



Figurative Language and Affective Meaning in Jennifer Lopez's Empowerment Songs

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ABSTRACT

The gender-based oppression faced by women has led to the rise of empowerment movements that reach into the music media. Therefore, songs that carry messages of empowerment are often from the perspective of women, expressing the voices of a group that has long been marginalized. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method to analyze how figurative expressions contribute to the portrayal of women's empowerment and to examine the affective meanings that convey the messages of empowerment in Jennifer Lopez's "Ain't Your Mama" and "Limitless" song lyrics. The findings reveal that in "Ain't Your Mama," the figurative expressions used include metaphor, metonymy, symbol, and hyperbole, while in "Limitless," they include metaphor, symbol, paradox, and irony. Each of these figurative expressions in the songs contributes to strengthening the message of empowerment. As for the affective meaning, "Ain't Your Mama" expresses its message more confrontationally, while in "Limitless," the tone is more reflective and motivational. Figurative language and tone in the songs enable listeners to personally feel and deeply understand the empowering message behind the lyrics.

Keywords: figurative language, affective meaning, Jennifer Lopez, women's empowerment, lyrics

Introduction

According to Schmitz and Gabel (2023), women have encountered oppression based on gender, which has resulted in discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, aggression, and the violation of rights. This oppression toward women has led to the rise of the women's empowerment movement, which seeks to challenge gender inequality and advocate for equal rights. According to Verma (2009), women's empowerment refers to a process in which women are enabled to take charge of their own environment, access available resources, and have influence in decision-making. The concept of women's empowerment has gained widespread recognition over time, extending its influence even into music.

One of the greatest figures in music entertainment is Jennifer Lopez. It can be seen from the achievements she has made throughout her career. At the 2014 Billboard Music Awards, she received the Icon Award (Weatherby, 2018). She was nominated for two career Latin GRAMMYs and for two GRAMMY nominations for Best Dance Recording, "Let's Get Loud," at the 43rd GRAMMY Awards (Fabian, 2018). Her significant impact in the industry has made her considered the most impactful Latin entertainer of all time (Liptak, 2022). Moreover, Jennifer Lopez has also become the first Global Advocate for Girls and Women at the United Nations Foundation (Rabbitt, 2015). This suggests that she is involved in contributing to the promotion of women's empowerment.

Among Jennifer Lopez's songs that express themes of women's empowerment in her songs are "Ain't Your Mama" and "Limitless." Both of these songs present messages of women's empowerment with two different perspectives of empowerment. Despite the differences, both songs utilize figurative language to deliver their empowering messages. Furthermore, these two songs have different tones when delivering messages of empowerment, which influences how the listener perceives them.

It is undeniably true that songs often contain expressions that convey non-literal meanings. These non-literal expressions are often written by the songwriters to enhance the aesthetic of the lyrics. Figurative expressions in songs allow artists to communicate affective messages that emotionally engage listeners beyond literal meaning (Haque et al., 2024; Rohmah, 2025). One of the tools used to deliver these messages is figurative language.

According to Perrine (1963), figurative language conveys meanings that are not intended to be understood literally.

However, the use of figurative language in song lyrics not only enhances the entertainment value but also helps to communicate deeper meanings (Wiryantini, 2024). In the context of women's empowerment, figurative language in song plays an important role in expressing ideas and emotions. It influences how the message of empowerment is shaped and interpreted. Creative language use in popular music has also been shown to enhance engagement and strengthen motivational responses in language learning contexts (Darussalam & Ningrum, 2023; Wulansari & Fakhurriana, 2024). Task-based and expressive activities have been shown to support students' affective expression in constructing meaning (Hibatulloh et al., 2024).

Besides the lyrics, songs also often communicate their messages through tone, which reflects the songwriter's emotional state and intentions, making music a powerful medium for personal expression, including personal concerns. This emotional tone in lyrics is known as affective meaning, which, according to Leech (1974), is the aspect of meaning that reflects the personal feelings of the speaker, including his attitude to the listener or his attitude to something he is talking about. The impact resulting from the song, for example, is lifting the listener's mood by the lyrics delivered with cheerful word choices, encouraging them to be happy. Hence, affective meaning offers songwriters an opportunity to express themselves more deeply and connect emotionally with their audience. Learners' affective factors, such as self-efficacy and emotional involvement, significantly contribute to how they interpret expressive texts (Apriliyani & Usuludin, 2023).

Undoubtedly, the study of figurative language has been widely conducted to be the main approach to analyzing song lyrics in research. The study of affective meaning has also been widely applied to analyze song lyrics. However, most analytical studies with both approaches are done separately, not combined into one approach to study the meaning in song lyrics. Some researchers have explored the figurative language to analyze specific themes in songs, such as race (Dojack & Abu-Obeida, 2023), and women's empowerment (Neisya et al., 2023; Wiryantini, 2024; Zolkifli & Ghani, 2024). There is also a study on the affective meaning of a love song (Rafael et al., 2024).

Regarding the theme of women's empowerment, Zolkifli and Ghani (2024) examined figurative language in Taylor Swift's feminist-themed songs, while Neisya et al. (2023) also did a similar analysis on Katy Perry's lyrics. Additionally, Wiryantini (2024) analyzed how Lady Gaga and Beyoncé use figurative language to convey messages of women's empowerment.

However, there is a lack of studies on Jennifer Lopez's songs, which also contribute to the theme of empowerment. Her songs have not been widely explored in academic research, particularly in terms of the figurative language and the affective meaning conveyed in the lyrics. Moreover, the separation between the analysis of figurative language and affective meaning limits the depth of analysis and prevents a more comprehensive understanding of the messages conveyed in songs, particularly those about women's empowerment. By combining figurative language and affective meaning analysis, the study can not only uncover the non-literal meanings used by the songwriter but also interpret the emotional tone, such as sadness or anger, conveyed through these figurative expressions. Previous studies on feminist songs often focus mainly on figurative language without exploring the emotional impact it may have on the audience. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by analyzing how figurative language in "Ain't Your Mama" and "Limitless" contributes to the portrayal of women's empowerment, how the affective meaning in each song differently delivers the message of women's empowerment, and how figurative language can affect the affective meaning in the songs.

The analysis is primarily carried out using Perrine's (1963) theory of figurative language and Leech's (1974) concept of affective meaning to explore both the figurative expressions and emotional tones conveyed in the lyrics. To deepen the analysis, this research also applies Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) conceptual view of metaphor to support the understanding of metaphor, Kabeer's (1999) women's empowerment theory to guide the interpretation of the songs that express empowerment, and Tyson's (2006) theory of traditional gender roles to assess whether the song analyzed reinforces the traditional gender roles or instead challenges them. These theoretical frameworks, thereby, provide a comprehensive view of women's empowerment in song lyrics through a semantic lens, both in terms of figurative language and the emotional tone conveyed to listeners.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The main data of this research, Jennifer Lopez's "Ain't Your Mama" and "Limitless" song lyrics, were collected from Spotify to ensure accuracy. The lyrics were then analyzed in three focus areas. First, the lyrics from both songs that contained figurative language were marked carefully to be later analyzed in the *Results and Discussions* section to identify the types and meanings of the figurative expressions used. Any lyrics that do not contain figurative expressions were excluded, resulting in merely the figurative expressions data. Second, lyrics that contained affective meaning from both songs were noted to examine the emotional tone of the messages about women's empowerment. Lastly, the results of both analyses were considered together to explore how figurative language and affective meaning interact in shaping the songs' empowering messages.

The findings were presented in three sections, namely figurative language, affective meaning, and the interrelation of both aspects. In the figurative language section, the collected data were presented in two separate tables, each representing one song. Each table consisted of the figurative expressions and their respective types. Below each table, a detailed explanation is provided. The detailed explanation began with a brief description of each figurative language type found, followed by an interpretation of the meaning of each expression that delivers an empowering message and theme. In the affective meaning section, the analysis was carried out line by line.

However, certain lines that were more effectively conveyed together with the lines before or after them were grouped to be analyzed together. Each collected data followed by an explanation of how the tone contributed to the delivery of messages that promote women's empowerment. Additionally, when multiple selected lines came from the same stanza, a brief paragraph was provided to highlight the overall meaning of the stanza and to illustrate the emotional progression presented throughout the song lyrics. Finally, the interrelation section discussed how these two aspects complemented each other in portraying women's empowerment. This structured placement provided a clearer way to the analysis and helped explain the portrayal of women's empowerment.

Result and Discussion

1. Figurative Language as a Tool for Delivering Empowering Messages

Through Perrine's (1963) theory of types of figurative language, there are four figurative expression types found in Jennifer Lopez's "Ain't Your Mama" song lyrics: metaphor, metonymy, symbol, and hyperbole. Within these song lyrics, there are two lines containing metaphor, one line consisting of metonymy, two lines consisting of symbol, and one line containing hyperbole. Each of these types has its own significance related to empowering women. This is aligned with studies emphasizing the emotional role of language in developing personal meaning and confidence (Haque et al., 2024; Apriliyani & Usuludin, 2023).

Table 1 Types of Figurative Language in "Ain't Your Mama"

No.	Figurative Language	Lyrics
1.	Metaphor	<i>I ain't your mama</i> <i>You still tryna ride this train?</i>
2.	Metonymy	<i>Things are about to change, 'round here, 'round here</i>
3.	Symbol	<i>I ain't gon' be cooking all day</i> <i>Lucky to have these curves</i>
4.	Hyperbole	<i>We used to be crazy in love</i>

According to Perrine (1963), metaphor is a comparison between two unrelated things that is implied rather than stated by not using the word "like" or "as." According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p. 2), "metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." Therefore, it can be inferred that metaphor is not merely a device to help provide a more imaginative description of the thing someone is expressing, but also to reflect how people conceptualize and make sense of the world around them. The following are lines that express metaphor:

(1) *I ain't your mama*

The metaphor "mama" represents domestic labor as a burden associated with gender. It conveys the idea that a woman, as a partner in a relationship, is not solely responsible for household work or for pampering her partner, implicitly highlighting cultural norms that

normalize women as caretakers. The explicit rejection of this role strengthens the song's empowering message, actively challenging gender norms that persist to this day.

(2) *You still tryna ride this train?*

The word "train" metaphorically means the journey or experience of being in a relationship with her. It can also be interpreted as a metaphor for the movement and effort required to maintain the relationship. Therefore, "ride this train" refers to continuing the relationship, which, in this case, as implied, the situation is burdening and unequal to the woman. By asking this question assertively, the female speaker explicitly challenges gender norms in romantic relationships.

The second figurative language used in this song is metonymy. Metonymy is a figurative expression that uses an idea of something that is closely related to the thing being referred to (Perrine, 1963). The following is a lyric that contains metonymy:

(3) *Things are about to change, 'round here, 'round here*

The phrase "'round here" in the lyric does not refer to a specific location in a small scale. Rather, it points to the current situation that has been happening, which is the unfair treatment received by the woman. This means that the woman will not accept the reality that has been burdening her, but will change the situation, refusing to continue living in the burdensome situation. The control and confidence expressed in this metaphor support the movement against gender norms that assume women have no right to voice their opinions and make their own choices.

The other form of figurative language used in this song is symbol. Perrine (1963) defined symbol as one type of figurative language in which something represents more than what it literally is. Therefore, a word functions as a symbol, can be understood literally, and also beyond its literal meaning. The following are the lyrics that contain symbol:

(4) *I ain't gon' be cooking all day*

The phrase "cooking all day" is an activity that refers to housework frequently associated with and performed by women. As stated by Rodrigues et al. (2020), the responsibility of daily household food preparation has, throughout history, been a job that falls on women. Thus, in this lyric, the phrase conveys a deeper meaning by symbolizing all the domestic work traditionally associated with women, including the cooking itself. Similar to the message in "I

ain't your mama," this line expresses an opposition to the idea that women should be stuck handling all household responsibilities alone, portraying empowerment as resistance to unequal domestic norms rather than a mere symbolic gesture.

(5) *Lucky to have these curves*

The symbol "curves" in this line refers to the woman's physical body and also the woman's entire self and presence in the relationship. It conveys a message to her partner that he should be grateful for having her, not just for her physical appearance, but also as a whole and complex individual in his life. The line implies that a woman in a relationship deserves complete recognition, actively challenging gender norms that marginalize women.

Hyperbole, according to Perrine (1963), is a figure of speech that expresses an idea of something or a situation in an exaggerated way. It is a way to emphasize a point that the speaker or writer wants to convey. The following is a lyric that expresses hyperbole:

(6) *We used to be crazy in love*

The hyperbole "crazy" does not imply literally that they are insane with love, but rather an exaggerated way of describing how big and deep the amount of love they once experienced. In the present times, the woman feels unloved and unappreciated because of the unequal treatment in the relationship that makes her feel more merely someone who takes care of the household, rather than as a partner in a relationship. This critique of traditional gender expectations in relationships reinforces the song's message that women deserve recognition and respect for their contributions beyond domestic labor, and should always be treated as equals in a relationship.

Meanwhile, in Jennifer Lopez's "Limitless," there are also four types of figurative language, but not entirely the same as in "Ain't Your Mama," including metaphor, symbol, paradox, and irony. There are seven lyrics containing metaphors in this song, one line consisting of a symbol, one line containing a paradox, and one line using irony.

Table 2 Types of Figurative Language in "*Limitless*"

No.	Figurative Language	Lyrics
1.	Metaphor	<i>I am limitless</i>
		<i>I am a woman who roars</i>

	<i>I couldn't fight anymore</i>
	<i>I wouldn't fight in this war</i>
	<i>I told myself I had to be a different someone</i>
	<i>Nobody opened my doors</i>
2.	Symbol <i>I made it home, I made it known</i>
3.	Paradox <i>In order to win at a war I had already won</i>
4.	Irony <i>Yeah, I'd given up on the saying 'I'll never give up'</i>

As mentioned before, a metaphor is a comparison between two things that are unlike (Perrine, 1963). This song uses metaphors several times in its lyrics. The following are the metaphors used in Jennifer Lopez's "Limitless":

(7) *I couldn't fight anymore*

In this line, the word "fight" does not literally mean involved in a battle, war, or a physical fight. Metaphorically, it represents the emotional struggle faced by the speaker, who is a woman. She expresses that she no longer has the strength to endure life's hardships. This line conveys not only personal exhaustion but also implicitly critiques societal norms that expect women to continually endure hardships, reinforcing the song's theme of female empowerment.

(8) *I wouldn't fight in this war*

Similar to the previous line, "fight in this war" is a metaphor for an internal emotional struggle. The word "war" emphasizes the situation that is overwhelming and painful for her to face. This line implies that she no longer has the strength or willingness to keep fighting, as she is surrounded by emotional exhaustion that leads her to surrender. This line subtly critiques the norm that assumes women must always be strong and resilient, as if they are somehow expected to suffer through everything.

(9) *I told myself I had to be a different someone*

The phrase "a different someone" in this line metaphorically means to change herself into anyone as long as it is not her true self. In the past, she once believed that she needed to be someone else to be able to face the situation because she did not believe in her own capabilities. This line critiques norms that pressure women to become someone they believe

is better than their true selves, reinforcing the song's broader message of female empowerment through self-acceptance.

(10) *I am limitless*

The word "limitless" metaphorically refers to the idea of being capable of achieving anything and embracing the potential in oneself. This line conveys a message of self-awareness and empowerment, emphasizing that nothing can restrict the woman from pursuing her goals and recognizing the potential within herself. This metaphor actively promotes self-empowerment, positioning the song as a statement that women can overcome limits and fully embrace their capabilities.

(11) *I am a woman who roars*

This line contains a metaphor because it is comparing a woman's strength and courage to the roar of animals that are typically associated with courage and dominance. The woman's roaring means that she is voicing her confidence and resistance to the fear within herself, defying traditional stereotypes that expect women to be passive or submissive. It reinforces the image of a powerful woman who refuses to stay silent when she is overwhelmed by her limitations and dares to fight against anything that hinders her.

(12) *Nobody opened my doors*

The word "doors" refers to opportunities. This line means no one would ever want to provide a path and opportunity for her. She must create her path by herself rather than waiting and relying on others to grant her opportunities, emphasizing the self-reliance message. Therefore, this line challenges societal and gendered expectations that women should wait for permission or assistance to advance, reinforcing the song's message of female empowerment through initiative and independence.

As mentioned before, a symbol, according to Perrine (1963), defined as something that has meanings more than what it is. Following is the line that contains a symbol in "Limitless":

(13) *I made it home, I made it known*

The word "home" in this line not only refers to a place where she feels safe, but it also means a state of inner peace in which she is accepting herself to be the way she is. It signifies that she is finally overcoming a long and difficult emotional conflict, resulting in embracing who she truly is. The lyrics show part of the process of a woman whose mind is overwhelmed by

negativity to a more positive one, which is self-acceptance. This journey challenges the societal and gender norms that often pressure women to hide who they truly are. In this context, self-acceptance becomes not just personal healing but a powerful act of resistance and female empowerment.

According to Perrine (1963), paradox is a statement that appears contradictory but reveals a truth upon closer inspection. This figure of speech encourages a deeper interpretation. The following is the line in “Limitless” that contains a paradox:

(14) *In order to win at a war I had already won*

This line is considered a paradox because it presents a contradictory idea of trying to win a war, but, on the other hand, she has already won it. It reflects an internal conflict within herself. She has a complex feeling about the situation she has been through, even though she has already overcome the problem or even achieved success. It highlights the doubts experienced by women due to societal perceptions that consider them inferior.

Irony, according to Perrine (1963), occurs when there is a difference between what is expected and what actually happens. He also stated that both irony and paradox require deeper thought to be understood, and they are useful in preventing over sentimental interpretations. It can be implied that irony invites the reader to look beyond the literal meaning of the words. The following is the line that contains irony in “Limitless”:

(15) *Yeah, I'd given up on the saying 'I'll never give up'*

The clause “I’ll never give up” is meant to show determination and persistence. However, she gave up on that belief, which can be considered an irony. There is a contradiction between what was once believed, which is never giving up, and what actually happened, which is giving up. This line reflects her exhaustion from a stressful situation, but it also marks a step in her journey toward self-empowerment.

In Jennifer Lopez’s “Ain’t Your Mama,” the song emphasizes the importance of women standing up against the burdens placed upon them and rejecting the unfair concepts toward them. It highlights the right of women to reject traditional gender roles that, according to Tyson (2006), men are often portrayed as rational, strong, protective, and decisive, while women are emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive. These stereotypes, therefore, place women in a powerless position. Meanwhile, in Jennifer Lopez’s “Limitless,” the message is

about empowering women to recognize their inner strength and self-worth. It encourages the listeners to overcome doubt and realize that they are capable of more than they think.

Figurative language allows the message of women's empowerment to be delivered in a subtle but powerful way, without bluntly stating the hardships women face entirely through literal expressions, which could make the lyrics feel less engaging and too wordy. It serves as a narrative tool to express these issues through music. In "Ain't Your Mama," figurative expressions are used to critique unfair traditional gender roles in a way that feels more relatable and engaging for listeners. The same is applied in the song "Limitless," in which figurative expressions create the message of empowering women who face internal struggles more engaging for its listeners. Therefore, the use of figurative language adds depth and allows for a richer interpretation of the song's message.

The use of metaphor in both songs reinforces the main message of women's empowerment. In "Ain't Your Mama," the word "mama" metaphorically represents a woman in a romantic relationship who is expected to take on the role of a mother who is doing domestic tasks. This metaphor critiques the traditional expectation placed on women. In the song "Limitless," the word "limitless" is a metaphor for strength and potential. The term alone does not have anything to do with empowerment. However, by using it as a metaphor in this song, it conveys a message of encouragement and self-empowerment, suggesting that nothing should hold a woman back from achieving her goals.

Metonymy in the analyzed song helps express a bigger idea by using a more specific or concrete word. In "Ain't Your Mama," the phrase "'round here" is used to represent the overall situation, not just the small, specific area. Thus, the use of metonymy in this song highlights the way the woman takes over the control that was previously dominated by the man.

The symbol used in the lyric enriches the message by presenting a phrase that can be understood literally but also with a deeper meaning. In "Ain't Your Mama," the phrase "cooking all day" literally refers to the act of cooking, which is a task that is traditionally associated with women. However, symbolically, it presents a broader indication that the point is not merely the cooking, but the entire burden of household chores that is placed solely on women. The phrase becomes a representation of larger gender roles and societal

expectations. By refusing to cook all day, it is not just rejecting the task, but a whole unequal gender-based system within the household. In "Limitless," the word "home" literally means a physical place to rest. However, as a symbol, it represents a state of emotional peace and self-acceptance. It reflects the moment when she recognizes her true self, embraces it, and feels safe within her own identity.

The use of hyperbole in the analyzed song emphasizes the intensity of the experience being described. For example, the word "crazy" in the phrase "crazy in love" is an exaggeration to highlight how deeply the woman once felt in love with her partner. However, the love that was once intense has now faded, indicated by the unfair treatment she received. This change, which is so deep in the past that it uses an exaggerated term, drives the speaker to protest and speak up. Thus, the hyperbole not only illustrates the emotional depth of the past but also justifies the woman's disappointment and her decision to voice her frustration. It implies that being treated unfairly is a valid reason for women to speak as a form of response.

The usage of paradox in this song highlights the complexity of women's struggle in facing societal expectations. The contradiction emphasizes the emotional tension women experience. Meanwhile, the use of irony deepens the emotional impact of the message.

2. Affective Meaning in Conveying Women's Empowerment

Overall, the song "Ain't Your Mama" carries a message of empowerment about a woman who is fed up with the traditional roles society expects her to take on. Through its lyrics, Jennifer Lopez criticizes the domestic roles that are unfairly placed on women, which is conveyed in the form of resistance. To explore this further, the following section presents the analysis of the affective meanings in "Ain't Your Mama" by Jennifer Lopez through the lens of Leech's (1981) theory:

(16) *I ain't gon' be cooking all day, I ain't your mama / I ain't gon' do your laundry, I ain't your mama*

These lyrics express emotions of annoyance, resistance, and self-empowerment. It contains the rejection of the expectation for women to perform traditional gender roles in a romantic relationship. The repeated use of "ain't" emphasizes her refusal in a blunt and direct tone, confronting her unwillingness to take on the motherly role for her partner.

(17) *When you're gon' get your act together*

This line expresses the woman's frustration and disappointment in her partner's behavior. The use of the word signifying a question shows her frustration at being burdened with responsibility, as the man seems to show no signs of changing the situation. This lyric implies that she hopes that this cycle that has been causing her distress for a long time will eventually stop.

Together, as one stanza, these lines express a long-held frustration in a blunt and direct way. The stanza begins with the woman directly confronting the behavior that troubles her, showing a strong sense of self-empowerment and the courage to resist. This direct opposition challenges the idea that women should passively accept or stay silent in the face of unfair expectations.

(18) No more playing video games

This line delivers a message using imperative, with an assertive command, and conveys determination. The woman takes control in the relationship, asserting her voice and making decisions. This line implies authority and challenges the stereotype of traditional gender roles in which, as Tyson (2006) states, women are seen as submissive.

(19) Things are about to change, 'round here, 'round here

This line expresses a strong optimism and confidence. The woman has made a firm decision to take control of her situation and change what has been burdening her. The tone in this lyric reflects determination, suggesting that she is no longer willing to accept the unfair treatment.

In the second stanza, there is a shift in emotional tone from predominantly negative emotions to a more positive one. Here, the songwriter conveys an encouraging message to women, urging them to be confident and to refuse passive acceptance of their situations.

(20) We used to be crazy in love / Can we go back to how it was

These lines reflect a feeling of emotional longing and nostalgia. She yearns for the love and connection they once had, in which the man's treatment toward her did not burden her with unequal treatment. The change in her partner's behavior creates emotional weight for the woman, emphasizing her sadness and disappointment.

(21) When did you get too comfortable? / 'Cause I'm too good for that, I'm too good for that

These lines convey both disappointment and self-assurance. The woman expresses frustration with a sarcastic tone, highlighting how her partner has become careless and taken her for granted. However, she chooses to confidently assert her value rather than pleading with her partner. This reflects a strong sense of self-empowerment, as she realizes and demands to be treated with respect.

In the third stanza, there is a significant shift in emotion. The lyrics transition from the intense and highly empowering tone of the previous stanza to a return to negative emotions, marked by disappointment and sadness over the change in her partner's behavior.

(22) *Lucky to have these curves*

This line expresses self-love, pride, and confidence. In this lyric, the woman embraces her body, showing that she values herself for who she is. She is aware of her own worth and refuses to let anyone, especially her partner, devalue her. This reflects self-acceptance and independence, as she does not seek validation from him but rather asserts her own value.

(23) *Stop getting on my nerves*

This line expresses frustration, annoyance, and anger. The use of "stop" reflects her desire to put an end to the unfair treatment, particularly the expectation that she will take on traditional gender roles such as doing housework without being treated with the respect she deserves.

(24) *You still tryna ride this train?*

In this line, the woman uses a confrontational tone to challenge her partner. The metaphor of "riding this train" refers to the ongoing relationship, which the woman now views as draining and one-sided. Her direct question forces her partner to confront the reality of the relationship and whether he is willing to continue a relationship that has become unfair and exhausting.

In the last stanza, the tone changes back to confidence, portraying the woman as someone in control and unafraid to speak up against unfair treatment. This suggests she has fully taken charge of the situation. Therefore, in *Ain't Your Mama* by Jennifer Lopez, the emotional progression moves from anger, to nostalgic sadness and finally back to confrontation. The song is dominated by anger in response to restrictive gender norms, encouraging women to be assertive and confident.

Jennifer Lopez also expresses affective meaning in her song "Limitless." However, the way the message of empowerment is conveyed, in terms of tone and word choice, is different from how it is expressed in "Ain't Your Mama." Overall, this song carries the theme of encouraging women to push beyond their limits and believe in their own potential. The following is the analysis of affective meanings conveyed in Jennifer Lopez's "Limitless":

(25) *I couldn't fight anymore*

(26) *And I wouldn't lie anymore*

(27) *And all of the truths that I couldn't ignore*

(28) *I wouldn't fight in this war*

This stanza expresses a feeling of deep surrender, emotional exhaustion, and pain. The speaker, who is a woman, is conveying frustration and exhaustion as she admits that she is no longer able to deny the truths she has been avoiding. The tone in these lines reflects vulnerability and the exhaustion of pretending to be a strong person.

(29) *No no no no no no no no crying*

This line expresses exhaustion and internal conflict between the desire to cry and the determination to hold herself together. "Crying" in this case is intended as a form of weakness. Therefore, the woman, by saying this line, is trying to strengthen herself with words, encouraging herself not to become a person who can be considered weak due to all the negativity that surrounds her thoughts. It conveys a powerful moment of both emotional vulnerability and strength.

(30) *I told myself I had to be a different someone / In order to win at a war I had already won*

These lines reveal the woman's self-doubt and internal conflict in a reflective tone. She believed she was not capable of achieving the goals she had been striving for, even though, in fact, she had already overcome them. It highlights the battle within herself, questioning her value and capability to succeed that women often face.

(31) *Yeah, I'd given up on the saying 'I'll never give up'*

This line expresses reflection and past despair. The woman had given up on her principle of "never give up" due to the exhaustion she felt, unable to keep striving anymore. It reveals a moment of emotional exhaustion and surrender.

(32) *But look at me now / Yeah, look at me, I'm limitless (I'm limitless)*

These lines convey a strong sense of acceptance and confidence. All the despair of the past has passed, and now she realizes that she has potential and accepts herself. She embraces her potential and recognizes her worth, delivering a tone of pride and resilience.

From the lines above, which form a single stanza, there is an emotional progression from past despair and exhaustion to showing confidence in herself. This stanza captures a shift from negative emotions to positive self-empowerment, reflecting the woman's internal growth and self-development.

(33) *I am a woman who roars / Nobody opened my doors*

These lines reflect themes of self-empowerment, courage, and independence. She boldly declares her power and voice. These lines emphasize her journey of the success she achieves on her own and the refusal to depend on others for validation or opportunity.

(34) *Yeah, I am a woman saying I want more / So give me what I'm asking for*

These lines express ambition, courage, and assertiveness. In these lines, the woman declares that she has accepted herself with confidence. This change highlights a shift in which she now embraces her worth and no longer questions whether she can deal with and strive toward her goals. This stanza expresses the woman's confidence, showing her rise from the struggles earlier in the song. It portrays a woman who has grown stronger over time, taking control of her life and speaking up without fear. This part marks the peak of her journey from weakness to strength, encouraging other women to believe in their own worth.

(35) *I made it home, I made it known / I am here to stay*

This stanza conveys a tone of confidence. They represent pride and inner strength, showing that she has overcome the doubts that once held her back. Now, she finally stands in her identity confidently.

Emotionally, the song progresses from despair and internal conflict toward a more positive and empowering tone. This emotional journey shapes the overall meaning of the song, which centers around a woman rising from hardship. It invites the listener to experience that journey with her, a rise from deep surrender, which can be described as a powerful form of empowerment.

In Jennifer Lopez's "Ain't Your Mama," the tone is confrontational, marked by strong rejection and bold words, shaping a resistance that contains a strong sense of annoyance and frustration. Even though these are negative emotions, they become a powerful drive for showing women's agency, which is the ability of women to resist and demand change. This supports Kabeer's (1999) idea that empowerment includes the courage to fight against oppressive systems. Through its fiery tone, the song motivates the listeners, making them feel the sense of resistance that Jennifer Lopez delivers, especially as it highlights women's strength and assertiveness.

Aside from the lyrics, the confrontational message is reinforced by the song's fast, energetic tempo and strong beats, which create a sense of urgency and determination. The upbeat musical pace keeps the listeners feeling energized and engaged, leaving them uplifted and motivated after hearing it. Jennifer Lopez delivers the lyrics with confidence, bringing the song's empowering message to connect with the listeners.

In contrast, the tone in Jennifer Lopez's "Limitless" is more reflective, motivating, and emotional as it primarily encourages women to recognize their worthiness, validate their feelings, and promote self-acceptance. The song reflects a woman's gradual journey of self-awareness, starting with feelings of surrender and turning into a powerful moment of believing in her own potential. This change creates a deep emotional impact on the listeners because of its reflective tone that contrasts with the confrontational tone in "Ain't Your Mama."

The tempo in "Limitless" starts slow and gentle, reflecting a moment of vulnerability and surrender. As the lyrics move toward empowerment, the tempo gradually builds, marking the shift from hesitation to determination. This change invites listeners into the journey toward self-belief, evoking feelings of hope and pride. The delivery follows the same flow, starting softly with a sense of despair, then growing more passionate and dynamic during the chorus.

By using music as a medium to express feelings about unfair situations, while also encouraging listeners to embrace their values, music contributes to the empowerment movement. It helps spread the message of women's empowerment to a broader audience. Affective meaning is key to making this message more accessible and impactful. Therefore,

this suggests that delivering messages about women's empowerment is not limited to one specific way. Songs can express empowerment through a wide variety of tones, all of which contribute to the message of women's empowerment.

3. Interrelation between Figurative Language and Affective Responses in the Lyrics

Figurative language and affective meaning can influence each other, with figurative language enhancing the affective response by making it more sensual, powerful, and emotionally profound. According to (Williyan et al., 2023) figurative language in literary works serves as a reflection of the songwriter's emotional expression. Therefore, the use of figurative language in songs about empowerment greatly influences how the message is conveyed, particularly in terms of its emotional expression.

In "Ain't Your Mama," the metaphor "mama" highlights the role of a mother while challenging traditional cultural norms. By replacing a direct statement with the symbolic term "mama," the songwriter sharpens the message of rejection and strengthens its emotional impact. This reinforces the song's empowering message, which is further emphasized by the use of "ain't," conveying a firm refusal. Meanwhile, "ride your train" functions as another metaphor that encourages listeners to envision the consequences of continuing or ending the relationship, thereby amplifying the emotional impact.

The metonymy in "Ain't Your Mama" reinforces the power held by the female speaker, which strengthens the affective response by allowing listeners to sense the scale of her authority. The symbol "cooking all day," directly referring to traditional social norms, resonates strongly with female listeners who feel constrained by these roles, allowing them to feel the songwriter's anger. This makes the song's message more provocative while clarifying the singer's intention to raise awareness and resistance against outdated gender expectations. Furthermore, the symbol "curves" shows that empowerment in the song is not only about rejecting domestic burdens but also about celebrating women's identity and physicality. As a result, the affective response extends beyond anger and frustration to include confidence and self-celebration. Moreover, the use of hyperbole further intensifies this emotional response by contrasting past memories with the present situation, making the song more emotionally compelling to listeners.

In "Limitless," several metaphors shape the affective response in different ways. The metaphor "limitless" reinforces this response by conveying a feeling of boundless possibility, making listeners believe their potential has no limits. The metaphor "roars" adds a dominant tone, influencing emotions with confidence. The metaphors "fight" and "war" present personal struggle as a battlefield, allowing listeners to imagine the intensity of the pressures faced. The metaphorical phrase "a different someone," referring to someone different from herself, evokes sympathy and understanding because of the choice of words. Finally, the line "nobody opened my doors" emphasizes the obstacles caused by a lack of support, enabling listeners to feel the female speaker's struggle.

The symbol "home" strengthens the emotional response by providing a clear image of achievement and safety, connecting with listeners through its universal and familiar concept. The paradox in the song intensifies this response by adding a dramatic aspect to the steps the woman has taken, making listeners feel the weight and significance of her journey. Finally, the irony touches listeners by presenting the idea of self-empowerment that the female speaker once gave up on, creating an emotionally moving contrast.

Conclusion

This study shows that the figurative language and affective meaning in "Ain't Your Mama" and "Limitless" by Jennifer Lopez both reinforce the message of women's empowerment, making it more personally accessible to the listeners. The types of figurative language found in "Ain't Your Mama" are metaphor, symbol, metonymy, and hyperbole, whereas in "Limitless," the figurative language includes metaphor, symbol, paradox, and irony. In "Ain't Your Mama," the figurative language supports the idea of empowerment by opposing traditional gender roles, showing that women have the right to reject and speak out against them. In "Limitless," it serves to encourage women, inspiring them to continue striving beyond the limits they once believed were impossible to surpass.

This analysis also reveals that "Ain't Your Mama" and "Limitless" convey the theme of women's empowerment through distinctly different tones in their lyrics. "Ain't Your Mama" conveys its message with a tone of defiance, as reflected in the use of terms that express disapproval and resistance to traditional gender roles. It encourages women to speak out against injustice and societal expectations placed upon them. On the other hand, "Limitless"

conveys empowerment through an uplifting tone that inspires and motivates the listener. It empowers through encouragement, aiming to emotionally move and inspire its listeners. This implies that the message of women's empowerment can be expressed in multiple ways, using different emotional tones while still promoting the same idea.

Through this research, readers can gain insight about figurative language and affective meaning in Jennifer Lopez's song that promotes women's empowerment. Moreover, this analysis can also serve as a resource for other researchers to obtain further insight into affective meaning and figurative language in song lyrics. However, this research is limited to the figurative language and affective meaning study in song lyrics, not linking it to the cultural and social context of the songwriter or singer. Therefore, future researchers may explore how race plays a role in the delivery of messages about women's empowerment in songs, for example, by comparing Jennifer Lopez with other singers of different races. Future researchers may also examine the other types of meaning, such as social meaning, in Jennifer Lopez's songs about women's empowerment.

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