UNRAVELING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S ALBUM "MIDNIGHTS": A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Julis[1], Kunto Nurcahyoko[2]
[1] Catholic University of Saint Augustine Hippo, Indonesia
[2] Catholic University of Saint Augustine Hippo, Indonesia
[1]julishilarion@gmail.com,
[2]k.nurcahyoko@sanagustin.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the idiomatic expressions present in Taylor Swift's album "Midnights." Employing qualitative research and content analysis, the songs from the album serve as the primary data source. Using Palmer's theory, the researcher collected the song lyrics by browsing various platforms, particularly Spotify, transcribing, and listening to them. The data analysis involved reading, identifying, and classifying the types and meanings of idiomatic expressions within the lyrics, culminating in drawing conclusions. The findings revealed three types of idiomatic expressions in the lyrics: phrasal verb idiom (67% - 37 idioms), partial idiom (9% - 5 idioms), and prepositional idiom (24% - 13 idioms). The idiomatic expressions were associated with two distinct meanings: denotative meaning (91% - 50 idioms) and connotative meaning (9% - 5 idioms). This study sheds light on the prevalence and types of idiomatic expressions in Taylor Swift's album "Midnights," providing insights into the richness of language use and its impact on the overall themes and emotions conveyed in the songs.

Keywords: idiomatic, expression, song, lyrics, midnights

Songs are captivating literary works that offer enjoyable entertainment through various voice presentation techniques, melodic music, and drum beats, altering our perceptions of the world (Wahyudi, 2016). Songs represent a unique form of human communication, connecting artists with their audience as part of self-expression and relating to others (Joseph Machlis in Ball, 2012). Therefore, song is one of the ways to express ideas or feelings. Idiomatic terms are frequently used in songs to engage listeners and comprehend the authors' intentions.

Within songs, lyrics and tunes are inseparable, with poets and composers using connotative words to enhance song appeal. Understanding these connotations adds to the enjoyment of the music. Analyzing and learning songs, especially in a foreign language such as English, indirectly improves language abilities for Indonesians, such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Comparing good music can be challenging, requiring skilled wordplay by composers to capture listeners' interest. One effective method uses idiomatic phrases to create catchy and expressive song lyrics.

Idioms play a significant role in communication, adding diversity to writing and speaking (Cahyono, 2005). According to Feare in Yasiruddin (2013), idioms have unique meanings that cannot be understood solely from their words, making them challenging for non-native English speakers to grasp. In song lyrics, songwriters use idioms to bring intrigue, originality, and aesthetic appeal. The vocalist's use of idioms can convey emotions with varying interpretations for listeners, including Taylor Swift Songs. Taylor Swift's songs beautifully illustrate everyday life and emotions through her experiences, creating literary masterpieces with lovely lyrics and expressive language.

This study chose Taylor Swift's album due to her popularity as a musician known for her meaningful lyrics. Taylor Swift, an American singer-songwriter and producer, was born on December 13, 1989, in West Reading, Nashville, U.S. She gained fame as a country-pop singer from 2006 to 2013 and began her professional career in 2004. Taylor Swift's 10th studio album, "Midnights," was released on October 21, 2022, and consists of 13 tracks, including the single "Anti-Hero." The album received critical acclaim, ranking as the third-best album of 2022 on Billboard's Staff List. "Midnights" even achieved significant milestones, becoming Spotify's most-streamed album in a single day and the best-selling album of 2022. It also made history by having all its tracks reach the top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 songs chart, making Taylor Swift the artist with the most top 10 hits among women.

Several authors have carried out studies on song analysis. Dinda Lauzardia (2022) conducted a study titled "The Idiomatic Expression in Taylor Swift's Songs of Folklore Album" using Lou's theory (2007) to categorize idiomatic expressions. The research found 68 idiomatic expressions in the lyrics, with the most common types being adjectives and nouns combined (36), two-word verbs (10), verbs and nouns used together (9), verbs and prepositions (8), prepositions or adverbs (4), and idiomatic expressions with adjectives phrases (1). Similarly, Fatin (2016) conducted a descriptive qualitative study analyzing Adele's album "25" using Makkai's Theory (1972). The research identified 56 idioms in the album's songs, including irreversible binomial idioms (4), tournure idioms (17), and phrasal verbs (35). These idiomatic phrases primarily conveyed emotions like anguish, suffering, grief, and themes of love and wishes. The study also highlighted the potential use of Adele's song lyrics as a teaching tool for English.

However, most of these studies focused on investigating idiomatic expressions in the previous albums of Taylor Swift. There have been arguments among the fans that Taylor Swift even plays around with the words and meaning in her latest album, "Midnights," which comprises 13 songs. Unlike previous research, the present study employed Palmer's theory to analyze the idioms in the album. The choice of "Midnights" is unique as it has not been analyzed before among Taylor Swift's albums. The researcher aims to answer the question of identifying and categorizing the idioms used in the album "Midnights" by Taylor Swift, unraveling their meanings and implications.

Literature Review
Songs and Idiomatic Expression

As defined by Thao et al. (2020), a song is a form of music and lyrics used to convey feelings, concepts, emotions, or thoughts. It combines poetry with music and can cover various themes like love, family, and personal experiences. The lyrics are vital in conveying the song's message and often have a melodic and linguistic value. Idioms, however, are phrases that cannot be translated word-for-word. There are eight types of idioms, such as similes, proverbs, and clichés. With its idiomatic expressions, Western music can be a helpful tool for language learning, allowing people

to understand meanings and emotions in a language context. Combining music and idioms can make language learning enjoyable and reduce anxiety.

In a song, the writer usually uses idioms. Idioms refer to a complicated expression whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meanings of its constituent parts, which Weinreich (1969) characterizes as an idiom. According to various researchers, idioms have both literal and idiomatic meanings and can convey a wide range of emotions, situations, and concepts (Halliday, 2007; Biber et al.,2006; Ding, 2019). Idioms are a common and sophisticated language structure used in various ways, including describing emotions like happiness, sadness, love, and hate. They can also convey time, place, and measurement. However, understanding idioms can be challenging for readers, sometimes leading to misunderstandings in song lyrics. Idioms are multi-word phrases that mix the literal meanings of their constituent words, and their meanings may not be directly related to their components.

Based on the given definitions, the researcher concludes that an idiom is a set of words with a specific order that collectively carry a meaning that cannot be directly translated. Learning the meaning of an idiom requires more effort than understanding individual words. To grasp idioms, students may need to combine the meanings of multiple words or match them with appropriate phrases or situations. Although not always grammatical, native speakers use idiomatic expressions with a fixed structure and meaning. For those learning English as a foreign language, comprehending idioms can be challenging, as they require understanding each meaning in the proper context.

This study examines the various kinds and structural nuances of English idioms used in Taylor Swift's song lyrics. The types of idioms in this research are based on Palmer's theory (1976: 98-99). He states that common types of idioms are phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, and idiomatic phrases. 1) The most prevalent kind of idiom in English is called a phrasal verb, which combines verbs and particles (adverbs and prepositions), Palmer (1976: 99). Phrasal verb is a very general type of idiom in English, which is usually known as a phrasal verb. It is the combination of the verbs and particles (most of the particles form the same as prepositions), but changing the real meaning of each word, for example: make up, break up, give up. 2) Partial Idiom if one of the words has an ordinary meaning and the other has an odd meaning. The partial idioms mean that one of the words has its usual meaning, and the other has a meaning peculiar to the particular sequence. However, it depends on whether or not it is defined, for example, a black cat or a dark horse. 3) Prepositional verbs are a series of verbs and prepositions without changing the meaning of words. It combines the verb and preposition, for example: care for, laughing at.

Besides the types of idioms found in this album, the meaning of each idiom will be explained by Leech's (1981) theory. There are two meanings according to Leech theory namely 1) Denotative meaning is a level of sign that produces the explicit, direct, and true meaning, for example: childish, childfree etc. 2) Connotation meaning which refers to a level of sign that explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified by providing an implicit, unstated, or fictitious meaning. For example: a piece of cake, feeling blue, etc.

METHOD

The data in this study were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative technique. The study employed a qualitative approach focusing on descriptive data rather than numerical analysis. The decision to use descriptive qualitative research was based on its suitability for addressing the album's idiomatic expressions found in the Midnight album by Taylor Swift. The research involved gathering, organizing, classifying, analyzing, and interpreting data, aligning with Surakhmad's

description of the descriptive method (1982). Overall, the study used descriptive qualitative techniques to analyze and interpret idioms in Taylor Swift's latest album, "Midnights."

Palmer's theory (1976) was used to categorize the idioms into phrasal verbs, partial idioms, and prepositional idioms, while Leech's theory (1981) examined their meanings. There will be an analysis of the lyrics of each song in this album. 13 tracks in this album will be analyzed. Midnight's track list were: Lavender Haze, Maroon, Anti-Hero which is the single of these tracks, Snow on the Beach (ft. Lana Del Rey), You're on Your Own, Kid, Midnight Rain, Question...?, Vigilante Shit, Bejeweled, Labyrinth, Karma, Sweet Nothing and Mastermind.

FINDINGS

The current study builds upon two hypotheses to ensure a rigorous analysis. Based on Palmer's (1976) categorization, the first hypothesis classifies idioms into three subcategories: phrasal verbs, partial idioms, and prepositional idioms. Phrasal verbs combine a verb with an adverb or preposition, altering the verb's real meaning; partial idioms consist of specific or unusual sentence parts; and prepositional idioms combine a verb with a preposition without altering the verb's real meaning.

Additionally, Leech's (1974) theory of different kinds of meaning, including conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic meanings, supports this research. These theories lay the groundwork for addressing the research question on the idioms used in Taylor Swift's album "Midnights."

In this study, we exclusively analyzed one album comprising 13 songs to determine the prevalent type of idiomatic phrases and understand how idiomatic expressions are utilized. The resulting idiomatic phrase types are presented in the following table.Table 1. Types of Idioms found in "Midnights" based on Palmer's Theory

Songs	Types of Idioms		
	Phrasal Verb	**Partial Idiom**	**Prepositional Idiom**
Lavender Haze	4	1	1
Maroon	2	1	3
Anti-Hero	4	1	1
Snow on the Beach	3	-	3
You're On Your Own, Kid	4	1	-
Midnight Rain	2	-	1
Question	3	-	1
Vigilante Shit	1	-	2
Bejeweled	3	-	1

Labyrinth	7	-	-
Karma	2	-	-
Sweet Nothing	1	1	-
Mastermind	1	-	-
	37 (67%)	5 (9%)	13 (10%)

Besides, there were meanings based on Leech's theory found, among others were denotative (50) and connotative (5). Denotative was found in phrasal verbs and prepositional idiom, beside connotative was found in partial idiom. It shows that the number of denotativas is more than the number of connotations.

Table 3. The Meaning of idiom found in "Midnights" based on Leech's Theory

Meaning of Idiom	Numbers	Percentage
Denotative	50	91%
Connotative	5	9%
Total	55	100%

Table 4. The types & meaning of idiom found in Taylor Swift's album "Midnights"

Types of Idiom (Palmer)	Song Title	Idiomatic Expression	General Meaning	Type of Meaning (Leech)
Phrasal Verb	Lavender Haze	Creeping up	To approach someone or something slowly and often stealthily	Denotative
	Maroon	Looked up	To turn one's gaze or attention from something else, often by literally lifting one's head or turning one's eyes upward	Denotative
	Anti-Hero	End up	To finally be in a particular place or situation	Denotative

	Snow on the Beach	Passing by	To move, travel, or proceed past someone or something	Denotative
	You're On Your Own, Kid	Went away	To leave a place	Denotative
	Midnight Rain	Gave away	To give something (to someone) for free; to donate something (to someone)	Denotative
	Question...?	Swept away	To destroy or remove (something) completely.	Denotative
	Vigilante Shit	Rise above	To not allow something bad to affect your behaviour or upset you.	Denotative
	Bejeweled	Polish up	To rub or brush an object to make it shine, especially a metal or wooden object.	Denotative
	Labyrinth	Break free	To escape from physical restraints, or to detach or separate something from an obstacle or restraint	Denotative
	Karma	Look down	To feel that someone is less important than you or does not deserve respect	Denotative
	Sweet Nothing	Picked up	To lift someone or something using your hands	Denotative
	Mastermind	End up	To reach some conclusion, state, or situation due to a particular course of action	Denotative
Partial Idiom	Lavender Haze	I do give a damn	Used as a way of saying you really care about something, especially the interesting things that someone else is doing or saying	Connotative

Maroon	Hollow-eyed	With the eyes appearing to be sunk into the face, as from excessive fatigue	Connotative
Anti-Hero	Teatime	The time in the afternoon when some people eat a small meal	Connotative
You're on your own, kid	Blood, sweat and tears	Extremely hard work, or the greatest effort possible, in order to achieve something	Connotative
Sweet nothing	Glad handing	Being very friendly to people you have not met before, as a way of trying to get an advantage	Connotative
Prepositional Idiom	Midnight rain	Thinks of	To consider something; to have something as a possible plan or idea	Denotative
	Maroon	Laughing with	To laugh as a result of a particular emotional state or condition	Denotative
	Anti-Hero	Laughing at	Literally, to react to someone or something with laughter.	Denotative
	Snow on the Beach	Thanks for	To express or demonstrate gratitude to one for something they did, as by actually saying "thank you" or doing something in return	Denotative
	Lavender Haze	Staring at	Literally, to gaze or gawk at someone or something in an intense, prolonged, or steadfast manner	Denotative
	Bejeweled	Walk in	To accompany or escort someone on foot	Denotative
	Question	Searched for	To hunt, seek, or try to discover something	Denotative

Vigilante Shit	Dress for	To wear certain clothes in order to make someone else happy	Denotative

DISCUSSION

Through data analysis, the researcher identified 55 idiomatic expressions in the album, classified into five types based on Palmer's theory (1976): phrasal verb idiom, partial idiom, and prepositional verb idiom. Among these were 37 phrasal verb idioms, five partial idioms, and 13 prepositional idioms. The researcher referred to the Cambridge and Free Dictionary by Farlex to define each idiom.

The study is in line with several relevant previous research conducted by Ristanti et al. (2022) on Ariana Grande's album "Positions" using Palmer's theory (1976). In that research, they identified 39 idiomatic expressions categorized into three types: 22 phrasal verb idioms, nine partial idioms, and eight prepositional verb idioms. Contrary to their findings, this current study revealed more idioms in Taylor Swift's album. The writing style of the lyrics in "Midnights" appears to lean towards idiomatic expressions, enabling better comprehension of the idiom's contextual meaning and classification. Understanding these idioms and their meanings can contribute to semantic analysis.

The discussion of idiomatic expressions in Taylor Swift's songs from the album "Midnights" is based on the findings from the aforementioned research. The incorporation of idioms in song lyrics can be attributed to various artistic and communicative reasons. Firstly, idioms add depth and complexity to the lyrics, enriching the overall poetic quality of the song. Songwriters often use idiomatic expressions to create vivid imagery and evoke emotions in their audience. These figurative language devices enhance the storytelling aspect of the song, allowing listeners to connect with the narrative on a deeper level.

By infusing idioms, songwriters can effectively convey abstract concepts, personal experiences, and universal themes concisely and evocatively. For example, the word "teatime" is used in a song called Anti-Hero. The lyric says "... at tea time, everybody agrees. The time does not mean the afternoon when some people eat a small meal. Based on The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Online Dictionary, this idiom was categorized as a partial idiom. According to Leech's theory (1974), the idiom "teatime" could be classified as connotative because the writer used the connotation of teatime to present "the time when people have a small discussion or gossip". Besides, based on the theory by Palmer (1976), this idiom could be categorized as a partial idiom because it contains a peculiar and particular meaning, and the rest of the words have their literal meaning. Besides, this idiom has a connotative meaning because it provides an implicit, unstated, or fictitious meaning.

Another example is "Blood, sweat and tears" on a song entitled You're on your own, kid. The lyric says, "I gave my (blood, sweat, and tears) for this". The words do not mean that the singer offers the real blood or sweat, but instead she puts in her hard work, or the most significant effort possible, in order to achieve something. Based on The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Online Dictionary, this idiom was categorized as a partial idiom. Besides, this idiom is included in connotative meaning because it provides an implicit, unstated, or fictitious meaning. According to Leech's theory (1974), the idiom "blood, sweat, and tears" could be classified as connotative because the writer used the connotation of blood, sweat, and tears to present "hard work, or the

greatest effort possible, in order to achieve something". Besides, this idiom has a connotative meaning because it provides an implicit, unstated, or fictitious meaning.

Moreover, idioms serve as cultural touchpoints, fostering a sense of familiarity and relatability among listeners. Songs incorporating well-known idioms can resonate with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds, making the music more inclusive and accessible. Idioms also tap into shared cultural experiences and traditions, strengthening the emotional connection between the artist and their audience. Using idioms in songs adds a layer of playfulness and creativity, making the lyrics memorable and catchy. Listeners often find themselves singing along to songs with cleverly embedded idiomatic expressions, contributing to the song's overall popularity and staying power. The fusion of music and idioms creates a unique blend of artistry and linguistic innovation that sets songs apart from other forms of communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study analyzed idioms in Taylor Swift's album "Midnights," resulting in two main conclusions. First, 55 idioms were identified across the 13 songs in the album. These idioms were classified into three types: phrasal verbs (67%), partial idioms (9%), and prepositional verb idioms (24%). Examples of phrasal verbs include "creeping up," "take away," and "break through," while partial idioms include expressions like "I do give a damn" and "blood, sweat, and tears." Additionally, prepositional verb idioms were also found, such as "thinks of," "laughing with," and "dancing with."

Secondly, the study explored the meanings of these idioms, distinguishing between denotative and connotative meanings. Most idioms (91%) were found to have denotative meanings, aligning with the literal meaning of their parts. On the other hand, 9% of idioms had connotative meanings, signifying a departure from the literal interpretation. The dominant type of idiomatic expression in the album was phrasal verbs (67%) and denotative meanings (91%).

The study shows that Taylor Swift used idioms strategically to enhance the allure, appeal, and impact of the songs in the album. However, this study acknowledges its limitations, including the relatively small sample size of songs analyzed. Future researchers can expand on this work by analyzing a larger and more diverse selection of English songs to gain deeper insights into idiomatic expressions. Moreover, exploring the role of the gender variable as a potential moderator in idiom usage could be a compelling avenue for further investigation.

This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of idioms in song lyrics and their impact on language and expression. By employing various idiom dictionaries, the researcher ensured accurate interpretations of the idiomatic expressions in Taylor Swift's album "Midnights." As idioms play a significant role in communication, this research adds to the broader field of semantic analysis, shedding light on the creative and meaningful use of idiomatic expressions in music.

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