Idiomatic Expressions Found in Taylor Swift's Song 'All Too Well (10 Minute Version)'

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Abstract: This research analyzes idiomatic expressions in Taylor Swift's song "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)." A qualitative approach focused on content analysis of the song's lyrics. The data were collected by transcribing and analyzing the lyrics to identify and classify idiomatic expressions using Makkai's (1972) theory. The analysis revealed a total of 11 idiomatic expressions, categorized into Phrasal Verb Idioms (1 idiom), Tournure Idioms (7 idioms), Irreversible Binomial Idioms (1 idiom), and Phrasal Compound Idioms (3 idioms). Tournure Idioms were the most frequently used, highlighting their prominence in conveying the song's themes. This study contributes to the understanding of idiomatic expressions in song lyrics and their role in enhancing lyrical content.

Keywords: Idiomatic Expression, Lyrics, Song, Taylor Swift

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential tool people use to share ideas and communicate. Without language, it would be difficult to share information or interact with others. Algeo (2005) describes language as a set of agreed-upon spoken symbols use to share information. Communication involves interaction, where individuals express their feelings, emotions, and ideas through spoken words to others (Herman, 2015). This definition includes several important terms such as system, signs, vocal, conventional, human, and communication. Therefore, language serves as a means to create communication and foster positive relationships with others, using signs or vocal symbols that allow people to understand each other.

Idioms, or idiomatic expressions, are a type of casual language in which the intended meaning diverges from the literal interpretation of the individual words used in the phrase. Halliday (2007) states that an idiom in any given language is something for which no equivalent exists in another language (Sinaga et al., 2020). Biber et al. (2006) explain that idioms convey meanings distinct from the literal definitions of their individual parts. When incorporated into song lyrics, idioms can convey complex emotions and ideas in a compact, evocative manner. For example, a phrase like "hit the sack," which means "to strike a sack," is understood idiomatically as "to go to sleep." This use of idioms in songs not only enriches the lyrical content but also aids in the listener's engagement by presenting familiar expressions in a new and memorable context.

A song is a distinctive musical composition typically made to be performed vocally, featuring recognizable melodies and rhythms. Hutajulu and Herman (2019) note that a song is one way people communicate, enabling collaborative interaction between people. According to Thao and Herman (2020), a song serves as a communication system, allowing individuals to convey feelings, ideas, emotions, or thoughts through sounds and melodies. Songs are typically performed using musical instruments, which together create a distinct harmony and rhythm. They can cover various topics, such as love, family, or personal experiences. Additionally, songs can serve as entertainment and a tool for learning vocabulary, listening skills, pronunciation, and grammar.

Lyrics are the words that enhance a song, typically made up of choruses and verses. Lyrics are capable of having the power to give listeners a deep understanding of a song's meaning or message. When someone listens to and sings a song's lyrics repeatedly, they might end up remembering the words without even trying. Rainey and Larsen (2002) mention that many adults can recall song lyrics they frequently heard as teenagers, even if they haven't listened to the mentioned lyrics in a long time. Lyrics are the text of a song, typically found in popular music or a short poem that conveys the songwriter's personal feelings and thoughts. This implies that lyrics are more than just putting words together; they are a way for the composer to express feelings, including desires, struggles, love, ideas, and emotions (Sitorus & Herman, 2019:24). Based on these definitions, researchers can conclude that lyrics are a way for songwriters to express their emotions through words in a song, which helps listeners understand and remember new vocabulary.

This study employs Makkai's (1972) theory to classify idiomatic expressions, focusing specifically on lexemic idioms. According to Makkai, idioms can be divided into sememic and lexemic types. The researcher chose to focus on lexemic idioms because they consist of more than one nominal free form, making them more suitable for this analysis. Sememic expressions, which include proverbs and longer sentence-like structures, are less relevant for this study's purposes.

Lexemic idioms, as defined by Makkai, include six types: 1) Phrasal Verb Idioms, which are formed by combining a verb with a particle, such as an adverb or preposition; 2) Tournure Idioms, which are more complex idiomatic expressions typically consisting of at least three words, predominantly verbs; 3) Irreversible Binomial Idioms, which are idioms with a fixed word order, usually linked by conjunction; 4) Phrasal Compound Idioms, which involve the combination of an adjective with a noun, or two nouns; 5) often hyphenated, combining nouns or adjectives with verbs, frequently employed in more serious contexts; and 6) Pseudo

Idioms, which are multi-word phrases where one or more words do not have meaning on their own outside the idiom, often confusing.

Previous research on idiomatic expressions includes Van Thao (2021) focused on identifying and categorizing idiomatic expressions in Ed Sheeran's lyrics, providing insights into how idioms contribute to the overall meaning and emotional impact of the songs. Artadiyani, Mawa, and Wulandari (2021) examined the types and functions of idiomatic expressions in Westlife's lyrics, offering a methodology that can be adapted to analyze idioms in Taylor Swift's music. Mite's (2023) research explored idiomatic expressions in film dialogue, providing comparative insights for understanding idiomatic usage across different media, including song lyrics. Effendi (2022) highlighted the narrative and emotional functions of idioms, which can be applied to the analysis of Taylor Swift's lyrics. Lastly, Clarisa's (2022) study investigated the role of idiomatic expressions in animated film dialogue, offering findings that can enhance the understanding of idiom usage in Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)." These studies offer important frameworks and methods that will help in examining the idiomatic expressions found in Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)." This research focuses solely on analyzing idiomatic expressions within the chosen lyrics of Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version).

This study contributes to the understanding of idiomatic expressions in song lyrics by analyzing Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" (Taylor's Version). The study focuses on identifying and categorizing idioms within the lyrics, a critical aspect of Swift's songwriting that enhances the emotional and narrative depth of her music. The problems addressed in this study are: What types of idiomatic expressions are present in Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version) and Which type of idiomatic expression is most commonly used in the song? The analysis also examines the role these idioms play in conveying the song's themes and emotions. The study's findings will be presented through a detailed analysis and discussion, including the identification of idiom types and their frequency within the lyrics.

2.   METHOD

The study used a descriptive qualitative research method because it analyzed words, phrases, and sentences rather than numbers. Qualitative research, as described by Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), involves providing rich, verbal descriptions to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. The data for this study was collected from the official music video of Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" (Taylor's Version) available on the Taylor Swift YouTube channel. The video was published on November 12, 2021. The data

collection method employed in this study includes listening to the song, transcribing the lyrics, and marking idiomatic expressions. After collecting the data, the analysis follows the steps outlined by Sinaga, Herman, and Marpaung (2020), which involve careful reading, identifying, classifying, and analyzing idiomatic expressions based on Makkai's (1972) theory of lexemic idioms. Finally, conclusions are drawn to summarize the types and functions of idiomatic expressions used in the lyrics of Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)." This method allows the researcher to thoroughly examine the idioms present in the song and understand their contribution to the song's overall meaning and emotional impact.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher identified the idiomatic expressions in Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" using Makkai's (1972) theory of lexemic idioms. These idioms were grouped into six different categories: Phrasal Verb Idioms, Tournure Idioms, Irreversible Binomial Idioms, Phrasal Compound Idioms, Incorporating Verb Idioms, and Pseudo Idioms. The detailed findings and discussion are presented below.

As outlined in the methodology, the researchers focused on a single song, "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)," by Taylor Swift. Using Makkai's (1972) theory, the analysis aimed to determine the types of idiomatic expressions present and to identify the most frequently occurring idioms. The data analysis revealed that out of the six sub-classes, four were identified in the lyrics: Phrasal Verb Idioms, Tournure Idioms, Irreversible Binomial Idioms, and Pseudo Idioms. The most dominant type of idiom found was Tournure Idiom, which was used extensively throughout the song. The detailed distribution of idiomatic expressions is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Idiom Expression Found in Taylor Swift's Songs "All Too Well (10 minute version)

No	Types of Idiom	Idiom	Meaning
1.	Phrasal Verb Idiom	Drive down	To move or travel downward, often referring to a journey
2.	Tournure Idiom	Lost in translation	To fail to understand or convey something accurately due to language or context differences
		Time won't fly	Time seems to move slowly
		Paint you blue?	To make someone feel sad or depressed

		Ran the red	To go through a red traffic light (suggesting breaking rules or taking risks)
		Double-cross my mind	To deceive or betray someone's thoughts or plans
		Turning red	To blush or show embarrassment
		Getting lost upstate	To become confused or disoriented while traveling in a rural or less familiar area
3.	Irreversible Binomial Idiom	Skin and bones	To describe someone who is extremely thin.
4.	Phrasal Compound Idiom	Late-night	Refers to activities or events occurring late in the evening or night
		Lifeless frame	A body that looks without energy or emotion
		Twin flame	A concept of a deep, intense connection with another person, often viewed as a soulmate

Table 1 presents the findings of idiomatic expressions in Taylor Swift's song "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)." The idioms are categorized into five types: Phrasal Verb Idioms (1 idiom), Tournure Idioms (7 idioms), Irreversible Binomial Idioms (1 idiom), and Phrasal Compound Idioms (3 idioms). Tournure Idioms are the most common, followed by Phrasal Verb and Phrasal Compound Idioms. This shows the song uses a variety of idioms to add depth to the lyrics. Further details from Table 1 are explained in the points below:

Phrasal Verb Idiom

a. **'Drive down'**

The idiomatic expression *drive down* is found in the lyrics:

"And I was thinking on the drive down."

The phrase *drive down* is considered a phrasal verb idiom because it consists of the verb *drive* followed by the preposition *down*. As defined by the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, *drive down* refers to causing something, like prices, to fall quickly. However, in this context, *drive down* refers to the act of traveling by car to a lower place or specific destination. The phrase is used to convey that the speaker was reflecting while driving.

Tournure Idiom

a. Lost in translation

The idiomatic expression *lost in translation* is found in the lyrics:

"Well maybe we got lost in translation."

According to Wiktionary, *Lost in translation* means something unable to be understood due to having been poorly translated. This suggests that the original meaning or intent has been distorted or misunderstood, often because of a change in context, such as moving from one language or situation to another. In the context of the song, this phrase implies a miscommunication or misunderstanding within the relationship, where the true meaning of feelings or intentions is not accurately conveyed or understood.

b. Time won't fly

The idiomatic expression *time won't fly* is found in the lyrics:

"Time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it."

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the phrase *time flies* is commonly used to express that time passes quickly, but here it is negated, meaning time is moving very slowly. In this context, it reflects the speaker's feeling of being stuck in the past.

c. Paint you blue?

The idiomatic expression *paint you blue* is found in the lyrics:

"And did the twin flame bruise paint you blue?"

Based on the discussion from English Stack Exchange, *paint* in idiomatic expressions often means to depict or describe in a certain way, while *blue* is associated with sadness or melancholy. In this context, *paint you blue* suggests causing deep emotional pain or sorrow, rather than its literal meaning of physically painting oneself blue or acting wildly.

d. Ran the red

The idiomatic expression *ran the red* is found in the lyrics:

"You almost ran the red 'cause you were looking over at me."

Based on the explanation from the theoretical framework and after the researcher examined the data from Wiktionary, the phrase *ran the red* primarily means to drive past an illuminated red traffic light instead of stopping, which is illegal and dangerous. It can also mean entering a restricted area, falsely accusing someone of wrongdoing, passing a political bill based on false premises, or claiming a position one has not

rightfully earned. In the context of the song, the phrase emphasizes a moment of carelessness or distraction, fitting the primary meaning related to traffic lights.

e. **Double-cross my mind**

The idiomatic expression *double-cross my mind* is found in the lyrics:

"You double-cross my mind."

According to the Britannica Dictionary, *double-cross* means to cheat or deceive someone, especially by doing something different from what was promised or expected. In this context, the phrase is used figuratively to convey a sense of betrayal or deceitful memory that haunts the narrator's thoughts.

f. **'Turning red'**

The idiomatic expression *turning red* is found in the lyrics:

"Photo album on the counter, your cheeks were turning red."

In this context, *turning red* is categorized as a *tournure idiom* because it consists of a verb followed by an adjective that, together, creates a fixed, idiomatic meaning. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the phrase *turning red* generally means becoming red in the face due to embarrassment or another strong emotion. The researcher compares the meaning of *turning red* in the lyric with its dictionary definition, confirming that it refers to a physical reaction to emotions.

g. **'Getting lost upstate'**

The idiomatic expression *getting lost upstate* is found in the lyrics:

"We're singing in the car, getting lost upstate."

Getting lost is categorized as a *tournure idiom* because it includes a verb followed by an adjective that, when combined, conveys a fixed, idiomatic meaning. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, *get lost* means to become lost or to lose one's way. In the song, it implies that the couple was driving aimlessly, perhaps enjoying each other's company without worrying about their destination.

Irreversible Binomial Idiom

a. **Skin and bones**

The idiomatic expression *skin and bones* is found in the lyrics:

"From when your Brooklyn broke my skin and bones."

According to NoSweatShakespeare, the idiom *skin and bones* means someone is extremely thin, often due to unhealthy conditions, such as illness or starvation. For example, "After the illness, he was skin and bones," or "The starving dog was nothing

but skin and bones." However, in the context of the song, the phrase takes on a figurative meaning, symbolizing deep emotional pain and vulnerability. The researcher classifies this as an irreversible binomial idiom because the order of the words is fixed, and the phrase conveys a specific, figurative meaning.

Phrasal Compound Idiom

a. Late-night

The idiomatic expression *late-night* is found in the lyrics:

> *"Sipping coffee like you were on a late-night show."*

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, *late-night* refers to something that happens late in the evening. In the song, it describes a casual, intimate moment shared by the couple. The researcher categorizes this phrase as a phrasal compound idiom because it is a compound phrase with an idiomatic meaning.

b. Lifeless frame

The idiomatic expression *lifeless frame* is found in the lyrics: *"And you held my lifeless frame."*

Lifeless frame is considered a phrasal compound idiom because it uses the adjective *lifeless* and the noun *frame.* According to the Cambridge Dictionary, *lifeless* means without life or energy, and *frame* refers to a person's body. The combination of these words emphasizes the overwhelming sense of apathy or despair that the speaker is experiencing.

c. Twin flame

The idiomatic expression *twin flame* is found in the lyrics:

> *"And did the twin flame bruise paint you blue?"*

Twin flame is categorized as a phrasal compound idiom because it consists of two nouns (*twin* and *flame*) used together. According to Collins Dictionary, a *twin flame* refers to an intense soul connection with another person that is believed to be one's other half or mirror soul. It is a deeply spiritual concept, often associated with two people destined to meet and grow together.

4.   CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" effectively uses idiomatic expressions to add emotional depth and complexity to the song. The analysis identified a total of 11 idioms, classified into four types: Phrasal Verb Idioms (1 idiom), Tournure Idioms (7 idioms), Irreversible Binomial Idioms (1 idiom), and Phrasal Compound Idioms (3 idioms). Tournure Idioms were the most frequently used, highlighting their importance in conveying nuanced emotions and ideas. Idioms such as "lost in translation" and "time won't fly" demonstrate how Taylor Swift skillfully uses language to create lyrics that resonate deeply with listeners. By applying Makkai's theory to categorize these idioms, this study sheds light on the significant role of idiomatic language in enhancing the overall impact of song lyrics. Although this research provides a focused analysis, it acknowledges the need for broader studies with more extensive data. The findings offer valuable insights for understanding idiomatic expressions in music, contributing to the appreciation of how such language enriches the art of songwriting and helps listeners connect more personally with the lyrics.

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