

**AN ANALYSIS OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN SONGS  
LYRICS FROM TAYLOR SWIFT'S ALBUM 'MIDNIGHTS'**



**A THESIS**

*Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Sciences of Hasanuddin University  
in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements to Obtain Bachelor's Degree  
in English Literature Study Program*

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**FACULTY OF CULTURAL SCIENCES**

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**LEGITIMATION**

**THESIS**

**AN ANALYSIS OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN SONGS LYRICS FROM  
TAYLOR SWIFT'S ALBUM 'MIDNIGHTS'**

**BY**

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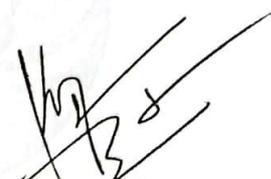
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**AGREEMENT**

On Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup> 2023, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by Indy Christiani Imbo (F041191058) entitled *An Analysis of Idiomatic Expressions in Songs Lyrics from Taylor Swift's Album 'Midnights'* submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements to obtain Sarjana Degree in English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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The thesis by Indy Christiani Imbo (F041191058) entitled *An Analysis of Idiomatic Expressions in Songs Lyrics from Taylor Swift's Album 'Midnights'* has been revised as advised during the examination on Friday, July 28<sup>th</sup> 2023 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

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With reference to the letter of the dean of Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University No.1903/UN4.9.1/KEP/2022 regarding supervision, we hereby confirm to approve the undergraduate thesis draft by Indy Christiani Imbo (F041191058) to be examined at the English Literature Study Program of Faculty of Cultural Sciences.

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Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by herself. This thesis does not contain any materials which have been published by other people, and it does cite other people's ideas expect the quotations and references.

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This thesis is submitted as partial fulfillment of requirements to obtain bachelor's degree in English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. The writer realizes that in writing this thesis, there are still many shortcomings. Therefore, the writer expects constructive criticism and input for the improvement of this thesis.

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Best Regards,

**Indy Christiani Imbo**

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## ABSTRACT

**Indy Christiani Imbo.** 2023. *An Analysis of Idiomatic Expression in Song Lyrics from Taylor Swift's Album 'Midnights'* (supervised by **Harlinah Sahib** and **Karmila Mokoginta**).

This study aims to: (1) to find out the types of idiomatic expressions used in songs lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 'Midnights'; and (2) to analyze the meanings of each idiomatic expression used in songs lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 'Midnights'.

The method used in this research was descriptive qualitative method. The sources of the data are thirteen songs by Taylor Swift in the album 'Midnights' which contain idioms. The writer collected the data by searching and downloading Taylor Swift's 'Midnights' album from YouTube channels, and listening to the songs and read the lyrics of the songs, then identifying parts of the songs lyrics that contain idiomatic expressions; and analysed them by identifying the idiomatic expressions in the songs based on Boatner and Gates (1975) theory, and describing the meaning of idiomatic expressions, then tabulating the idiomatic expressions analysis.

The findings indicate that 88 idiomatic expressions appear in the lyrics of the songs, and the most dominant type is phraseological idiom (50 idioms). There are also lexemic idioms with 37 idioms, and 1 frozen idiom. There is no proverbs found in the analysis. The findings of this study imply that phraseological idioms are more frequently used in the lyrics of the 'Midnights' album. The findings also imply that there are some themes contained in the songs in the album.

**Keywords:** *Idiomatic Expressions, Album 'Midnights', Taylor Swift*

## ABSTRAK

**Indy Christiani Imbo.** 2023. *Analisis Ekspresi Idiom dalam Lirik Lagu dari Album Taylor Swift 'Midnights'* (dibimbing oleh **Harlinah Sahib** dan **Karmila Mokoginta**).

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengetahui jenis-jenis ekspresi idiom yang digunakan dalam lirik lagu dari album 'Midnights' Taylor Swift; (2) menganalisis makna dari setiap ekspresi idiom yang digunakan dalam lirik lagu dari album 'Midnights' Taylor Swift.

Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini adalah tiga belas lagu Taylor Swift dalam album *Midnights* yang mengandung makna idiom. Penulis mengumpulkan data penelitian dengan mencari dan mengunduh album 'Midnights' Taylor Swift dari saluran YouTube, dan mendengarkan lagu-lagu tersebut dan membaca lirik dari lagu-lagu tersebut, kemudian mengidentifikasi beberapa bagian dari lirik lagu-lagu tersebut yang mengandung ekspresi idiomatik; dan menganalisis data tersebut dengan mengidentifikasi ekspresi idiomatik yang ditemukan berdasarkan teori Boatner dan Gates (1975), dan mendeskripsikan makna setiap ekspresi idiomatik, lalu membuat tabel untuk hasil analisis ekspresi idiomatik tersebut.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 88 ekspresi idiomatik ditemukan dalam lirik lagu-lagu tersebut, dan jenis yang paling dominan adalah idiom fraseologis (50 idiom). Terdapat juga idiom leksemik dengan 37 idiom, dan 1 idiom beku. Tidak ada idiom peribahasa yang ditemukan dalam analisis ini. Hasil penelitian menyiratkan bahwa idiom fraseologis lebih sering digunakan dalam lirik lagu dari album 'Midnights'. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan ada beberapa tema yang terkandung di lagu-lagu dalam album tersebut.

**Keywords:** *Ekspresi Idiomatik, Album 'Midnights', Taylor Swift*

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Language is very important, both in the process of thinking and in human activities. Bloomfield (1933: 149) states that language is an element of human culture that plays an important role. We usually use language to communicate with other people, in other words it can be said that language as a communication tool has an important role in human activity.

Keraf (1997:1) states that language as a means of communication between humans, consists of two parts, namely form and meaning. Form is the part of language that can be absorbed by the five senses, namely by hearing or seeing, while meaning is the content in the form which causes a certain reaction in the mind of the listener or reader.

In communicating, both verbal and writing, people usually use idioms, metaphors, or expressions in their sentences. The purpose of using these expressions of idioms in communication is so prominent that the other person (listener) or reader feels more interested in the things they are read or listening. Idioms are usually used in everyday communication to express something implicitly or indirectly from the speakers to readers, for example, 'give in' is an idiom that means 'surrender'. This idiomatic meaning is completely unrelated to the literal meaning of the individual words 'give' and 'in'.

There are many ways that can be done in practicing, especially English, in a fun way, for example from watching movies, podcasts, language learning applications and the most form of fun ways is songs. Listening to music or songs, the most basic way, is usually used to hone English skills.

The concept of idioms are usually used in everyday conversation and writing. Idioms are usually made up of short words, but are used in the appropriate context and circumstances and in the right way. Conversations using idioms can make the spoken sentences becomes alive.

One of the uses of idioms in a sentence can be found in song lyrics. Songs are a medium for expressing feelings and ideas which contain many interesting things behind the lyrics of the song. Songs lyrics are written in the language used by the songwriters as a tool to convey their feelings. At times, lyrics cannot be easily understood or interpreted. Songwriters usually include many expressions in songs lyrics, and most of the expressions found are in the form of idioms. According to Rahayu (2019: 1), song is a type of poetry that can be sung or conveyed with a melody with various expressions from the carrier.

Many people can sing songs in English, unfortunately many of them do not really understand the meaning of the songs they sing. The meaning of a song is very important in enjoying a song.

In expressing their experiences, songwriters play with words and language to create attractiveness and uniqueness to their lyrics or poetry. This language game can be in the form of vocal games, language styles, or deviations from the

meaning of words and is strengthened by the use of melodies and musical notation that is adapted to the lyrics of the song, therefore the listener is increasingly carried away with what the composer is thinking (Awe, 2003).

Songs are currently growing rapidly following the flow of modernization. This development can be seen in the song's creativity for expression with easy-to-remember lyrics, so that it is widely liked by the wider community. One of them is Taylor Swift, who made her first debut as a professional singer by releasing the album "Tim McGraw" in 2006.

As in every Taylor Swift song in her other albums, Taylor surely provides some lyrics that have no literal meanings.

The writer chose the song lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 'Midnights' for Taylor Swift's songs are very popular for many people, especially at present. Taylor Swift is known as a singer and songwriter who always puts some or many idioms in each of her songs lyrics. 'Midnights' is the tenth album of Taylor Swift, released on October 21, 2022. This album is the newest by Taylor Swift which contains thirteen songs, they are *Lavender Haze*, *Maroon*, *Anti-Hero*, *Snow on The Beach* (featuring Lana Del Rey), *You're on Your Own, Kid*, *Midnight Rain*, *Question...?*, *Vigilante Shit*, *Bejeweled*, *Labyrinth*, *Karma*, *Sweet Nothing*, *Mastermind*.

In the 'Midnights' album, there are so many types of idioms that can be analyzed in each of the songs in the album. That is another reason, the writer chose Taylor Swift's 'Midnights' album.

There are unique facts about this album. 'Midnights' contains songs about Taylor's experiences with insomnia. Through her songs, Taylor seems to wish to tell the various emotions she feels on nights when she can't sleep. The post about the release of 'Midnights' also broke the record for the most likes of Taylor Swift's post about her other album announcement, with the number of likes achieved on Twitter reaching 1.1 million likes and 8 million more likes on Instagram.

Based on the background above, the writer is interested in doing this research entitled "An Analysis of Idiomatic Expression in Song Lyrics from Taylor Swift's Album 'Midnights'" to describe the form of idioms in writing song lyrics in Taylor Swift's latest album 'Midnights'.

## **B. Identification of Problems**

According to the explanation above and based on writer personal observation, the writer investigates the problems that can be identified as follows:

1. The issue of idiom is rarely explored. However, it is frequently used in daily conversations.
2. Understanding idiomatic expressions is difficult to be done, especially for people who use English as a foreign language.
3. Song is one of the media for learning English. However, there are still many idioms in English songs.

### **C. Research Questions**

From the statement background above, the writer formulates two research questions as follows:

1. What is the meanings of each Idiomatic Expression found in songs lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 'Midnights'?
2. What types of Idiomatic Expressions are used in songs lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 'Midnights'?

### **D. The Objectives of Study**

Related to the problems mentioned above, the objectives of the study can be stated below:

1. To analyze the meanings of each idiomatic expression used in songs lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 'Midnights'.
2. To find out the types of idiomatic expressions used in songs lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 'Midnights'.

### **E. The Significance of Study**

This study is expected to provide several benefits for the readers. Theoretically, the findings of this study can be used as a reference to gain knowledge on idiomatic expressions, especially for the next researcher who will going to conduct related objects.

Practically, this study is also expected to contribute more systematic conceptual understanding of idioms. It is hoped that this study will inspire English teachers to convey idioms understanding to their students through engaging medium, such as songs.

#### **F. Scope of Problems**

1. Based on the previous explanation, the writer limited this study by only focusing on one of the semantic elements, namely idiomatic expression in the songs lyrics.
2. The writer choose the lyrics of Taylor Swift's newest album 'Midnights'.
3. There are some theories about idiomatic expressions proposed by some expert, such as Leech (1974), Lou (2007), and Fernando (2009). But in this study, the writer analyzes the types of idiomatic expressions by using Boatner dan Gates theory (1975) which classifies the four types of idiomatic expressions.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **A. Previous Studies**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the literature which is relevant to the topic of the study including previous studies required as material to consider for this research, as well to support the construction of the theoretical background. From several journals that have been read by the writer, the writer found several journals relevant to research on idiom.

The first, by Dinda Lazuardia (2022) entitled “The Idiomatic Expression in Taylor Swift’s Songs of Folklore Album”. This research was done by using descriptive qualitative method to analyze Taylor Swift’s song lyrics in the Folklore album with eight types of idiomatic expressions according to Lou’s (2007) theory. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that there are 68 idiomatic expressions appeared in the song lyrics dominated by idiomatic expression with adjectives and nouns in combination (36), idiomatic expression with two-word verb (10), idiomatic expression with verbs and nouns used together idiomatically (9), idiomatic expression with verbs and preposition (8), idiomatic expression with preposition or adverbs (4), and idiomatic expression with adjectives phrases (1). This research shows that idiomatic expression with adjective and nouns in combination are more popularly used in the song lyrics than other types of idiomatic expression.

The second relevant study was done by Vega Tannya Marz (2016) entitled “Idiomatic Expression Found in Taylor Swift’s 1989 Album”. This research was done by using library research as the method of research and descriptive method as the method of data analysis. The data is ten of Taylor Swift’s songs in 1989 album which are chosen randomly. After analysis the data, the researcher found 8 various of idiom in Taylor Swift’s songs, they are: verb and preposition, verbal expression, idiomatic in comparison, adjective phrase, two words verb, adjective and noun, idiomatic expression with preposition, and idiomatic expression with verb and noun in combination. This research found that most of Taylor Swift’s song used verb and preposition form of idiomatic expression.

Another relevant study is proposed by Nguyen Van Thao and Herman (2021) entitled “An Analysis of Idiomatic Expressions Found in Ed Sheeran’s Selected Lyrics Songs”. This research was done by using qualitative research which focused on content or document analysis. The songs from Ed Sheeran’s album, *Divine*, were chosen as the data source in this research. The data were analyzed by using the theory of Makkai (1972). After analyzing the data, the researchers found that there are two idiomatic expressions depicted in the lyrics songs, they were phrasal verb idiom and 4 tournure idiom. Phrasal verb idiom was the most dominant with 6 data (60%) and tournure idiom with 4 data (40%).

There are some similarities between previous and the current study. The previous and current study both are talking about idioms in a song lyrics. The

differences are data objects being analyzed and the theory used to analyze the data. The first relevant study uses an object in the form of an album from Taylor Swift 'Folklore'. The second relevant study also uses Taylor Swift album '1989' as the data object. Finally, the third or the last relevant study is slightly different from another relevant studies, where the data object is the songs from Ed Sheeran's album 'Divine'.

These studies indicate that there are still many songs that contain several or many idioms that need to be studied in order to know their real meanings. Although there are some similarities in these studies, the writer choose Taylor Swift's newest album, which is 'Midnights' (2022). Boatner and Gates (1975) theory is selected to identify the song lyrics in the 'Midnights' album.

## **B. Theoretical Background**

### **1. Definition of Idiomatic Expressions**

Idiom (idiomatic expression) is a type of informal language that have a meaning different from the meaning of the words in the expression. There are several opinions regarding the meaning of idioms. According to Biber, et al (2006), idiomatic expressions are expressions with a meaning which is entirely different from the meaning of their parts. Herman and Purba (2020:2) argue that idiomatic expressions (idioms) are multi-word phrases which that combines the literal senses of the individual words in each phrase. In the other

hand, idiomatic phrase is an expression whose meaning does not conform to the principle of compositionality, and unrelated to the meaning of its parts. As an example “hit the sack”, literally meaning as “hit or punching a bag”. However, “hit the sack” means “sleep”. It can be concluded that the idiom is a combination of two or more words that produce a special meaning.

Semantically, idiom expresses new meanings that cannot be traced based on the lexical meanings of its elemental words. At a glance, idiom shows some similarities with compound words. When traced again, there are important differences between compound words and idiom. Compound words are meanings that express new meanings that can still be traced based on the lexical meaning of the words that form them, while idiom cannot be traced based on the individual words that form the idiom.

This statement is also supported by the opinion of Chaer (2009: 74) which states that the meaning contained in idiom is not in accordance with the rules of language from a lexical or grammatical meanings. When several words form a single unit called an idiom, a different meaning is formed from the meaning of the constituent words one by one.

In the end, it can be concluded that the meaning of an idiom is a new meaning that is created when several words are combined to form a single unit or more called idiom. The way to find out whether a word is an idiom or not is by associating the sentence expressed with the topic of conversation. If in the sentence there is a word that is strange or does not make sense, it can be said

that it is an idiom. In the end, to understand idioms, it is necessary to learn and increase the vocabulary of idioms.

## 2. Types of Idiom

Idiom is a form of expression of words or phrases that have different meanings that can also be understood in terms of its general use. Boatner (1975: 6) states that idiom is a description of new meanings in a group of words that have a specific meaning.

In 'A Dictionary of American Idiom', Boatner and Gates (1975: 148) divide idioms into four types, namely:

### a. Lexemic Idioms

Lexemic idioms are idioms related to part of speech, such as:

#### 1) Verbal in Nature

This idiom is an idiom that contains and means a verb, for example:

- *Turned up*: changing
- *Look forward*: to seek
- *Get to*: to arrive

#### 2) Nominal in Nature

This idiom is an idiom that contains and means a noun, for example:

- *A fish story*: an amazing story
- *A wild guess*: a prediction
- *Cup of joe*: cup of coffee

### 3) Adjective in Nature

This idiom is an idiom that contains and means an adjective, for example:

- *Go on*: be fast
- *Mad as a hornet*: very angry
- *Brand-new*: completely new

### 4) Adverbial in Nature

This idiom is an idiom that contains and means an adverb, for example:

- *Over and over*: repeatedly
- *World without end*: forever
- *Dead of night*: in the middle of night

## b. Phraseological Idioms

This idiom form uses words or phrases in writing or speech that are used by certain people or groups, usually consists of a single clause. This idiom can be rephrased in another way in the same language without changing its meaning by giving it a slightly different emphasis. The difference between this idiom and other idioms is in the number of words more than other idioms, such as:

- *Between the devil and the deep blue ocean*: Being in a difficult situation where you have to choose two complicated choices
- *Give it a go*: to try something

- *Bite off more than you can chew*: Taking on a task beyond capacity

#### c. Frozen Idioms

There are a limited number of frozen idioms that can be said or written in various ways without destroying the meaning of the idiom. The frozenness of this idiom is based on its uniqueness, that is, it cannot be passive, for example:

- *Piece of cake*: something easily achieved
- *Kick the bucket*: die

If this idiom is passivated, an idiom with an ambiguous meaning will be formed, for example:

- *Bucket kicked by the pilot*

As the sentence changes in the idiom above, the meaning of the idiom is lost because it is passive and can no longer be said as idiom.

#### d. Proverbs

Proverbs are idiomatic expressions that refer to human experiences and provide advice or warnings. For example:

- *All roads lead to Rome*: There are many ways to achieve a goal
- *A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step*: No matter how big the task or challenge is, it can only be completed when we start it

Based on several explanations regarding the types of idiomatic expressions according to Boatner and Gates (1975), it can be concluded that there are four types based on the theory used. One of them is Lexemic Idiom which has other types of branches, apart from Phraseological Idiom, Frozen Idiom, and Proverbs. Idiomatic also has differences in terms of usage in terms of words or phrases based on four types idiomatic and contextual meaning.

### **C. 'Midnights' Album**

Song is one of the rhythmic media that can function as a conveyer of the intentions of someone who sings it. In a song there are song lyrics that make a song feel more alive and the message that a singer wants to convey will be felt.

Song is a form of music in the form of a framework including melody and rhythm which is composed of norms, tempo and dynamics. In a narrow sense, the song is synonymous with melody. When someone hears the lyrics of a song and sings it repeatedly, they are unconsciously memorizing vocabulary.

Sitorus and Herman (2019) state that lyrics are the words of a song, especially a pop song, or a short poem that expresses the personal thoughts and feelings of the person who wrote it. This means not only the arrangement of words into sentences, but also the representation of the songwriter's feelings and emotions to describe their feelings such as desires, struggles, love, ideas and, feelings.

This also happened to Taylor Swift, who finally released her latest album, titled 'Midnight', on October 21, 2022. 'Midnights' is Taylor's tenth album in her career as a singer. 'Midnights' contains songs about her experiences when she experienced insomnia. Through her song, Taylor seems to want to tell the various emotions she feels on nights when she cannot sleep. She also admitted that she wrote the songs on this album at night.

In the album 'Midnights', there are thirteen songs that were successfully written by Taylor who admits that the number of her songs is thirteen which is her favorite and lucky number. The thirteen songs that Taylor managed to produce in her 'Midnights' album are; Lavender Haze, Maroon, Anti-Hero, Snow on The Beach (featuring Lana Del Rey), You're on Your Own, Kid, Midnight Rain, Question...?, Vigilante Shit, Bejeweled, Labyrinth, Karma, Sweet Nothing, and Mastermind.

It is known that the singer whose fan name is Swifties is never negligent in inserting idioms in her song lyrics, including the album 'Midnights' which will be examined by the writer.