

METHOD

This study employed qualitative research. With its emphasis on understanding and interpreting meaning from natural settings, qualitative research is well-suited for this purpose (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It allows an exploration into the nuances of language, specifically figurative language in AmaLee's song lyrics without manipulating or controlling the data. This study utilized textual analysis to understand AmaLee's self-expression and identity construction through her song lyrics. Textual analysis is a research method used to study the content and structure of texts, including written, visual, and multimedia materials. It involves identifying patterns, themes, and other features within a text, and interpreting their meanings within a particular context (Burrows as cited in Schreiber et al., 2004). Song lyrics can be treated as a form of text and thus examined for meaning, values, and messages using textual analysis (Smith, 2017). The method offered practical techniques for analyzing and evaluating textual data, making it suitable for studying VTuber virtual identity through song lyrics.

The data for this study consisted of all eight song lyrics from the album *Rise of the Monarch* by AmaLee. This album was chosen because it served as a unique and innovative approach to introduce AmaLee's VTuber persona. The songs in the album were: "Rise of the Monarch", "From the Embers", "Metamorphosis", "Monster U Made", "Villain Vibes", "MWTWB", "Drink Your Light", and "Call Me King". The title of the first song is the same as the title of the album as it provides a brief introduction to the album's tale. The song lyrics were obtained from YouTube Music. AmaLee embodied the complex virtual identity of a youth navigating the online world. As a prominent singer and voice actress, she delved into the VTuber space, creating a new online persona called Monarch. The album *Rise of the Monarch* was chosen because it directly reflected AmaLee's self-expression in relation to her virtual identity. This album explored the rise of her virtual identity, revealing how AmaLee expressed the distinct traits associated with her online persona. Analyzing the album *Rise of the Monarch* by AmaLee not only offered valuable insights into how VTubers utilized song lyrics for self-expression in the

digital world, but also how youths navigated the internet to explore new identities and challenge societal boundaries. It is important to note that the music and other instrumental aspects were not evaluated in this study.

In the analysis of AmaLee's song lyrics, the data underwent a multi-step process. First, all of the figurative language were closely examined from the lyrics. Then, following the classification established by Abrams and Harpham (2014), sixteen distinct figurative language were identified and tabulated (see Table 1). This tabulation revealed metaphor and symbol as the most prevalent figurative language. These two dominant figurative language were subsequently subjected to a textual analysis to determine their overall significance, resulting in 3 recurring identity traits across the eight songs. The analysis of the data indicated overlapping characteristics embodied within these metaphors and symbols. Recognizing that a single song lyric could incorporate multiple identity traits and a single identity trait could manifest across multiple song lyrics, the analysis explored the recurring emergence of identity traits throughout the album and uncovered three most prevalent traits. Finally, drawing upon the theoretical framework presented by Barton and Lee (2013), the analysis concluded in an examination of the identity AmaLee constructed through her song lyrics.

Table 2: Figurative Language Classifications

Figurative Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Metaphor	2	5	11	7	14	12	11	8	70
Symbol	4	2	3	3	1	2	2	6	23
Personification	0	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	6
Hyperbole	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	4
Paradox	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
Irony	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	4
Allusion	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3

Sarcasm	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Metonymy	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Simile	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

The numbers on the top row of Table 2 indicate the name of the songs: (1) "Rise of the Monarch", (2) "From the Embers", (3) "Metamorphosis", (4) "Monster U Made", (5) "Villain Vibes", (6) "MWTWB", (7). "Drink Your Light", (8) "Call Me King". The numbers below each song indicate the figurative language count, with total counts for each type across the album listed in the rightmost column. This study analyzed the two most common figurative language across the album, namely metaphor and symbol, to investigate the kind of virtual identity depicted by AmaLee. It is important to note that the two figurative language are interchangeable due to the subjective nature of interpretation and their context. One word or phrase may function as a metaphor in one context, but functions as a symbol in another.