

# The cognitive processing of emotionally lyrics on you're your own, Kid by Tylor Swift's Song : A Psycholinguistic Study

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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pemrosesan kognitif terhadap lirik yang sarat emosi dalam lagu *You're On Your Own, Kid* karya Taylor Swift melalui pendekatan psikolinguistik. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana lirik lagu tersebut membangkitkan memori autobiografis, mendukung refleksi emosional, dan memengaruhi kondisi psikologis pendengar. Melalui analisis kualitatif, studi ini menemukan bahwa lirik naratif Swift yang dipenuhi metafora, perjuangan pribadi, dan tema kemandirian memicu evaluasi emosional yang mendalam dan keterlibatan kognitif. Resonansi emosional dari lagu ini semakin diperkuat oleh tanggapan di media sosial, di mana para pendengar

secara terbuka membagikan refleksi mereka. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa musik populer tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai alat terapeutik dan edukatif yang dapat menumbuhkan kesadaran diri serta ikatan sosial melalui pengalaman bersama. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman mengenai peran musik dalam pemrosesan psikolinguistik dan perkembangan emosional, khususnya di kalangan remaja dan dewasa muda.

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the cognitive processing of emotionally charged lyrics in Taylor Swift's song *You're On Your Own, Kid* through a psycholinguistic lens. The research investigates how the lyrics evoke autobiographical memories, support emotional reflection, and influence listeners' psychological states. Using qualitative analysis, the study reveals that Swift's narrative lyrics laden with metaphors, personal struggles, and themes of independence trigger deep emotional evaluation and cognitive engagement. The emotional resonance of the song is further enhanced by social media responses, where listeners publicly share their reflections. These findings suggest that popular music can function not only as entertainment but also as a therapeutic and educational tool, fostering self-awareness and social bonding through shared experiences. The study contributes to the understanding of music's role in psycholinguistic processing and emotional development, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

## Introduction

Have you ever listened to music until you are lost in your feelings? Almost everyone must have experienced a moment like this. This happens because music, especially song lyrics, has the power to touch our emotions. In the study of psycholinguistics, this phenomenon is interesting to study because it involves the process in which our brain responds to the meaning contained in the song lyrics emotionally. Psycholinguistics as



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“the study of how individuals comprehend, produce, and acquire language”. With this emphasis we are made to see the field as that akin to cognitive science, a discipline whose priorities reflect insights of psychology, linguistics, neurosciences and to a lesser extent philosophy (Afolayan, et al 2014 ).

To express feelings, a person can do many ways to convey emotions or feelings to others. Music is one way that can be used to convey messages or communicate so that the messages written can be understood by others, each musician makes songs that they write in their own language simply so that they can enter the listener. With their emotions, musicians pour those emotions into the lyrics of the songs they create. This shows that songs can also interact with others to understand feelings and exchange feelings or arguments.(Fitriani & Muassomah, 2021)

As the song, that is currently popular, Taylor Swift is an American singer, songwriter, and actress who is known as one of the most influential artists in the global music industry. Born on December 13, 1989 in Reading, Pennsylvania, Taylor Swift began her career in the world of country music before successfully expanding into the pop, folk, and alternative genres. Her relatable lyrics and captivating stories have been warmly received by listeners, especially teenagers, allowing her fan base to continue to grow over the years.

Taylor Swift is known as a great songwriter and often uses narrative in her lyrics. She is able to tell stories with detail and nuance that makes the listener feel as if they are in the situation she is describing. One of Taylor Swift's emotional works, "You're on Your Own, Kid" is the fifth song from the midnight album. This song is not just a series of lyrics, but also has a deep meaning that describes the journey of an individual's life full of hard work. In this song, Swift presents the perfect blend of honesty in her lyrics and the power of her vocals, creating a masterpiece that touches the heart and gives meaning to its listeners.

Song lyrics are starting to play an important role in identifying emotions. Psycholinguistic features are one of the features of song lyrics. The way these features are presented can vary based on the type of corpus and the model of emotion ( Rachman., et al 2018 ). Song lyrics have a strong influence on a person's emotional state, which makes many people express their feelings through music. This study aims to investigate how Taylor Swift's songs, as an example of emotional music, can affect the feelings and emotional state of the listener.(Waliulu et al., n.d.)

## Findings & Discussion

After analyzing the lyrics of Taylor Swift's songs You Are Your Own Kids, the researcher managed to find several words that can be examined in lexical and contextual meanings. In "You're On Your Own, Kid," Taylor Swift reflects on her younger years through a series of personal memories. The opening verse captures the bittersweetness of a childhood crush that wasn't returned. As the song continues, she shifts focus to an important turning point in her life when she begins writing songs. Lines

like “I picked the petals, he loves me not. Something different bloomed, writing in my room,” show how she channeled her emotions into creativity. These moments highlight how Swift’s personal experiences, especially those tied to love and self-discovery, have been a cornerstone of her songwriting, beginning in her childhood bedroom.

As Taylor Swift reflects on the early days of her career in “*You’re On Your Own, Kid*,” she writes about playing her songs in a parking lot, unsure whether this refers to listening to her music in her car or performing in informal spaces before achieving mainstream success. This imagery captures the raw beginnings of her journey in the music industry. She later acknowledges the harsh reality of competing with countless other aspiring artists in Nashville, noting in her lyrics that her dreams weren’t unique but shared by many others. The first verses of the song paint a picture of Swift’s teenage years, and as the song unfolds, her reflections mature, mirroring her journey from girlhood to adulthood.

These adolescent reflections align with the vulnerability and emotion conveyed through Swift’s breathy vocal style. In the third chorus of “*You’re On Your Own, Kid*,” Swift transitions into a more mature perspective, reflecting on her journey as a songwriter and performer. The song “*You’re On Your Own, Kid*” by Taylor Swift contains lyrics full of emotion and self-reflection, which effectively activates the listener’s memory. The depiction of youthful experiences, such as feelings of unrequited love and the struggle to be accepted, relate strongly to the emotional experiences of many individuals. For example, lyrics like “I waited patiently, he’s gonna notice me” conjures up universal images of longing and disappointment, which are often felt in adolescence. In expressing their feelings, poets or songwriters need to play with words and language to create appeal and distinctiveness to their lyrics or poems. This phenomenon was also reflected in the reactions of listeners on social media platforms such as TikTok, where many users expressed their memories and feelings regarding the life struggles depicted in the song. (Afolayan, 1971) The freedom that accompanies loneliness is one of the song’s central themes. Taylor realizes that, despite her sense of community, she will ultimately have to face life alone. The sentiment that no one is always there for us is conveyed in the following sentence.

"I think you got it, oh, you got it[Hentian Pembungkusan Teks]You're on your own, kid[Hentian Pembungkusan Teks]You always have been"

The phrase “*You’re on your own, kid*” is a very memorable part, which shows that in the end, we have to accept the fact that we ourselves are responsible for our lives. This is a moment of enlightenment where we begin to see that no one can always support us every step of the way. That independence comes with many sacrifices, but it also gives us the freedom to choose our own path.

One of the dominant themes is the struggle of studying away from home, where listeners feel connected to the lyrics that describe independence and an emotional journey that is not always easy. In this context, Swift’s song acts as an emotional trigger that relives individual experiences, ranging from a sense of nostalgia to motivation to

keep fighting. Cognitively, song lyrics can influence how listeners process their experiences. The song not only reveals Taylor Swift's story, but also provides a cognitive framework for listeners to reflect on and make meaning of their own life experiences. For example, the lyrical section "Everything you lose is a step you take" transforms the perception of loss into part of the growth process. This process, according to Juslin and Västfjäll's (2008) research, is known as music-guided emotional evaluation, where listeners reflect on their experiences with the help of emotional structures in the song (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008).

Deep melodies and repetition of metaphors such as "From sprinkler splashes to fireplace ashes" help strengthen the listener's emotional connection with the lyrics. The use of these simple yet meaningful metaphors illustrates life's diverse journeys, from childhood memories to the challenges of adulthood. These elements encourage deeper cognitive processing, creating a personal connection between the listener's past experiences and the emotional reflections presented by the song.

The lyrics and melody in "You're On Your Own, Kid" have far-reaching implications, both psychologically and socially. The song can be used as a medium for emotional therapy, assisting individuals in understanding and accepting their experiences through self-reflection. In an educational context, the song also has relevance, especially for those who face big challenges such as studying away from their families. The emotional support that listeners feel through this song shows how music can serve as a form of psychological assistance. Furthermore, the widespread reactions on social media platforms show that songs like this are not only a medium for entertainment, but also a space for communities to share experiences and emotions. Additional studies could explore the role of popular music in supporting mental health and strengthening social connections through shared reflection.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Taylor Swift's "You're On Your Own, Kid" demonstrates how music can evoke deep emotional responses and activate autobiographical memories through its relatable lyrics and heartfelt melodies. The song's exploration of unrequited love, personal growth, and independence resonates universally, allowing listeners to reflect on their experiences. Cognitive theories, such as music-guided emotional evaluation, explain how lyrics like "Everything you lose is a step you take" help reinterpret struggles as vital parts of personal development. Additionally, the song fosters social connection, as seen in TikTok discussions where listeners share personal stories of resilience and self-reliance. This highlights the song's potential not only as entertainment but also as a medium for psychological support and emotional reflection, creating both individual and communal impacts.

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