



Bridging Cultures Through Music: A Stylistic and Cross-Cultural Analysis of Figurative Language Translation in C-Pop

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Keywords

Cross-cultural communication; Figurative language; Music translation; Stylistic analysis; Translation strategies

Abstract

This study explores how figurative language in WayV's *Kick Back* (秘境) album functions stylistically and how its meanings are transferred through translation for cross-cultural audiences. Music serves as a medium that bridges cultural boundaries, and the translation of figurative expressions plays a crucial role in shaping intercultural understanding. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research analyzes figurative devices found in three selected song lyrics through listening and note-taking techniques. Data were processed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, while semantic validation, expert judgment, and intrarater reliability ensured data credibility. The analysis identifies seven types of figurative language: simile (12 instances), personification (2), metonymy/synecdoche (1), *nianlian* (1), parallelism (1), contrast (2), and rhetorical question (1). Connotative meaning dominates the figurative expressions. Simile emerges as the most frequent stylistic device. The findings show that figurative language not only shapes the emotional and aesthetic tone of the songs but also presents challenges in translation, particularly in maintaining stylistic effect and cultural nuance. This study highlights how stylistic translation contributes to cross-cultural communication by enabling listeners from different linguistic backgrounds to access the intended meanings embedded in the lyrics.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential element of human life, functioning as a primary tool for communication and as a medium through which individuals express ideas, emotions, and experiences. Through language, humans can convey thoughts, share knowledge, and influence others, enabling social interaction and cultural exchange (Eriyanti et al., 2020). Beyond its utilitarian purpose, language serves as a vehicle for imaginative and aesthetic expression. Literary works, in particular, demonstrate how language can encapsulate personal experiences, beliefs, and emotions, producing texts that not only inform but also evoke aesthetic appreciation and emotional resonance (Huriyadi, 2019). One of the most significant aspects of literary expression is **stylistics**, which examines the use of language to produce particular effects and convey meaning. Stylistics focuses on how authors manipulate language to achieve artistic, emotional, and persuasive effects within texts (Lafame, 2020; Madeamin & Thaba, 2021). Through stylistic devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, parallelism, contrast, and rhetorical questions, writers can shape readers' interpretations and evoke specific emotional responses. In the context of songwriting, stylistic analysis is equally relevant, as lyrics represent a literary form that communicates the songwriter's identity, ideas, and emotions. Lyrics, therefore, serve as a medium through which artists express themselves creatively while engaging listeners through both textual and musical elements.

Music, as a universal form of expression, has long been recognized as a powerful medium for conveying ideas, emotions, and cultural narratives. It allows composers and performers to communicate with audiences in ways that transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries (Khoirunnisa, 2020). Lyrics, as an integral component of music, combine meaningful language with melodic and rhythmic elements, providing both aesthetic pleasure and communicative function. Unlike everyday language, song lyrics frequently employ figurative language to evoke imagery, emotion, and imagination. Figurative expressions, including metaphors, similes, personification, and other rhetorical devices, enrich the lyrics and create deeper resonance with listeners. These devices are particularly significant in songs that are intended for international or cross-cultural audiences, as they carry both linguistic and cultural meaning that may require careful interpretation or translation to preserve their effect.

In recent years, the popularity of foreign-language music has grown significantly in Indonesia, alongside the thriving domestic music industry. Indonesian audiences increasingly consume music not only in Bahasa Indonesia but also in foreign languages, including English, Korean, and Mandarin. Among these, Mandarin-language music, particularly from C-pop (Chinese pop), has gained remarkable traction among young listeners. This phenomenon reflects both globalization in music consumption and the increasing influence of East Asian pop culture in Indonesia. The rise of C-pop boy groups, such as WayV (威神V), has contributed to the popularity of Mandarin-language songs in Indonesia and worldwide.

WayV is a Chinese boy group and a sub-unit of NCT, formed under SM Entertainment, a South Korean entertainment company. Since their official debut on January 17, 2019, WayV has gained international recognition, particularly among youth audiences, due to their unique blend of Mandarin pop, choreography, and visual aesthetics. Their third mini-album, *Kick Back* (秘境), includes six songs—*Kick Back*, *Action Figure*, *Horizon*, *All For Love*, *Good Time*, and the Korean version of *Kick Back*—each featuring distinct stylistic and linguistic elements. The album combines contemporary pop music with lyrical content that conveys emotions, experiences, and imaginative narratives. The lead single, *Kick Back* (秘境), released in March 2021, has achieved widespread international acclaim, ranking high on global iTunes charts, China's QQ Music, and social media platforms such as YouTube and Twitter. The music video has garnered millions of views and likes, demonstrating its popularity and cultural reach across linguistic and national boundaries.

The growing global influence of C-pop, exemplified by WayV, raises important questions about the role of language style in music, particularly when songs are consumed across cultures. Lyrics, when translated into different languages, must retain not only semantic meaning but also stylistic and cultural nuances. Figurative language in lyrics poses particular challenges for translation because metaphors, similes, and other rhetorical devices often rely on cultural knowledge, linguistic conventions, and aesthetic expectations specific to the source language. Translators must therefore balance fidelity to the original text with the need to produce a version that is meaningful, aesthetically pleasing, and culturally relevant for the target audience.

Despite the increasing attention to international music, relatively few studies have examined the stylistic features of C-pop lyrics and their translation especially in the context of cross-cultural communication. Most existing research focuses on Western music or K-pop, leaving a gap in the analysis of Mandarin-language lyrics and the strategies used to render figurative language accessible to diverse audiences. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining the stylistic devices employed in WayV's *Kick Back* (秘境) album, the meanings they convey, and the translation strategies necessary to bridge cultural and linguistic differences.

The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to identify the types of stylistic devices used in the selected lyrics, (2) to analyze the meanings conveyed through these devices, and (3) to determine the most frequently occurring stylistic features and their implications for translation and cross-cultural understanding. By doing so, this study contributes to the fields of stylistics, translation studies, and intercultural communication, highlighting how music can function as a bridge between cultures. The findings are expected to provide insights for translators, musicologists, linguists, and educators interested in cross-cultural communication through music and the challenges of translating figurative language in songs.

In conclusion, music serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for cultural exchange,

emotional expression, and linguistic creativity. Analyzing the stylistic devices in lyrics and their translation provides a window into the ways language, culture, and music intersect to create meaning for audiences across linguistic and national boundaries. WayV's *Kick Back* (秘境) album offers a rich case study for this purpose, illustrating the interplay between figurative language, stylistic choices, and cross-cultural communication. This research underscores the significance of stylistic and translational analysis in understanding how music functions as a vehicle for bridging cultures, fostering intercultural understanding, and promoting the global appreciation of Mandarin-language music.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design which emphasizes detailed observation and in-depth analysis of the subject under investigation. Qualitative research focuses on exploring phenomena in their natural or constructed contexts, paying particular attention to the characteristics, relationships, and qualities of the observed elements. Descriptive qualitative research, in particular, is used to provide comprehensive descriptions and interpretations of phenomena, aiming to reveal patterns, meanings, and stylistic features present in the data.

The primary data sources for this study are three songs from the Chinese boy group WayV (威神 V): *Kick Back* (秘境), *Action Figure*, and *All For Love* (梦尽). These songs were selected due to their linguistic richness, stylistic diversity, and popularity, which makes them suitable for analyzing figurative language and its translation in a cross-cultural context. Secondary data were collected from relevant literature, including books, academic theses, journal articles, dictionaries, and prior studies on stylistics, Mandarin language, song lyrics, and translation studies. Both Mandarin and Indonesian sources were consulted to provide a comparative perspective on language use and translation.

Data collection was conducted using the listening and note-taking techniques. Intensive listening allowed the researcher to identify and comprehend the lyrical content, while note-taking was used to document phrases and expressions that contain stylistic or figurative language.

For data analysis, the Miles and Huberman interactive model was employed, which consists of three stages: (1) **data reduction**, involving the selection, simplification, and abstraction of relevant information; (2) **data display**, where the data are organized and presented systematically to highlight patterns and relationships; and (3) **conclusion drawing and verification**, which involves interpreting the data, identifying thematic insights, and validating findings.

To ensure data validity, semantic validity was applied, allowing the researcher to assess whether the identified figurative expressions accurately represent their intended meanings. Expert judgment was also utilized by consulting the research supervisor to confirm the accuracy and interpretation of stylistic features. For reliability, the intrarater technique was implemented, which involved repeated review and analysis of the three song lyrics to ensure consistency in data coding, identification and

interpretation.

This methodological approach allows the study to systematically examine stylistic devices, interpret their meaning, and evaluate the strategies used in translating figurative language, providing insights into how lyrics convey emotion, culture, and meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study analyzed the lyrics of three songs by WayV—*Kick Back* 《秘境》, *Action Figure*, and *All For Love* 《梦尽》—to identify and categorize rhetorical devices and to explore their denotative and connotative meanings. A total of 20 rhetorical instances were identified across the three songs, which are summarized in Table 1. Rhetorical Device:

Table 1. Distribution of Rhetorical Devices in WayV Lyrics			
Rhetorical Device	Song's Title		
	Kick Back 《秘境》 Mìjìng	Action Figure	All For Love 《梦尽》 Mèngjǐn
Avareg of Data			
Metaphor (比喻 Bǐyù)	2	6	4
Personification (比拟 Bǐnǐ)		1	1
Metonymy/Synecdoche (借代 Jièdài)	1		
拈连(Niānlián)			1
Paralelism (对偶 Duì'ǒu)		1	
对比(Duìbǐ)	1		1
反问(Fǎnwèn)	1		
Avarege:	5	8	7

The analysis demonstrates that **metaphor (12 instances)** is the dominant rhetorical device, followed by personification, contrast, and less frequent devices such as metonymy, Niānlián, parallelism, and rhetorical questions. The analysis of three WayV songs—*Kick Back* (秘境 Mìjìng), *Action Figure*, and *All For Love* (梦尽 Mèngjǐn)—revealed that a total of 20 lyric excerpts employ rhetorical devices. These

excerpts were systematically categorized according to the classification of *Hànyǔ Xūcígé* (汉语修辞格, Mandarin rhetorical devices) as proposed by Huángbóróng and Liàoxùdōng. Seven types of rhetorical devices were identified, with varying frequencies and functions in conveying meaning.

1. Metaphor (比喻, Bǐyù)

Metaphor emerged as the most prevalent rhetorical device, appearing in 12 out of 20 excerpts. Metaphors were primarily used to express abstract emotions and complex psychological states, mapping them onto concrete images. For example, in *Kick Back*, the lyric “心如荒野” (*heart like a wasteland*) metaphorically conveys emotional desolation. Similarly, *All For Love* uses “爱与痛交织成旋律” (*love and pain intertwine into a melody*), demonstrating conceptual metaphor where emotional experiences are represented through auditory imagery. These metaphors serve both cognitive and aesthetic functions, enabling listeners to visualize abstract states and empathize with the emotional content.

The analysis of metaphors in the lyrics of three WayV songs—*Kick Back* (秘境 *Mìjìng*), *Action Figure*, and *All For Love* (梦尽 *Mèngjǐn*)—revealed a total of 12 instances, distributed as follows: *Kick Back* contains 2 data points, *Action Figure* 6 data points, and *All For Love* 4 data points. The following example illustrates the identification and interpretation of metaphor in *Kick Back*. Table 2. Example of Metaphor (比喻, Bǐyù):

Table 2. Example of Metaphor (比喻, Bǐyù)			
Lyric Excerpt	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
离开名为觉醒的时空	Líkāi míngwèi juéxǐng de shíkōng	Leaving the space and time called consciousness	The phrase 时空 (<i>shíkōng</i> , "space and time") is metaphorically represented as fantasy or imagination. Here, "space and time" do not refer to literal temporal-spatial dimensions but symbolize the subjective constructs of the mind. This metaphor conveys a connotative meaning: departing from the imagined world or personal fantasy equates to reaching a state of awareness or consciousness. Thus, the lyric reflects an abstract conceptual mapping in which the act of leaving fantasy is equated with the realization of consciousness.

In this lyric excerpt, the metaphor is identified through the semantic mapping of concrete concepts (space and time) onto abstract ideas (fantasy and awareness). The term 时空 (*shíkōng*) functions as the source domain (physical space-time) in the metaphor, while the target domain is the individual's inner imaginative or mental realm. This mapping creates a cognitive and aesthetic effect, allowing the listener to conceptualize consciousness in terms of tangible spatial-temporal imagery.

The metaphor carries polysemous meanings: literally, 时空 refers to “space and time,” yet in the lyric, it signifies the imaginative constructs that exist solely in the mind. By framing imagination as a form of “space and time,” the lyric poetically emphasizes the process of transitioning from fantasy to awareness, which can be interpreted as personal growth or cognitive awakening.

This approach to metaphor aligns with Huángbóróng and Liàoxùdōng’s theory of *Hànyǔ Xūcígé*, where metaphor functions not only as a decorative literary device but also as a semantic bridge between abstract concepts and perceivable reality, enhancing both comprehension and aesthetic experience.

Table 3. Example of Metaphor (比喻, Bǐyù) – Kick Back 《秘境》 Mìjìng

Lyric Excerpt	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
等到黑暗后的光明	Děngdào hēi'àn hòu de guāngmíng	Waiting for the light after darkness	In this lyric, the phrase 黑暗后的光明 (<i>hēi'àn hòu de guāngmíng</i>) is metaphorically used to represent awaiting a new life or better circumstances . The word 黑暗 (<i>hēi'àn</i> , "darkness") symbolizes a difficult or painful period in someone's life, whereas 光明 (<i>guāngmíng</i> , "light") represents hope, positivity, or a brighter future. The preposition 后 (<i>hòu</i> , "after") emphasizes the sequential nature of this transition from hardship to hope. Connotatively, this lyric suggests anticipation of renewal and personal growth , framing the metaphor as a mental and emotional journey from struggle to recovery. This aligns with Huángbóróng and Liàoxùdōng's theoretical perspective that metaphors in Mandarin lyrics often bridge abstract emotional experiences with concrete imagery, thereby enhancing aesthetic and cognitive understanding.

The metaphor here illustrates the cognitive mapping from concrete imagery of light and darkness to abstract experiences of hope and adversity, conveying emotional depth and narrative progression in the song. The lyric 等到黑暗后的光明 (*Děngdào hēi'àn hòu de guāngmíng*), translated as “waiting for the light after darkness,” demonstrates a classic metaphorical structure in Mandarin lyrics, mapping the abstract concept of hope and renewal onto the concrete imagery of light emerging from darkness.

Metaphorical mapping: Darkness (黑暗, *hēi'àn*) symbolizes adversity, emotional struggle, or life's challenging periods. Light (光明, *guāngmíng*) represents positive change, new opportunities, or personal growth. The temporal preposition 后 (*hòu*, "after") suggests a sequential process, emphasizing the transition from hardship to hope.

Connotative meaning: Beyond the literal sense, the lyric conveys a narrative of perseverance and optimism, implying that enduring difficulties will eventually lead to personal or emotional

enlightenment.

Cognitive function: This metaphor facilitates mental simulation, allowing listeners to understand emotional and psychological experiences through visualizable natural phenomena (darkness and light), consistent with Huángbóróng and Liàoxùdōng’s framework of metaphor in Mandarin literature.

Cultural resonance: The metaphor also reflects a common motif in East Asian aesthetics, where contrasts between light and dark often signify life cycles, moral growth, or spiritual awakening. Thus, this lyric not only illustrates emotional depth but also reinforces the listener’s cognitive engagement with the song’s thematic message of hope and resilience.

Table 4. Example of Metaphor (比喻, Bǐyù) – Action Figure

Lyric Excerpt	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
面具下 被孤独 遮蔽	Miànjùxià bèi gūdú zhēbì	Loneliness hidden beneath the mask	The phrase 面具下 (miànjùxià, "under the mask") functions metaphorically to represent a smile or outward cheerfulness that conceals true emotions. 孤独 (gūdú, "loneliness") symbolizes inner sadness or isolation. Thus, the lyric conveys the act of hiding personal sorrow behind a façade of happiness, a common emotional experience in human life. Connotatively, this metaphor communicates the duality of external appearance versus internal feeling, emphasizing the complexity of emotional expression. This usage aligns with Mandarin rhetorical theory, demonstrating the expressive power of metaphor to convey psychological states through tangible imagery.

The lyric 面具下被孤独遮蔽 (Miànjùxià bèi gūdú zhēbì), translated as “loneliness hidden beneath the mask,” employs metaphor to explore psychological concealment and duality of human emotion.

Metaphorical mapping: The “mask” (面具, miànjù) is metaphorically associated with outward expressions of cheerfulness or social conformity, whereas “loneliness” (孤独, gūdú) represents the singer’s internal emotional state. The verb 遮蔽 (zhēbì, “to hide/conceal”) links these two domains, highlighting the tension between external appearance and internal reality.

Connotative meaning: Connotatively, the lyric conveys emotional complexity, portraying how individuals may present a composed or joyful exterior while experiencing isolation or sadness internally. This underscores themes of identity, vulnerability and emotional authenticity.

Cognitive function: Through metaphor, the listener can bridge abstract emotional states with tangible objects, facilitating empathy and emotional comprehension. The lyric exemplifies how Mandarin rhetorical devices can translate psychological phenomena into perceptible imagery, enhancing

interpretive engagement.

Aesthetic impact: The use of metaphor intensifies the lyric's emotional resonance, creating a layered narrative that communicates both the explicit act of hiding and the implicit emotional struggle.

Table 5. Analysis of Metaphor (比喻, Bǐyù)

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Metaphorical Meaning	Analysis
在英雄漫画里崇拜	Zài yīngxióng mànhuà lǐ chóngbài	Admiring someone in a hero comic	Comic heroes symbolize aspirational strength	The lyric uses metaphor to map admiration onto comic heroes, representing the listener's or singer's aspiration toward heroic qualities such as courage, resilience, and integrity. By situating the admiration "inside a hero comic," the lyric conveys that the ideal figure may be imagined or exaggerated, yet serves as a model for personal development. Connotatively, it reflects the projection of personal ideals onto cultural symbols, linking pop culture imagery to emotional and motivational states.

The metaphor in the lyric 在英雄漫画里崇拜 (*Zài yīngxióng mànhuà lǐ chóngbài*) establishes a clear conceptual mapping between the abstract emotional state of admiration and the concrete, culturally recognizable images of comic heroes. This aligns with contemporary cognitive theories of metaphor, which posit that abstract psychological experiences are often understood via concrete representations, enabling listeners to relate complex internal states to familiar visual or cultural entities.

In terms of connotative meaning, the metaphor extends beyond its literal reference to admiration within a comic. The comic hero is interpreted as an embodiment of aspirational qualities—strength, resilience, courage—that the listener or protagonist seeks to emulate. Consequently, the lyric conveys motivational and aspirational layers, transforming a simple act of admiration into a reflection of personal growth and idealized values.

Regarding **cultural resonance**, the lyric integrates contemporary pop-cultural elements, namely comic heroes, into traditional metaphorical practice. This demonstrates a bridge between modern media representations and classical Mandarin stylistics, reflecting a dynamic adaptation of metaphorical expression consistent with the frameworks proposed by Huáng Bóróng and Liào Xùdōng. The metaphor thus situates the listener within a culturally and temporally relevant context, enhancing interpretive depth.

Finally, the **aesthetic function** of the metaphor lies in its dual engagement with visual and emotional cognition. By combining vivid imagery of comic heroes with abstract feelings of admiration, the lyric

creates a multi-layered aesthetic experience, offering listeners both conceptual and sensory engagement. This contributes to the overall poetic and emotive impact of the song, illustrating how metaphorical language operates simultaneously on cognitive, cultural, and aesthetic levels.

Table 5. Metaphorical Language (比喻, Bǐyù)

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
所有想要飞的期待	<i>Suǒyǒu xiǎngyào fēi de qídài</i>	All hopes want to fly	The lyric demonstrates a sophisticated interplay between linguistic form and cognitive-emotional processing, using metaphor not only to convey loss and impermanence but also to enhance aesthetic engagement and cultural relatability.

The **metaphor** in the lyric 在英雄漫画里崇拜 (*Zài yīngxióng mànhuà lǐ chóngbài*) establishes a clear conceptual mapping between the abstract emotional state of admiration and the concrete, culturally recognizable images of comic heroes. This aligns with contemporary cognitive theories of metaphor, which posit that abstract psychological experiences are often understood via concrete representations, enabling listeners to relate complex internal states to familiar visual or cultural entities.

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Table 6. Metaphorical Language (比喻, Bǐyù)

Lyrical Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
就算岁月褪去了我的漆	Jiù suàn suìyuè tuìqùle wǒ de qī	Even if years fade my paint	Integrates universal theme of enduring love with traditional Chinese appreciation for symbolic representation; combines classical metaphorical imagery with contemporary lyrical style

The lyric 就算岁月褪去了我的漆 (*Jiù suàn suìyuè tuìqùle wǒ de qī*) exemplifies a Bǐyù (simile/metaphor) in which the abstract notion of enduring love is concretely mapped onto the image of painted color. Conceptually, “paint” represents love that has been carefully applied and nurtured, much like a vibrant artwork, allowing listeners to visualize an otherwise intangible emotional state. Connotatively, the lyric conveys that genuine love persists despite the erosive effects of time, emphasizing continuity, resilience, and devotion. Cognitively, this metaphor facilitates understanding of complex emotions through tangible imagery, leveraging the listener’s ability to relate abstract feelings to sensory experience. Culturally, the metaphor resonates with Chinese aesthetic traditions that value symbolic representation, while simultaneously integrating contemporary pop-lyrical practices. This duality enhances the lyric’s emotional impact, bridging timeless cultural motifs with modern artistic expression.

In the lyric 就算岁月褪去了我的漆 (*Jiù suàn suìyuè tuìqùle wǒ de qī*), the metaphorical mapping aligns the abstract concept of enduring love with the concrete image of paint that may fade over time. “Paint” represents the emotional investment and visible imprint of love, making the intangible idea of persistent affection more tangible and relatable. Connotatively, the lyric conveys the resilience and steadfastness of love, emphasizing that true emotional bonds persist despite the erosion of time. Cognitively, the metaphor allows listeners to understand complex emotional experiences through visual and tactile imagery, supporting mental simulation of the fading yet enduring affection. Aesthetically, the combination of concrete imagery and abstract emotion enriches the lyrical expression, creating a vivid, emotionally resonant experience that engages both imagination and empathy.

2. Personification (比拟 Bǐnǐ)

The personification style in the lyrics of *Action Figure* consists of 1 instance, and in *All For Love* 《梦尽》 (*Mèngjǐn*) also consists of 1 instance. The explanation is as follows:

Tabel 7. Personification (比拟 Bǐnǐ) – Action Figure

Lyrical Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
阴影下眼睛开始逃避	Yīnyǐng xià yǎnjīng kāishǐ táobì	Eyes start to flee under a shadow	Metaphorical Mapping: The abstract emotion of fear or anxiety is mapped onto “eyes” as an agent capable of action, creating a vivid image of avoidance. Connotative Meaning: Beyond literal eye movement, the lyric conveys a sense of psychological retreat or emotional withdrawal in the face of darkness or threat. Cognitive

Function: Personification allows listeners to concretely visualize internal emotions, facilitating empathetic understanding of fear or hesitation. **Aesthetic Impact:** The imagery produces a striking visual effect and enhances emotional engagement, combining human and non-human elements to evoke tension and atmosphere.

In the lyric line “阴影下眼睛开始逃避” (Yīnyǐng xià yǎnjīng kāishǐ táobì, *Eyes start to flee under a shadow*), the personification technique attributes human-like behavior to the eyes, portraying them as capable of active movement. The **connotative meaning** of this imagery conveys more than literal eye movement; it symbolizes emotional avoidance, vulnerability, and an instinctive reaction to fear or uncertainty. Through this figurative expression, the audience can perceive the speaker’s internal state of anxiety and hesitancy, allowing an intimate understanding of complex emotional experiences. From a **cognitive function** perspective, this personification enables listeners to map abstract psychological states—such as apprehension or self-protection—onto a tangible, visual element, facilitating mental simulation and emotional empathy. The **aesthetic impact** lies in the vivid and dynamic imagery, which enhances the lyric’s expressive depth, evokes tension, and integrates seamlessly with the overall mood of the song, providing both conceptual and sensory engagement for the audience.

Table 8.

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
眼神迷茫 脚步走得 缓慢	Yǎnshén mí máng jiǎobù zǒu de huǎnmàn	The confused eyes walk slowly	Personification is employed to attribute human-like actions to the eyes, thereby externalizing an internal emotional state.

In the lyric line “眼神迷茫脚步走得缓慢” (Yǎnshén mí máng jiǎobù zǒu de huǎnmàn, *The confused eyes walk slowly*), personification is employed to attribute human-like actions to the eyes, thereby externalizing an internal emotional state. The **metaphorical mapping** links abstract feelings of confusion and hesitation to the concrete physical movement of walking, making the psychological experience perceptible. In terms of **connotative meaning**, this imagery expresses indecision, uncertainty, and the slow pacing of emotional processing, reflecting the internal struggle of the speaker. From a **cognitive function** perspective, the metaphor allows listeners to visualize and simulate the emotional state, facilitating empathy and enhancing emotional comprehension. **Cultural resonance** is evident in the use of personification to articulate emotions, a common stylistic device in contemporary Mandarin lyricism, which bridges traditional rhetorical practices with modern pop culture expression. Finally, the **aesthetic impact** derives from the vivid visual and kinetic imagery, which engages the listener both emotionally and imaginatively, enriching the overall lyrical experience and highlighting the interplay between inner psychological states and externalized artistic representation.

3. Metonymy or 借代 (Jièdài)

Metonymy, or 借代 (Jièdài) in Mandarin rhetorical tradition, is a figure of speech in which a term is substituted by another closely associated concept. In the context of song lyrics, metonymy often

functions to condense complex, abstract ideas into concise, imagistic expressions that can resonate both cognitively and emotionally with listeners. In the lyric line from *Kick Back* 《秘境》 *mìjìng*, the use of “时间” (*time*) exemplifies this rhetorical strategy, allowing the abstract notion of temporal experience to stand in for broader existential or reflective themes.

Tabel 8. Metonymy/Synecdoche (借代 Jièdài) – Kick Back

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
再展开 时间的 迷	<i>Zài zhǎnkāi shíjiān de mí</i>	Open again the mystery of time	Enhances lyrical aesthetics through concise yet evocative imagery, combining intellectual depth and emotional resonance

The lyric line “再展开时间的迷” (*Zài zhǎnkāi shíjiān de mí*, *Open again the mystery of time*) employs *metonymy/synecdoche* (借代 *Jièdài*) by allowing the term “时间” (*time*) to stand in for a broader continuum of life experiences, events, and existential reflections rather than merely indicating chronological progression. In terms of **metaphorical mapping**, this abstraction enables listeners to conceptualize intangible temporal and existential phenomena through the concrete and culturally familiar concept of time. The **connotative meaning** extends beyond the literal, suggesting an introspective revisitation of past experiences or the enigmatic unfolding of personal and collective events. Functionally, the **cognitive impact** lies in facilitating comprehension of abstract ideas by linking them to tangible constructs, thereby enhancing mental visualization and reflective thought. Regarding **cultural resonance**, this use of temporal imagery aligns with traditional Mandarin literary and lyrical practices, where time often symbolizes philosophical insight, human destiny, or emotional states, allowing the lyric to resonate with audiences attuned to these conventions. Finally, the **aesthetic impact** is notable: the line combines brevity and poetic imagery, evoking intellectual curiosity and emotional engagement simultaneously, while maintaining lyrical elegance that enriches the listener’s interpretive experience.

4. The Rhetorical Figure 拈连 (*Niānlián*)

The rhetorical figure 拈连 (*Niānlián*) in Mandarin is characterized by the linking of concrete and abstract elements within a single expression to convey layered meanings. In song lyrics, this technique allows for the integration of tangible imagery with intangible concepts, enhancing both cognitive engagement and emotional resonance. The lyric line from *All For Love* 《梦尽》 *mèngjìn* exemplifies this approach by juxtaposing the perceptible image of the moon with the abstract notion of waiting, thereby communicating philosophical reflections on the impermanence and fluctuations of life.

Tabel 9. Niānlián (拈连) – All For Love 《梦尽》 mèngjìn

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Aesthetic Impact
月有 圆缺 别再 等待	<i>Yuè yǒu yuánquē bié zài děngdài</i>	The moon has fullness and imperfection; do not wait any longer	The rhetorical figure 拈连 (<i>Niānlián</i>) in Mandarin is characterized by the linking of concrete and abstract elements within a single expression to convey layered meanings. In song lyrics, this technique allows for the integration of tangible

imagery with intangible concepts, enhancing both cognitive engagement and emotional resonance.

The lyric line “月有圆缺别再等待” (*Yuè yǒu yuánquē bié zài děngdài*, *The moon has fullness and imperfection; do not wait any longer*) utilizes the rhetorical strategy of *Niānlián* (拈连) by connecting a concrete visual element—the moon in its waxing and waning phases—with the abstract concept of waiting. In terms of **metaphorical mapping**, the fluctuating moon phases serve as a tangible representation of life’s impermanence and cyclical nature, while “waiting” embodies human anticipation or hesitation. The **connotative meaning** extends beyond the literal, suggesting that life progresses regardless of human desire for completeness or ideal timing, emphasizing acceptance of imperfection and the inevitability of change. The **cognitive function** is achieved through linking a perceptible natural phenomenon with abstract existential reflection, aiding listeners in conceptualizing complex life experiences. In terms of **cultural resonance**, the lyric draws on the deep-rooted Chinese literary and philosophical motif of lunar cycles as symbols of temporal flow and impermanence, invoking culturally familiar imagery. Finally, the **aesthetic impact** is significant: the lyric combines vivid, accessible imagery with reflective philosophical content, producing both emotional engagement and intellectual stimulation, thus enhancing the overall poetic and lyrical quality of the song.

5. Parallelism (对偶 *Duì'ǒu*)

The rhetorical device *parallelism* (对偶 *Duì'ǒu*) in Mandarin involves the arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in symmetrical structures to emphasize rhythm, contrast, or balance. In song lyrics, parallelism often conveys emotional states, amplifies expressive intensity, and highlights thematic coherence. The opening line of *Action Figure* demonstrates the use of parallel structure to portray a spectrum of emotional experiences, providing both aesthetic appeal and cognitive accessibility.

Tabel 10. Parallelism (对偶 *Duì'ǒu*) – Action Figure

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
孤寂 怀疑 喧哗	Gūjì huáiyí xuānhuá	Loneliness, doubt and clamor.	In song lyrics, parallelism often conveys emotional states, amplifies expressive intensity, and highlights thematic coherence.

The lyric line “孤寂 怀疑 喧哗” (*Gūjì huáiyí xuānhuá*, *Loneliness, doubt, clamor*) exemplifies *parallelism* (对偶 *Duì'ǒu*) through the use of three syntactically and semantically balanced nouns. In terms of **metaphorical mapping**, the line is primarily **denotative**, describing the raw emotional states experienced in a romantic or interpersonal context, without invoking indirect figurative imagery. Its **connotative meaning** lies in the cumulative effect of juxtaposing loneliness, doubt, and clamor, which collectively convey the emotional turbulence and inner conflict of the lyric’s speaker. From a **cognitive function** perspective, the triadic structure allows the listener to process complex affective states efficiently, providing a mental framework to grasp emotional dynamics. The line demonstrates **cultural resonance** by adhering to classical and modern Chinese literary practices where parallel structures are used to balance meaning and enhance expressive clarity. Finally, the **aesthetic**

impact is achieved through rhythmic regularity and phonetic balance, which heightens the lyric’s musicality and memorability, offering both intellectual and sensory engagement to the audience.

6. Antithesis or Contrast (对比 *Duǐbǐ*)

The rhetorical device **antithesis or contrast** (对比 *Duǐbǐ*) in Mandarin lyrics highlights opposing concepts, actions, or emotional states to create tension, emphasize choices, and deepen interpretive layers. In the song *Kick Back*, the use of contrast conveys the tension between acceptance and release, reflecting inner decision-making and the emotional complexity of letting go of personal illusions or imagined worlds.

Tabel 11. Antithesis/Contrast (对比 *Duǐbǐ*) – Kick Back

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
不想被 结局更 改我选 择脱离	<i>Bùxiǎng bèi jiéjú gēnggǎi wǒ xuǎnzé tuōlí</i>	I do not want the ending to change; I choose to let go	The rhetorical device antithesis or contrast (对比 <i>Duǐbǐ</i>) in Mandarin lyrics highlights opposing concepts, actions, or emotional states to create tension, emphasize choices, and deepen interpretive layers

The lyric line “不想被结局更改我选择脱离” (*Bùxiǎng bèi jiéjú gēnggǎi wǒ xuǎnzé tuōlí*, *I do not want the ending to change; I choose to let go*) exemplifies the rhetorical device of **antithesis** (对比 *Duǐbǐ*) through the juxtaposition of two opposing attitudes: resisting alteration of the outcome versus actively choosing to disengage. In terms of **metaphorical mapping**, the lyric contrasts an abstract emotional stance—resisting change—with a concrete decision—choosing release—creating a mental representation of internal conflict. The **connotative meaning** extends beyond literal interpretation to communicate the singer’s assertion of autonomy, signaling a conscious choice to disengage from imagined or desired scenarios while maintaining personal integrity. From a **cognitive function** perspective, the juxtaposition facilitates audience understanding of the duality of human experience—acknowledging constraints while exercising agency. The lyric exhibits **cultural resonance** by echoing classical Chinese motifs of fate, impermanence, and moral choice, bridging traditional philosophical thought with modern lyrical expression. Finally, its **aesthetic impact** arises from the syntactic symmetry and conceptual tension, which heightens emotional engagement, underlines thematic depth, and produces a reflective listening experience.

Tabel 12. Antithesis/Contrast (对比 *Duǐbǐ*) – Kick Back

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Analysis
忽明忽灭无 法回到过去 就算爱得彻 底	<i>Hūmíng hūmiè wúfǎ huídào guàquè jiùsuàn ài dé chedì</i>	Suddenly bright, suddenly dim; I cannot return to the past, even if the love was complete	The contrasting imagery creates vivid emotional tension, enhancing lyrical depth and aesthetic richness

The lyric line “忽明忽灭无法回到过去就算爱得彻底” (*Hūmíng hūmiè wúfǎ huídào guàquè jiùsuàn ài dé chedì*, *Suddenly bright, suddenly dim; I cannot return to the past, even if the love was complete*) exemplifies the use of **contrast** (对比 *Duǐbǐ*) through juxtaposing opposing phenomena: sudden brightness versus

sudden dimness, and the impossibility of returning to the past versus the completeness of love. In terms of **metaphorical mapping**, the lyric aligns emotional fluctuation—happiness and sadness—with perceptible natural imagery (brightness and darkness) and temporal concepts (past vs. present). The **connotative meaning** extends beyond literal interpretation, revealing the singer’s internal struggle in reconciling the irreversibility of time with profound emotional attachment. From a **cognitive function** perspective, the contrast facilitates audience comprehension of complex emotional dynamics, guiding listeners to mentally simulate the oscillating moods described. The lyric demonstrates **cultural resonance**, reflecting traditional Chinese notions of impermanence, the ephemeral nature of emotions, and the philosophical acceptance of change, common in classical poetry. Finally, its **aesthetic impact** arises from the interplay of light or dark imagery and temporal contrast, producing a rich, emotionally engaging, and visually evocative lyrical expression.

7. Rhetorical Question (反问 Fǎnwèn)

In examining the rhetorical strategies employed in the song *Kick Back*, the use of **rhetorical questions (反问 Fǎnwèn)** emerges as a prominent stylistic device. This figure of speech not only conveys literal inquiry but also extends its function to metaphorical, cognitive, and aesthetic dimensions. By posing questions without expecting direct answers, the lyricist engages listeners in reflective contemplation, stimulates imaginative thinking and enhances the expressive depth of the song. The subsequent analysis considers the rhetorical question in terms of metaphorical mapping, connotative meaning, cognitive function, cultural resonance and aesthetic impact, illustrating how this stylistic choice enriches both the semantic and experiential dimensions of the lyrical narrative.

Tabel 13. Rhetorical Question (反问 Fǎnwèn) – Kick Back

Lyric Line	Pinyin	Literal Translation	Structural Features	Analysis
是否会存在 秘密的世外	Shìfǒu huì cúnzài mìmi de shì wài	Will there exist a secret world?	Use of rhetorical question with interrogative particle “是否”	This figure of speech not only conveys literal inquiry but also extends its function to metaphorical, cognitive, and aesthetic dimensions.

The lyric line “是否会存在 秘密的世外” (*Shìfǒu huì cúnzài mìmi de shì wài*, *Will there exist a secret world?*) employs rhetorical questioning (反问 Fǎnwèn) to evoke contemplation about the existence of a hidden or mysterious realm. In terms of **metaphorical mapping**, the lyric projects the abstract concept of unexplored or secretive experiences onto the concrete image of a “secret world,” bridging imagination and tangible perception. The **connotative meaning** extends beyond the literal query, suggesting a human desire for new experiences, discovery and an encounter with previously unexperienced facets of life. Functionally, the rhetorical device serves a **cognitive purpose**, actively engaging the listener to reflect on the unknown, stimulating mental imagery and imaginative thought. The lyric exhibits **cultural resonance**, as the motif of hidden worlds aligns with traditional Chinese literary themes of mystical or secluded spaces, often representing transcendence, self-discovery, or spiritual pursuit. From an **aesthetic perspective**, the rhetorical question enhances the lyric’s intrigue

and poetic elegance, creating suspense and an emotive tension that draws listeners into a contemplative experience.

8. Cross-Cultural Discussion

The stylistic and cross-cultural analysis of the lyrics from *Kick Back* 《秘境》 (*Mìjìng*), *Action Figure*, and *All For Love* 《梦尽》 (*Mèngjǐn*) demonstrates the intricate interplay between linguistic creativity and cultural meaning in Mandarin popular music. Across the three songs, a total of 20 lyric excerpts were identified with seven stylistic devices, including metaphor (比喻, *Bǐyù*), personification (比拟, *Bǐnǐ*), metonymy/synecdoche (借代, *Jièdài*), *Niānlián* (粘连), parallelism (对偶, *Duì'ǒu*), contrast (对比, *Duìbǐ*), and rhetorical question (反问, *Fǎnwèn*).

Metaphorical Mapping in the lyrics frequently maps abstract concepts onto concrete, culturally recognizable images. For instance, in *Kick Back*, “离开名为觉醒的时空” (*Leaving the space-time called awareness*) metaphorically equates *space-time* with personal imagination or fantasy, creating a cognitive bridge for listeners to conceptualize consciousness as an experiential domain. Similarly, in *Action Figure*, “所有想要飞的期待” (*All hopes want to fly*) maps the abstract concept of lost or unattainable hopes onto the concrete image of flying, highlighting the emotional intensity of anticipation and loss. These mappings align with cognitive theories of metaphor, enabling both Mandarin and non-Mandarin listeners to engage with abstract emotions through tangible imagery.

Connotative Meaning extends the literal semantic content by embedding emotional, philosophical, and aspirational layers. In *All For Love*, “月有圆缺别再等待” (*The moon is perfect and imperfect, do not wait anymore*) conveys not only the cyclical nature of life but also an ethical and temporal reflection, suggesting the inevitability of change and the futility of waiting for perfection. Similarly, in *Action Figure*, personification of “阴影下眼睛开始逃避” (*Eyes start to flee under the shadow*) gives emotional depth to abstract feelings of fear and avoidance, enhancing the listener's empathetic engagement.

Cognitive Function is evident as listeners interpret these figurative expressions to access complex psychological states. The lyric “就算岁月褪去了我的漆” (*Even if years fade my paint*) in *Action Figure* invites cognitive abstraction, where the ‘paint’ symbolizes enduring love that persists despite temporal changes. By connecting sensory imagery (paint, flying, shadows) to emotional and moral constructs, the lyrics facilitate cross-cultural comprehension of human experiences such as hope, loss, love, and existential reflection.

Cultural Resonance is reinforced through integration of both traditional Chinese imagery and contemporary pop-cultural elements. The recurring motif of the moon, hero comics, and temporal metaphors reflects an interplay between classical Chinese metaphorical frameworks (as codified by Huáng Bóróng and Liào Xùdōng) and globalized media culture. Such fusion allows listeners from diverse cultural backgrounds to perceive universal human experiences while maintaining the

specificity of Mandarin linguistic expression.

Aesthetic Impact arises from the interplay of stylistic devices, emotional resonance, and cognitive engagement. Metaphors, personifications, and Niānlián constructs create visual, temporal, and emotional imagery that enhances the lyrical beauty and artistic expression. For example, contrastive expressions like “忽明忽灭无法回到过去就算爱得彻底” (*Suddenly bright, suddenly dim; unable to return to the past, even if love is complete*) juxtapose light and darkness, past and present, generating both a dramatic and reflective aesthetic effect. Parallelism and rhetorical questions contribute to musicality, rhythm, and contemplative tension, making the lyrics not only semantically rich but also aesthetically compelling.

In sum, the lyrical analysis reveals that Mandarin pop music employs stylistic devices not merely for decorative purposes but as cognitive and cultural tools, bridging abstract emotional and philosophical ideas with concrete imagery. Through metaphoric mappings, connotative layers, and cultural resonances, these lyrics foster cross-cultural understanding, enabling listeners worldwide to experience the nuanced emotional and cognitive landscapes inherent in Mandarin music.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Mandarin pop songs, including *Kick Back* (秘境 *Mìjìng*), *Action Figure*, and *All For Love* (梦尽 *Mèngjǐn*), employ diverse stylistic devices such as metaphor, personification, metonymy, Niānlián, parallelism, contrast, and rhetorical questions to convey complex emotions and experiences. Through metaphorical mapping and connotative meaning, abstract concepts like hope, love, and loss are expressed via culturally recognizable imagery, enhancing cognitive engagement and aesthetic appreciation. The lyrics also reflect cultural resonance by blending traditional and contemporary motifs, bridging personal expression with collective cultural imagination. From a cross-cultural perspective, these findings highlight the role of pop music as a medium for intercultural communication, revealing how emotions, values, and social experiences are encoded in language and imagery. This research contributes to stylistic analysis, cognitive and cultural studies, and translation practice, offering insights into how music can foster understanding across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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