

Wichukorn Suriyawongpaisal 2013: A Study of Figurative Language that Conveys Connotation Related to American Cultural Values in Country Songs: The Case of Taylor Swift. Master of Arts (English for Specific Purposes), Major Field: English for Specific Purposes, Department of Foreign Languages. Thesis Advisor: Assistant Professor Pataraporn Tapinta, Ph.D. 74 pages.

The main objectives of this study are: 1) to identify common connotations expressing American cultural values through figurative language in Taylor Swift's songs, and 2) to analyze how those American cultural values are conveyed by figures of speech. The frameworks employed in this study are those of figurative language and connotation (Partington, 1998 cited Leech, 1974 and Eco, 1976; Dobrovolskij, and Piirainen, 2005; Burton, 2007; Ray, 2007; 2008; Carroll, 2008; Pence, 2012) and American cultural values suggested by different experts (e.g. Hofstede, 1984; Kernohan, 1998; Nooteboom, 2002; Brewer, 2009; Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel, 2009; Carroll, 2010; Knox and Schacht, 2010). This qualitative study employs the methods of descriptive and interpretive content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Three common types of figure of speech that express connotations through Taylor Swift's country songs related to American cultural values were found: metaphor, simile, and hyperbole. Four aspects of American cultural values of love and care, individualism, honesty and trust, and liberalism were revealed through four main relevant themes: bond and relationship, independency, honesty, and dignity respectively. These types of figure of speech play different roles in connoting American cultural values. Metaphors and similes were employed in the songs to help convey American cultural values that the lyricist wanted to share by empowering the intended messages with the devices of making indirect and direct comparison between certain entities and intended meanings. The employment of hyperbole was employed to emphasize the intended values by exaggerating the connoted messages. In brief, the three types of figure of speech appear to be powerful tools in Taylor Swift's country songs to express American cultural values. This finding seems to suggest that the power of these literary devices should effectively express intended messages in other genres of literary work and in any culture as well.

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