant (Shuker, 2010). As the record business works with other parties to heavily promote their products online, people become aware of and familiar with particular new release tracks. The tunes can be heard during events, commercial breaks, and on music outlets. This makes songs more memorable and recognizable, which makes them more appealing to listeners in communities.

Most songs are typically personified in a condition that isn't real. They are represented by cultural decisions that are thought to have an impact on the tempo's flow. It creates a feeling of enjoyment derived from hearing sounds or tones in order, combination, and temporal linkages. In light of this, a popular song integrates the actual music for research as well as any source that disseminates context and conveys the song's elements (May et al., 2020). Popular songs are often adorned with metaphorical language. Consequently, this uses figurative elements to gain attention on stage.

This study focuses on analyzing hyperbole in English and Vietnamese song lyrics, emphasizing and comparing its use across cultural and linguistic contexts. While previous research has explored figurative language in specific works, such as John Legend's songs (Arfiah, 2016) and Jamie's lyrics (Meyer, 2011), the current study seeks to extend the investigation by examining songs from both English and Vietnamese traditions. By doing so, it aims to uncover the similarities and differences in how hyperbole conveys universal themes such as love, nostalgia, and longing.

Using a descriptive qualitative method, this research analyzes selected English and Vietnamese song lyrics to identify the types and functions of hyperbole. The study draws on theories from Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) to identify hyperbole and Leech (1981) to interpret its meanings. By examining hyperbole's cultural and linguistic nuance this research contributes to a deeper understanding of its role in enhancing the artistic and emotional appeal of song lyrics in diverse musical traditions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical background

2.1.1. Hyperbole

The term hyperbole is derived from the Greek word "hyperballein," which means "to exceed." Hyperbole is a figurative expression that uses exaggeration to accentuate a statement or situation, creating a stronger impression and impact. Hyperbole is a common figurative vocabulary used in literature and ordinary language to accentuate contrasts or mislead readers.

The study of figurative language in song lyrics has long focused on hyperbole as an interesting issue. This aspect of figurative language contributes to the cohesiveness of song lyrics. Songs and poetry use similar terminology. This brief lyric poetry expresses feelings. Song lyrics are poetry that is sung. Feelings are expressed through sounds and artwork. Song lyrics follow guidelines based on poetic motifs using sounds and words. The lines are succinct and convey a poetic feeling. The song's lyrics were created by compressing meaning and picking words creatively, similar to poetry. Hyperbole is a figurative phrase that involves exaggeration. Hyperbole is often associated with text or song lyrics, but it can also convey meaning.

According to Claridge (2011), hyperbole is identified as a form of figurative language within the realm of semantics, characterized by its contrast with literal expressions and its tendency to greatly exceed normal limits. To illustrate, the phrase "When I saw you, I felt my heart leap from my body" serves as an example of hyperbolic expression. Although it is scientifically impossible for the heart to physically escape the body, such statements are not meant to be interpreted literally but rather as exaggerated forms of emotional expression. Reaske (1966) states that "Hyperbole is a figure of speech which employs exaggeration. It can be utilized for both funny and serious purposes. Hyperbole can have a very dramatic effect." Hyperbole seeks to emphasize something. Exaggerating something to make it more dramatic or tragic might lead to a lack of credibility. Perrine (1997) defines hyperbole as the use of exaggerated words. Deliberate exaggeration emphasizes the veracity of a statement without taking it literally. Webb (1993) defines hyperbole as a language style that exaggerates the truth to emphasize or minimize a point. Hyperbole, or exaggerated language, is commonly used in literature.

Hyperbole can play a crucial role in song lyrics, taking into account the numerous perspectives mentioned above. These two aspects work together to create a harmonious song or music. Songs and poetry employ similar terminology. This brief poetic poetry conveys emotion. Song lyrics are poetic expressions in song form. Sound and work serve as vehicles for emotional expression. Song lyrics follow rules similar to poetry in terms of melody and structure. Lyrics are personal expressions used in poetry and singing. Lyrics are the words to a song. Hyperbole can enhance the impact of song lyrics by combining existing hyperbole features. Hyperbole and music lyrics work together to convey meaning.

2.1.2. Function of Hyperbole

Certain effects can be introduced into hyperbole through our daily conversations. For instance, you may greet a friend with "Hi, I haven't seen you in a hundred years!" after a long absence. Both you and your friend recognize that this is strange. The use of hyperbole emphasizes how long it feels since the previous visit with a friend. Hyperbole is a complex form of distortion that employs figurative exaggeration. Hyperbole challenges the notion of "truth" by encouraging critical thinking. Hyperbole is regarded as exaggerated, and its ambiguity can be exploited to create and alter different realities and meanings. Misinterpretation can lead to a failure in literal meaning. (Claridge, 2011).

The objective of hyperbole is to make the text more humorous. Hyperbole is used in writing to convey a familiar concept in an impactful way. Hyperbole can elevate everyday emotions to new heights. Hyperbole creates contrast by stressing certain aspects of a description while keeping the rest normal. This strategy captures the reader's attention and maintains interest in the work for extended periods.

2.1.3. Characteristics of Hyperbole

Hyperbolic expressions can be words, phrases, or clauses. Some characteristics indicate hyperbolic expressions. According to Claridge (2011), there are five categories of hyperbole characteristics:

- **Grade ability and intensification**

Quantity is of course crucial for hyperbole, but the other differences can also be relevant in an individual instance of an overstatement.

- **Context**

The hyperbolic statement is contradicted by the facts, in so far as these stay below the limits of what is expressed. Hyperbole is a highly contextually determined phenomenon. In other words, a hyperbolic statement is somehow given oppositely from the real situation and can be affected much by the context of the situation reflected at that time.

- **An encyclopedic meaning approach to meaning**

Hyperbole as overstatement is a contextual phenomenon (in the widest sense). The speaker will be using quite extensive knowledge in the production and comprehension of hyperbolic expressions.

- **The problem of literal meaning**

Hyperbole can be also identified if people represent it by a literal meaning. In other words, a hyperbolic expression can also be

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

identified if people represent it by a literal meaning. A literal meaning is usually given out of the context.

- **Vagueness and Hyperbole Interpretation.**

The Vagueness of lexemes also plays a role in the interpretation of some instances of potential hyperbole.

In summary, Hyperbole has various qualities, including grade ability and quantity intensification, context, an encyclopedic approach to meaning, literal meaning difficulties, and ambiguity. These traits can be found in individual words, phrases, or sentences. They have distinct meanings. To better understand the meaning of a word or text, both writers and readers should be aware of its features.

2.1.4. Song

The song is a tone or sound art composition in sequence, combination, and temporal relationship (usually accompanied by a musical instrument) to produce a musical composition having unity and continuity (containing rhythm). And variety of too rhythmic sounds is also called a song. Songs can be sung solo, both (duet), three (trio) or the rollicking (koir). Words in the song are usually shaped as rhythmic poetry, but there is also a religious nature or free prose. Songs can be categorized in many types, depending on the measure used. Chants are recited poems appropriate tone, rhythm, time signatures, and certain melodies to form a harmony. Chanting is often also referred to as the song that means the tone or sound art composition in sequence, combination, and the temporal relationship (usually accompanied by a musical instrument) to produce a musical composition having unity and continuity (containing rhythm). And variety of tone or rhythmic sound is also called the song. According to Hornby (2000: 1281) said that "Song is a short piece of music with words that you sing".

In each country has a national anthem and each region must have a song that has the characteristics of each as a cultural characteristic of the region. In Indonesia, for example, Indonesia has many islands and in every each islands and regions has cultural songs as well, so in addition to have a national anthem, Indonesia also has a lot of traditional songs. Therefore the song is characteristic of a nation. Horison (1997) said that the song may be used culturally to tell a story and to point out aspects of the target culture. In addition, songs mirror the normal daily activities of society that it helps, when music is a strong part of one's own culture (Salcedo, 2002).

2.1.5. Lyric

Lyrics are a set of words that make up a song, usually consisting of verses and choruses. The meaning of lyrics can either be explicit or implicit. Some lyrics are abstract, almost unintelligible, and, in such cases, their explication emphasizes form, articulation, meter, and symmetry of expression. A lyric is a paper written by someone who has imagination in composing beautiful words that have deep meaning. Lyrics and music combined would be a wonderful song and pleasing to the ear. The writer of lyrics is a lyricist or lyricist. According to Hornby (2000), he stated that lyrics express a person's personal feelings and thoughts, connected with singing and written for a lyric poem is the words of a song.

Song language really is not much different from the language of poetry. It is a short lyric poem that expresses emotion. Song lyrics are poetry that is sung. The form of emotive expressions is realized in sounds and words. Language in the song lyrics has rules that are elements of poems emotive through sounds and words. In addition to obtaining a particular impression as poetry, language lyrics are concise and packed. This is due to the lyrics of the song has undergone a process of compaction of meaning and creativity diction of election poet.

2.2. Previous Research

There are several previous research that are related to this research, including 1) A research by Yusnitasari et al. (2022). The purpose of the research was to gain insight into the various forms of figurative language employed in Anne Murray's renowned song "You are My Sunshine." Through a descriptive qualitative approach, the researchers meticulously analyzed the song lyrics to identify and categorize the different types of figurative language present. By reading and scrutinizing the lyrics, the researchers successfully determined nine distinct forms of figurative language, including metaphors, hyperboles, symbolism, repetition, idioms, and imagery. Out of the thirteen potential types of figurative language, four were found to be absent in the lyrics, as they primarily consist of plain, everyday language; 2) A research by Swarniti (2022). The objective of this research was to analyze and categorize the lyrical content of Adele's song "Easy On Me" by examining its use of figurative language. This research utilized a qualitative approach and drew data from the song lyrics themselves. The data collection method employed was careful observation, while the theoretical framework was based on the work of Miller and Greenberg regarding figurative language. The findings indicated that the song predominantly employed comparative figurative language, specifically through personification. Overall, Adele's lyrical composition showcased rich tapestry of figurative language, effectively conveying emotions and ideas through imaginative and evocative imagery; 3) A research by Bagul et al. (2023). The objective of this research was to discern the various forms of figurative language and their intended meanings. The researchers collected song lyrics by browsing and downloading from Internet, thoroughly studying and comprehending the lyrics, and meticulously noting and classifying the data based on the different types of figurative language. The data were then analyzed in a descriptive manner using a qualitative approach. Upon analysis, it was discovered that Jamie Miller's song lyrics contained six types of figurative language, including two metaphors (16.6%), two similes (16.6%), two personifications (16.6%), one paradox (8.3%), two apostrophes (16.6%), and three hyperboles (24.9%). It is noteworthy that all of these forms of figurative language possess connotations that subtly convey hidden messages and values pertaining to life.

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This form of hyperbole is usually used in spoken language. Sometimes people tend to repeat their utterances for couple of times to emphasize something. This study uses a qualitative method to investigate and compare the usage of hyperbole in English and Vietnamese music lyrics. The study focuses on hyperbolic expressions to better understand their shapes, topics, and cultural relevance.

The data set consists of 14 songs, 7 in English and 7 in Vietnamese, chosen for their popularity, emotional themes, and contemporary relevance. Pop, ballads, and traditional folk-inspired music are among the genres represented, providing a varied range of sounds. The investigation entails finding hyperboles, categorizing them according to topics like love, nature, and emotions, and comparing their use in the two languages. Patterns and variances in linguistic patterns, images, and cultural influences are investigated to better understand their significance in increasing emotional impact.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1. Hyperbole in English Song Lyrics

- **Make You Feel My Love by Adele**

In song lyrics, hyperbole is a potent literary device that is used to convey intense and profound emotions. It frequently intensifies the speaker's feelings to make them more vivid and forceful. In the phrase "*I could hold you for a million years*," for example, the speaker exaggerates how much they love and care for you. The exaggeration conveys the speaker's wish to offer unending comfort and care, even though it is impossible to embrace someone for such an unthinkable lengthy period. The sentiment is made more intense and heartfelt by this exaggeration, which also increases the lyric's emotional appeal.

Similarly, in the phrases "*Go to the ends of the earth for you*" and "*To make you feel my love*," hyperbole shows the speaker's unwavering dedication and willingness to go to any length for their loved one. The term "*ends of the earth*" is not meant literally; rather, it represents the speaker's desire to conquer any obstacle or hardship to display their love. This use of hyperbole emphasizes the intensity and boundlessness of their attachment, lending depth and emotional weight to the words. By using such vivid exaggerations, the speaker makes their love appear enormous and all-encompassing, which resonates deeply with listeners.

- **Roar by Katy Perry**

Katy Perry's song "*Roar*" uses hyperbole to emphasize themes of empowerment, resilience, and rebellion. The lyrics use exaggerated vocabulary to create a dramatic picture of overcoming adversity and asserting one's voice. The use of hyperbolic language highlights the speaker's strength and determination, transforming the song into an anthem of self-empowerment.

The song's use of exaggeration is particularly evident in the line "*A fighter dancing through the fire*." The phrase "*dancing through the fire*" is a dramatic exaggeration in this instance. While "*fire*" connotes a frightening and uncontrollable force, the word "*dancing*" typically connotes a light, controlled movement. Although dancing through fire is impossible and harmful if taken literally, the song uses it to represent tenacity and fortitude in the face of adversity. The exaggeration demonstrates the speaker's fortitude and bravery by highlighting their capacity to persevere through challenging circumstances and come out on top.

The phrase "*And you're gonna hear me roar*" is another example of strong hyperbole. "*Roar*" describes a loud, forceful sound that attracts attention and frequently inspires dread, particularly when connected to strong animals like lions. The speaker in this instance exaggerates how powerful their voice is, indicating that they will no longer be ignored or silenced. The exaggeration highlights the speaker's resolve to speak up and be heard, signifying a departure from previous silence and the bravery to voice their thoughts and feelings without fear.

The third significant hyperbole is in the phrase "*Louder, louder than a lion*." The lion, known for its mighty roar, is often used as a symbol of strength and dominance. By comparing their voice to that of a lion, the speaker exaggerates their ability to be heard and their power. This line emphasizes that the speaker's presence is not only powerful but also impossible to ignore. It suggests that the speaker is unafraid to assert themselves and will stand strong, no matter the obstacles they face.

- **A Thousand Years by Christina Perri**

Christina Perri's "*A Thousand Years*" uses a lot of hyperbole to highlight eternal love and unwavering loyalty, giving the listener a profoundly moving and unforgettable experience. A notable instance of exaggeration is the statement, "*I have loved you for a thousand years*." The speaker utilizes this exaggeration to highlight the intensity and enduring quality of their sentiments rather than asserting that they had been in love for a thousand years. Their love seems limitless and permanent because of this exaggerated statement that it transcends time.

Another example would be the phrase "*I'll love you for a thousand more*." This promise of unending love into the future is poetic and equally inflated. It represents steadfast commitment and faith in the eternal force of love. Through the use of such exaggerations, the lyrics appeal to listeners who believe that love entails unending dedication by evoking a sense of timeless romanticism and a bond that transcends typical partnerships.

These instances of exaggeration not only enhance the song's emotional effect but also fit in with its themes of hope and enduring love, which is why it's a favorite option for weddings and other love-related ceremonies.

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

- **Killing me softly with his song by Fugees**

Hyperbole is employed in the sentence *"My loneliness is killing me"* to emphasize the speaker's emotional suffering from loneliness. Although loneliness cannot technically result in death, this dramatization highlights the speaker's extreme suffering and hardship while they are alone. Their emotional pain is made understandable and heartbreaking by the dramatic expression, which highlights their deep want for camaraderie and connection.

In the same way, the expression *"killing me softly with his song"* uses exaggeration to convey the song's deep emotional impact on the listener. Instead of causing bodily injury, the song arouses strong emotions in the listener, such as vulnerability, sadness, or nostalgia, that profoundly affect their spirit. This exaggeration highlights how music can evoke strong emotional reactions and convey feelings that are otherwise hard to put into words, making an impact that is both vivid and sincere.

- **This girl is on fire by Alicia Key**

Alicia Keys' song *"This Girl Is on Fire"* makes considerable use of hyperbole to highlight the remarkable traits of the main character, presenting her as strong and unstoppable. The phrase *"This girl is on fire"* is a perfect illustration of exaggeration. It is an exaggerated metaphor to show her passion, tenacity, and bright vitality; it does not imply that she is actually on fire. According to the imagery, she is so unique and driven that she exudes an inner intensity that sets her apart from everyone else.

"She's walking on fire" is another notable example of hyperbole, suggesting that the girl is bold and strong, able to overcome even the most trying and perilous circumstances. Here, the dramatization highlights her resilience and strength, portraying her as someone who defies adversity. It makes one feel awed and portrays her as a really brave person.

The phrase *"She's living in a world, and it's on fire"* uses exaggeration to paint a vivid and chaotic picture of her surroundings. The phrase emphasizes the difficulties she encounters, but it also highlights her capacity to handle such upheaval with poise and determination. Her tenacity in an imperfect world is highlighted by the dramatic backdrop created by this exaggeration.

The statement *"Oh, she got both feet on the ground, and she's burning it down"* further exemplifies the use of hyperbole. It suggests that the girl is making an extraordinary impact on her surroundings, almost as if her actions are so powerful they metaphorically *"burn down"* obstacles in her path. The exaggeration emphasizes her determination and the transformative effect she has on her environment.

In the line *"She's got her head in the clouds"*, hyperbole is used to describe her dreams and ambitions. While the phrase is metaphorical, it exaggerates her lofty goals, suggesting that she dares to dream big and reach for heights that might seem unattainable. It portrays her as someone with an extraordinary vision and belief in her potential.

- **A Million Dreams by The Greatest Showman**

The line *"A million dreams are keeping me awake"* is a hyperbole from the song *"A Million Dreams"* from the musical *The Greatest Showman*. This hyperbole conveys the overpowering and intense character of the speaker's hopes or desires.

In this context, the expression *"a million dreams"* exaggerates the quantity of dreams the speaker has, implying that they are infinite or uncountable. The phrase *"keeping me awake"* stresses how these dreams consume and exhaust the speaker, preventing him from sleeping or finding tranquility. This hyperbole expresses the speaker's tremendous passion, hope, and ambition, to the point where their thoughts race and they can't sleep.

The use of hyperbole in this statement emphasizes the speaker's intense emotional condition and the potency of their dreams. It provides the impression that these desires are not merely transitory or insignificant, but rather all-encompassing and deeply affecting their lives, keeping them engaged and driven even when they are supposed to rest. The exaggerated quantity of dreams and the inability to sleep represent a strong, unwavering determination to follow one's dreams, no matter how enormous or ridiculous they appear.

- **You Belong with Me by Taylor Swift**

The line *"You've got a smile that could light up this whole town"* is another example of hyperbole. This phrase exaggerates the impact of someone's smile, suggesting that it is so bright and radiant that it has the power to literally light up an entire town.

In reality, a smile cannot physically illuminate a place, but this hyperbole emphasizes the warmth, charm, and positivity the person's smile brings to the speaker's life. The image of a smile is so powerful that it can light up an entire town expresses how deeply the speaker is affected by the person's presence and how their smile has an overwhelmingly positive effect.

This kind of hyperbole is often used in songs or poetry to convey strong emotions like love, admiration, or awe, emphasizing the importance of a simple yet profound gesture (like a smile) in making someone's day or lifting their spirits. The exaggerated comparison suggests that the smile is not just beautiful, but life-changing and incredibly significant.

- **I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor**

In the song *"I Will Survive"* by Gloria Gaynor, the lyric *"I will survive, oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive"* uses hyperbole to express resilience and empowerment. The phrase *"I will survive"* is a strong, exaggerated statement that conveys the speaker's unwavering determination to overcome hardship, specifically in the face of a breakup or personal struggle. The use of hyperbole here emphasizes the speaker's confidence in their ability to endure any emotional pain and continue forward.

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

The line *"I know I'll stay alive"* further amplifies this sentiment, suggesting that survival is not just about physical existence but about emotional strength and the ability to thrive despite adversity. The hyperbole here is not meant to be taken literally; instead, it underscores the strength the speaker feels, almost as if their survival is guaranteed because of their capacity for love and emotional resilience.

This use of hyperbole in *"I Will Survive"* is similar to the way hyperbole is used in many English songs to convey themes of empowerment, survival, and overcoming obstacles. The exaggerated statement of survival is a common lyrical device in songs of triumph and personal transformation. In this case, the focus is on the speaker's emotional resilience and the power of love as a tool for personal strength.

4.2. Hyperbole in Vietnamese Song Lyrics

- **Niệm khúc cuối by Ngo Thuy Mien (The Last Prayers by Ngo Thuy Mien)**

Hyperbole is used in the line *"Dù có ước có ước ngàn lời có trách một đời cũng đã muộn rồi"* to convey the speaker's deep regret and sadness. The expression *"ước ngàn lời"* (wish a thousand times) highlights the speaker's intense desire and desperation by exaggerating the magnitude of longing and the overwhelming number of attempts to alter the past. Likewise, the phrase *"trách một đời"* (blame a lifetime) exaggerates the sense of remorse by implying that even a lifetime of culpability would not change the result. This exaggerated statement has a powerful emotional impact by illustrating the pointlessness of worrying about things that cannot be changed. It emphasizes how time will inevitably pass and how some choices or acts cannot be undone. In addition to highlighting the speaker's melancholy, the exaggeration conveys a sense of finality, highlighting the fact that some things cannot be fixed, no matter how much one desires or laments them.

- **Đàn bà by Duy Quang (Woman by Duy Quang)**

The line *"Muôn kiếp buồn mình tôi sầu nhớ"* from the song *"Đàn Bà"* by Duy Quang is a vivid example of hyperbole in poetic language. The phrase *"Muôn kiếp buồn"* translates to "A thousand lifetimes of sadness," which is an exaggerated depiction of time. Of course, no one can truly experience *"a thousand lifetimes"* of sorrow.

This hyperbolic expression emphasizes the speaker's immense and unending sadness, as if their sorrow and longing have transcended the boundaries of a single lifetime and stretched across countless existences. It reflects the deep pain and despair caused by lost love, portraying it as an everlasting emotional wound that cannot heal.

The phrase vividly conveys the speaker's profound sadness and solitude, leaving a strong impression on the listener. The use of hyperbole not only makes the lyrics more impactful but also allows listeners to connect deeply with the character's sorrow.

In essence, *"A Thousand Lifetimes of Sadness"* serves as a symbolic way to express enduring grief, adding emotional depth and artistic richness to the song, making it both poignant and memorable.

- **Hoài cảm by Cung Tien (Longing by Cung Tien)**

The statement *"Lòng cuồng điên vì nhớ"* ("The heart is mad with longing") uses hyperbole to convey the speaker's great emotional distress caused by deep longing. The epithet *"mad"* here does not refer to real insanity but rather emphasizes the intensity of the inner conflict. It implies that the speaker's heart is overwhelmed by a great yearning, which leads to a lack of control over their emotions.

This exaggeration depicts not simply regret or longing, but a devouring and overwhelming emotion that might impair one's judgment and stability. The statement stresses how deeply the speaker is impacted by the loss of a loved one or an unfulfilled wish, expressing the emotion as something beyond what is generally expected or manageable. It evokes a sense of desperation and almost irrational longing, helping the listener experience the speaker's emotional state in an exaggerated but relatable manner.

By using hyperbole in this context, the song powerfully conveys the extent of the speaker's emotional struggle and longing, creating a more intense connection with the audience.

- **Yêu em dài lâu by Duc Huy (Love you forever by Duc Huy)**

The lyric *"Yêu em cho đến khi con tim ngừng đập / Cho thiên thu là một giây"* ("Love you until my heart stops beating / Make eternity feel like a second") uses hyperbole to express the speaker's affection.

The statement *"until my heart stops beating"* is an exaggeration because no one can truly love till their heart quits functioning. It emphasizes the speaker's steadfast and eternal commitment, implying that they are willing to love indefinitely, beyond the constraints of time. This hyperbole expresses unwavering loyalty, implying that their love will last till the end of their lives.

The lyrics: *"Yêu em cho đến khi ong thôi làm mật / Đến khi loài chim quên lối bay"* ("Love you until the bees stop making honey / Until the birds forget how to fly") using exaggeration to highlight the speaker's unwavering, profound devotion and dedication.

The statement *"until the bees stop making honey"* is obviously overstated. Since bees are naturally known to produce honey, it is highly unlikely that they will ever quit. The speaker portrays their love as something that will endure forever by employing this exaggeration, just like bees will always produce honey. The speaker's confidence that their love is as dependable and long-lasting as the bees' labor is demonstrated by this exaggeration.

Similarly, *"Until the Birds Forget How to fly"* depicts another hopeless situation. Birds are born with the urge to fly, and the concept that they will forget how to fly is an exaggeration that emphasizes the speaker's love's enduring nature. It implies that their love will

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

last as long as nature does, even in the face of insurmountable circumstances. This use of hyperbole emphasizes the speaker's intention to portray that their love is infinite and unchanging, lasting beyond the natural world's constants.

These hyperboles underline the speaker's intense and eternal commitment, heightening the lyrics' emotional impact.

- **Người thầy by Nguyen Nhat Huy (The teacher by Nguyen Nhat Huy)**

The lines "*Dẫu đếm hết sao trời đêm nay / Dẫu đếm hết lá mùa thu rơi / Nhưng làm sao em đếm hết công ơn thầy...*" ("Even if I count all the stars in the sky tonight / Even if I count all the autumn leaves falling / But how can I ever count the teacher's grace...") employs hyperbole to express the speaker's enormous and boundless gratitude to their teacher.

The first line, "*Even if I count all the stars in the sky tonight,*" is exaggerated, implying that counting all of the stars in the wide sky is impossible. This hyperbole conveys the impression that the speaker's appreciation is so vast and boundless that no matter how many stars are counted, it would never be enough to express it fully.

Similarly, "*Even if I count all the autumn leaves falling,*" adds to the intensity of the experience. Autumn leaves fall in huge numbers, and the prospect of counting them all emphasizes the magnitude of the endeavor. This exaggeration illustrates that no matter how many things the speaker attempts to tally, the worth and gratitude they have for their teacher are immeasurable.

Finally, the sentence "*But how can I ever count the teacher's grace...*" speaks directly to the primary idea: the teacher's generosity and impact are so wide and profound that they cannot be quantified or properly described. The use of hyperbole here emphasizes the speaker's understanding that the teacher's impact is incalculable and eternal.

Overall, the hyperbole in these lines emphasizes the deep, limitless gratitude the speaker feels, making the emotion stronger and more meaningful by illustrating the impossibility of truly counting or measuring the teacher's influence.

- **Xin lỗi tình yêu by Dam Vinh Hung (Apologize for love by Dam Vinh Hung)**

The sentence "*Xin lỗi em ngàn lần xin lỗi em*" is an example of using hyperbole in song lyrics. This figure of speech is used to emphasize deep regret or remorse for an action, conveying intense emotion that ordinary language cannot fully express.

This sentence can be translated into English as: "*I'm sorry a thousand times, I'm sorry to you,*" where "*ngàn lần*" (a thousand times) is an exaggeration to show deep regret, going beyond a simple apology.

The reason for using hyperbole here is to highlight the speaker's extreme remorse, aiming to convey a sense of guilt and sincere concern for the person they are apologizing. The repetition of "*xin lỗi*" (sorry) also strengthens the impact of the apology, creating a stronger impression on the listener.

- **Yêu như lần yêu cuối by Mai Tien Dung (Love like the last time by Mai Tien Dung)**

The line "*Ngày mai dù ra sao anh vẫn xé tim mình để yêu*" from the song "*Yêu Như Lần Yêu Cuối*" (*Love like the last time*) by Mai Tiến Dũng also employs hyperbole to emphasize the depth of the speaker's commitment to love, no matter the circumstances.

The expression "*xé tim mình*" (tear my heart) is a vivid exaggeration in this context, signifying a readiness to bear emotional suffering and make sacrifices in order to love. It implies that the speaker is willing to go to considerable measures, including causing themselves mental distress, to love completely. The exaggeration in this statement, symbolized by "*Ngày mai dù ra sao*" (No matter what happens tomorrow), demonstrates the speaker's depth of devotion and commitment to love intensely and passionately despite the uncertainty of the future.

This excessive expression implies an almost dramatic and selfless love, in which the speaker's feelings and dedication are so strong that they are willing to bear the pain as a sign of devotion. It emphasizes the speaker's desire to love "like it's the last time," increasing the emotional depth of the song and helping the audience connect with the idea of eternal, undying love despite life's uncertainties.

- **Đi Để Trở Về by Soobin Hoang Son (Go to return by Soobin Hoang Son))**

In the song "*Đi Để Trở Về*" by Soobin Hoàng Sơn, the line "*Đi đến tận cùng thế gian*" uses exaggeration to convey strong and profound feelings. In addition to referring to a geographical distance, the expression "*tận cùng thế gian*" (to the ends of the earth) also expresses a sense of sacrifice and a readiness to face all obstacles to find something that has been lost or accomplish a life goal. Beyond merely denoting geographical limits, this exaggeration also conveys a spiritual sense, signifying a deep need for travel or reunion. It demonstrates an unshakeable resolve in the face of adversity. This stanza, which represents both action and emotional depth, emphasizes the act of traveling far to return.

In the context of the song, this lyric indicates the longing and profound desire to return to important values, such as love, family, or nation. The phrase "*tận cùng thế gian*" emphasizes the power of desire and determination to overcome any obstacle.

Thus, this poem blends intense emotion with spatial exaggeration, employing powerful imagery to communicate the idea of perseverance and a deep desire to return to one's origins.

V. DISCUSSION

Both English and Vietnamese song lyrics frequently use hyperbole, a rhetorical device that intentionally exaggerates for effect or emphasis. Hyperbole is used in both languages to amplify feelings, express powerful ideas, and produce memorable imagery. However, the cultural, linguistic, and thematic distinctions between Vietnamese and English music might influence how hyperbole

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

is used. A thorough comparison of hyperbole in Vietnamese and English song lyrics can be found here.

5.1. Similarities

Both English and Vietnamese songs effectively use hyperbole as a stylistic device to express profound emotions and create a strong connection with listeners. One prominent similarity is the way hyperbole is employed to emphasize intense emotions. For example, the English lyric *"I have loved you for a thousand years"* expresses an eternal and boundless love, just like the Vietnamese lyric *"Yêu em cho đến khi ong thôi làm mật"* (Loving you until the bees stop making honey) conveys an enduring and infinite affection. In both cases, hyperbole is used to amplify emotions, making them resonate deeply with the audience.

Additionally, hyperbole in both languages creates vivid and symbolic imagery that leaves a lasting impression. In the English song *"This Girl Is On Fire"* by Alicia Keys, the metaphorical phrase *"walking on fire"* emphasizes a sense of intensity and empowerment. Similarly, in Vietnamese music, the line *"Lòng cuồng điên vì nhớ"* (A heart gone mad with longing) vividly portrays the overwhelming nature of longing. These images help evoke a deeper emotional response from listeners by drawing them into the lyrical world.

Lastly, hyperbole reflects universal emotions in both English and Vietnamese songs. Themes such as love, longing, gratitude, and resilience transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. Whether it is an English ballad or a Vietnamese folk song, hyperbole serves as a bridge, allowing people from different cultures to relate to shared human experiences.

In general, in both the 7 English and Vietnamese song lyrics, hyperbole is used to highlight emotions or situations. Exaggerating things helps listeners easily feel the strength and depth of emotions, such as love, pain, or joy. Hyperbole in songs creates impressive images that make the song more interesting and memorable. Whether the song is in English or Vietnamese, hyperbole is used to clarify the emotional message that the author wants to convey. It can make the lyrics more intense and profound. Especially in songs about love, hyperbole is often used to express passion and intense feelings.

5.2. Differences

Despite their similarities, the use of hyperbole in English and Vietnamese songs differs significantly in themes, style, and cultural inspiration.

First, the themes in English and Vietnamese songs vary in focus. English songs often use hyperbole to highlight personal experiences, such as inner strength, passionate love, or triumph over adversity. For instance, the lyric *"She's walking on fire"* in *"This Girl Is On Fire"* celebrates confidence and resilience. In contrast, Vietnamese songs tend to emphasize themes like gratitude, love tied to nature, and nostalgia for traditional values. A prime example is the lyric *"Dẫu đếm hết sao trời đêm nay"* (Even if I could count all the stars tonight) from *"Người Thầy"* (The Teacher), which uses hyperbole to express boundless gratitude toward teachers. Second, there is a notable difference in the style of expression. English songs often use direct and impactful hyperbole, drawing from global imagery such as vast periods ("a million years"), grandeur (the universe, oceans), or extreme physical experiences ("walking on fire"). This reflects the Western cultural tendency toward straightforwardness and boldness in emotional expression. On the other hand, Vietnamese songs use soft, poetic, and metaphorical hyperbole. Nature-based imagery such as bees, stars, or spring is prevalent, reflecting the Eastern cultural preference for introspection and subtlety.

Another key distinction lies in the directness of the message. English hyperboles are often clear and easy to understand. For example, *"I Could Hold You for a Million Years"* vividly conveys the depth of the singer's love in a way that requires no additional interpretation. In contrast, Vietnamese hyperbole often carries deeper metaphorical meanings. The lyric *"Yêu em cho đến khi ong thôi làm mật"* (Loving you until the bees stop making honey) not only highlights enduring love but also suggests a connection to the cyclical and unchanging laws of nature, requiring the listener to reflect on its layers of meaning.

Finally, the cultural inspirations for hyperbole differ between the two languages. English hyperbole is influenced by modern and globalized elements, focusing on individualism and freedom. This is reflected in the bold and expansive imagery commonly found in English songs. Conversely, Vietnamese hyperbole draws heavily from traditional culture, emphasizing familial bonds, a deep connection to one's homeland, and gratitude toward predecessors. This cultural foundation gives Vietnamese songs a nostalgic and heartfelt tone, distinguishing them from their English counterparts.

VI. CONCLUSION

In both English and Vietnamese song lyrics, hyperbole plays a key role in intensifying emotions and expressing powerful sentiments. This study has examined the use of hyperbole in English and Vietnamese song lyrics, exploring their similarities and differences. Hyperbole is a universal tool in music, amplifying emotions and creating vivid imagery to connect with audiences. Both English and Vietnamese songs use hyperbole to express deep emotions like love and longing, emphasizing the intensity of human experiences.

While English lyrics frequently use direct and dramatic exaggerations to convey ideas of individualism and universality, Vietnamese lyrics tend to use poetic and nature-based hyperboles rooted in cultural and traditional symbolism. These distinctions highlight each language's unique cultural identities, which are influenced by historical and social situations.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of hyperbole's role in lyrical composition and its impact on listeners. It is hoped that this study serves as a reference for future research on hyperbole and other figures of speech, enriching the exploration of

Analysis of Hyperbole in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics

linguistic creativity in music.

REFERENCES

- 1) Arfiah, A. (2016). Figurative language in John Legend's songs: An analysis of metaphors and hyperboles. *Journal of English Literature*, 45(1), 89-103.
- 2) Bagul, R., Chavan, R., & Joshi, S. (2023). The use of figurative language in Jamie Miller's song lyrics. *Literary Studies Journal*, 19(2), 130-145.
- 3) Claridge, C. (2011). *Hyperbole in English: A corpus-based study of exaggeration*. Routledge.
- 4) Hornby, A. S. (2000). *Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary of Current English* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- 5) Harrison, M. (1997). The cultural significance of songs in society. *Cultural Insights*. Retrieved from <https://www.culturalinsights.com>
- 6) Knickerbocker, K. L., & Reninger, H. H. (1963). *Interpreting literature*. Macmillan.
- 7) Leech, G. (1981). *Semantics: The study of meaning*. Penguin Books.
- 8) Perrine, L. (1997). *Sound and sense: An introduction to poetry* (7th ed.). Harcourt Brace
- 9) Reaske, C. (1966). *How to analyze poetry*. Prentice-Hall.
- 10) Salcedo, M. (2002). The role of songs in daily life. *Journal of Music and Culture*, 5(3). Retrieved from <https://www.journalofmusicculture.com>
- 11) Swarniti, S. (2022). Figurative language in Adele's "Easy On Me": A study of personification and metaphor. *International Journal of Music and Language*, 13(4), 210- 222.
- 12) Webb, V. (1993). *Language and power in literature*. Longman.
- 13) Yusnitasari, M., Kurniawan, A., & Prawira, E. (2022). Figurative language in Anne Murray's "You Are My Sunshine". *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 28(3), 120- 135.